

## CoSIDA | CORNER



For decades the CoSIDA convention has been an important professional development opportunity for people in the athletics communications field. There are, of course, professional seminars and workshops as well as networking and social opportunities. I always felt that the convention was a success for me if I could come away from it having learned something new that could benefit the athletics department at which I was working and make some new contacts along the way.



Justin Doherty



We all know that the communications-based issues facing college athletics departments today are more complex than ever. That means that continuing education for communications and information directors is even more important. The CoSIDA convention, which will take place in San Francisco this summer, can serve as a tremendous learning opportunity not only for those in the communications field, but for anyone in athletics who has a vested interest in the way their department presents its message. If you have the opportunity to attend yourself, or to send staff members from your department, I know you'll find the CoSIDA convention to be an event that will keep you updated on the latest trends, reinforce things you're currently doing and expose you to new ways of managing your department's message.

Our convention this summer will feature three primary days of seminars, panels and breakout sessions. Each of those three days will be dominated by a particular theme.

The first day, Monday, July 5, will concentrate on "Best Practices and Solutions" and will be highlighted by a presentation from Don Ranly, a highly regarded professor emeritus from the University of Missouri's School of Journalism. Ranly will speak on writing and editing, and has long been a popular presenter at the CoSIDA convention. This day will also focus on the trend that athletics communications offices are becoming their own media for their institutions. With video streaming and the advent of hiring members of the media to serve as writers for athletics Web sites, we have created a panel with experts in our field on how to best get an institution's message out to the public.

The middle of the three days, Tuesday, July 6, will have a heavy focus on strategic communications. CoSIDA will be pleased to welcome Ari Fleischer, the former White House press secretary

who served as spokesman during the historic presidential recount, the Sept. 11 attacks, the anthrax attack and two wars. Fleischer now runs Ari Fleischer Sports Communications. He will be our keynote speaker and participate in a panel discussion, as well. In addition, there will be a presentation by the NCAA Communications staff that provides a strategic planning model for communications directors to use at the campus level. Ben Porritt, a crisis communications specialist, will present a panel on how to handle the media when a crisis hits an institution.

The final day of the convention — Wednesday, July 7 — will be "Digital Summit Day." Social networking, which has exploded over the last few years, will be the main highlight of this day. It will consist of a panel featuring experts in the media that utilize this medium as well as social networking companies such as Twitter and YouTube that are based in the Silicon Valley. Another major panel on this day features a joint presentation by representatives from FOX Sports Interactive, CBS College Sports and ESPN on where the television medium is headed over the next five years.

Each day of the convention will also include a variety of other panels and breakout sessions related to the "theme of the day."

The CoSIDA convention will include, for the first time, a Hall of Fame Gala on the night of July 6. That evening, CoSIDA will induct a new Academic All-America Hall of Fame class, as well as a new Hall of Fame class. That promises to be a special event.

The CoSIDA convention is for communications professionals at all levels of college athletics. The programming available is sometimes aimed at the entire group in attendance, while at other times it is division-specific. The bottom line, however, especially with technology leveling the communications playing field, is that the convention will have something for everyone.

The registration fee for the CoSIDA convention — just \$190 — continues to rank among the lowest in collegiate sports. We are all certainly in a cost-conscious mindset these days, but hopefully that relatively low fee allows for the nation's communications professionals to attend.

Thanks for this article to Justin Doherty, assistant athletics director for external relations, University of Wisconsin and CoSIDA President.

