



BIG SKY CONFERENCE
2491 WASHINGTON BLVD, SUITE 201
OGDEN, UT, 84401

CONTACT: JON KASPER
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER/MEDIA RELATIONS
801.392.1978 x-16
JKASPER@BIGSKYCONFERENCE.ORG



FACEBOOK.COM/BIGSKYCONF



TWITTER.COM/BIGSKYCONF

SYMPOSIUM HIGHLIGHTS

BIG SKY CONFERENCE SPRING MEETINGS

OGDEN, Utah (May 29, 2014) - The Big Sky Conference will host the first ever Student-Athlete Health and Wellness Symposium as part of its annual spring meetings at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks.

The Health and Wellness Symposium will feature nearly 20 expert speakers covering a targeted themes related to the student-athlete experience. Tuesday's sessions at the Education Building on the campus of the University of North Dakota will open with remarks from University of North Dakota President, Dr. Robert Kelley. Topics will include, "The Challenge of Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Student-Athletes," "Components of an Effective Program to Address Sexual Assaults," "Stress Management and the Student-Athlete", and well as discussions about concussions, alcohol and drug abuse and mindfulness.

"When you speak about student-athlete health, everyone thinks about the concussion issue," said Big Sky Conference Commissioner Doug Fullerton. "But what we have found is that the health issues faced by students in general and student-athletes in particular, are much broader than what happens on the field. Mental health and related issues of substance abuse, violence, sexual assault are all issues faced on a modern campus."

The inspiration for the symposium came after Dr. Brian Hainline, the NCAA's chief medical officer, spoke to Big Sky Conference university presidents last fall in Park City, Utah. Hainline identified mental health issues as a major issue plaguing student-athletes.

"After hearing what Dr. Hainline had to say, our presidents were motivated to see what we could do as a conference to educate the staffs across the league of these issues," Fullerton said. "Over the past several months, Jaynee Nadolski from my office and a steering committee have been working extremely hard to identify topics and speakers."

The steering committee included Dr. Lori Varlotta, the Senior Vice President of Student-Affairs at Sacramento State and Dr. Paul Gore, the ACE Fellow for Montana State and the Director of Institutional Research at the University of Utah. The committee used data relevant to the mental health and well-being of student-athletes, which was obtained from the Center for Collegiate Mental Health and the NCAA. A survey of Big Sky institutions further identified specific concerns on campus to assist in narrowing the focus of the symposium.

Following Tuesday's sessions, attendees will be able to take part in round-table discussions with the speakers over dinner.

Wednesday's sessions will conclude with "The Mindful Athlete," which will focus on how the student-athlete can live a more balanced life.

"We believe this event will be beneficial to all of our institutions and our student-athletes," Fullerton said. "We believe this is the first symposium of its kind conducted by a conference, and we're proud the league is presenting this opportunity to its membership. Because we're holding it on a campus, coaches, student-athletes, and other university personnel will be able to attend."

The Big Sky Conference will also conduct its normal spring business on the UND campus. Meetings begin on Monday and conclude on Wednesday afternoon. Athletic Directors, Senior Women Administrators, Faculty Athletic Representatives, and University Presidents, along with Big Sky Conference staff will be in attendance.

The lectures will be available on You Tube roughly 10 days after the event.

Symposium presenters include:

Dr. Mark Bajorek, the medical director for Portland State University's Health Service

Dr. Pat Donohue, Montana State's University's director of Counseling and Psychological Services

Dr. Caroline Faure, the director and founder of the Center for Sports Concussion at Idaho State University

Dr. Christine Fiore, the chair of the Psychology Department at the University of Montana

Lucy France, legal counsel at the University of Montana

Dr. Jennifer Gildner, a counselor and and sports psychologist at UC Davis

Dr. Renee Gilkey, a staff psychologist at the University of Northern Colorado

Aaron Grusonik, the Associate Dean of Students at Montana State University

Jessica Heskin, the coordinator for the Violence and Sexual Assault Support Service Program at Sacramento State

Tricia Hughes, the director of Health, Wellness and Prevention Services at Eastern Washington University

Andrene Kaiwi-Lenting, the Director of New Student & Transition Programs at Cal Poly

Cherisse Kuttyreff, the Director of Sports Medicine at Northern Arizona

Amelia Lawless, a health educator at Sacramento State's Student Health & Counseling Services

Jim Murphy, a licensed professional and addiction counselor at the University of North Dakota

Dr. Gloria Petruzzelli, a licensed Clinical Psychologist at Sacramento State's Student Health and Counseling Services

Eric Plummer, the Associate Vice President for Public Safety and Chief of Police at the University of North Dakota

Dr. Leanne Seguin, a licensed staff psychologist at the University of Northern Colorado

Joy Stewart-James, a health professional from Sacramento State's Student Health Services