

Division III LGBTQ+ Communication Inclusive Language Recommendations

Introduction: Benefits of LGBTQ+ Inclusion

LGBTQ+ inclusion ensures every student-athlete, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, may fully participate in and benefit from intercollegiate athletics. Since 2017, NCAA Division III has strived to increase engagement, education and understanding of LGBTQ+ issues at the campus, conference and national levels.

As a Division III athletics communication/sports information director or someone involved in athletics communication, you play a unique role in supporting your LGBTQ+ student-athletes' overall well-being, personal growth and sense of belonging. This resource offers several inclusive communications practices and templates specific to your roles, responsibilities and spheres of influence. As you consider the inclusive practices set forth in this resource, it is important to understand and to articulate to others why LGBTQ+ inclusion is important to Division III.

LGBTQ+ inclusion offers the following benefits to the Division III membership:

- 1. Fosters diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging and accessibility.**
LGBTQ+ inclusion within your athletics department may foster an athletics community and culture that value all dimensions of DEIBA.
- 2. Improved performance.**
Including LGBTQ+ student-athletes may help improve overall team performance by promoting different perspectives, ideas and skill sets.
- 3. Positive role models.**
LGBTQ+ student-athletes often serve as role models for others. This may help improve mental health and self-esteem. It may also be helpful for recruiting prospective student-athletes looking for an LGBTQ+-inclusive institution and athletics department.
- 4. Increased fan base/economic benefits.**
LGBTQ+ inclusion within your athletics department may help your institution increase its fan base by attracting new fans who support LGBTQ+ inclusion. By attracting new fans and supporters, your institution may also experience economic benefits through increased ticket sales, merchandise sales and donations.

Student-athlete and coach information collection

The privacy and respect of student-athletes and coaches should be always made a priority. Use of masculine, feminine and/or gender-expansive pronouns should be determined by the student-athlete and coach. Recommendations to enhance inclusion and respect for student-athletes and coaches include the following:

- » Provide an opportunity for student-athletes and coaches to give their names and identify pronouns. Update forms (e.g., Front Rush and Qualtrics) to include pronouns. Staff and game personnel should use the name and pronouns identified by the individual.
- » Discuss the benefits of listing pronouns (e.g., conveys inclusivity and respect).
- » To practice gender sensitivity and clear communication, coaches, staff and administrators may consider adding pronouns to their email signature.
- » Instead of requesting mother and father, ask for parent(s)/guardian(s)/ caregiver(s). Additional areas of consideration are to use sibling(s) instead of sister(s)/brother(s) and child/children instead of son(s)/daughter(s). Family constructs are complex.
- » As an athletics department, it is important to develop a consistent policy that addresses if coaches, staff and administrators should identify family members in their biographies. When determining, consider diverse perspectives, as well as privacy, safety and inclusion implications. No one should be required to provide personal information. Ultimately, the primary focus of every biography should be on professional experiences, achievements and contributions to the athletics department.

Discuss the benefits of listing pronouns.

Game presentation

Creating an inclusive and respectful game environment should be a priority. Recommendations to enhance inclusion and respect during competition include the following:

- » Use inclusive language (e.g., families/friends/fans or spectators/fans versus ladies and gentlemen).
- » Consider using gender-neutral pronouns during web streaming and broadcasts (e.g., they/them versus he/she) or use last names.
- » With announcements, confirm names, pronouns and pronunciations. If the student-athlete's first name and/or pronoun is unknown, use a gender-neutral pronoun (e.g., they/their) and the student-athlete's last name in all written and spoken announcements or public references.

- » With family/parent day announcements, confirm the relationship of parents/caregivers/guardians to student-athletes (e.g., mother, stepfather, guardian, grandparent) or use a more general statements such as family members; parent/caregiver versus mother/father; sibling versus brother/sister.
- » Unless using the institution’s branded nicknames, whenever possible refrain from using gendered language when referencing mascots (e.g., use Giraffes for both the men’s and women’s sports teams instead of using Lady Giraffes for the women’s teams).

Use inclusive language (e.g., families/friends/fans or spectators/fans versus ladies and gentlemen).

Website presentation

Developing content on website platforms that is inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community is an important step in incorporating differing perspectives. Supporting diversity in digital communications aids in the efforts of genuine storytelling. Further, being able to connect with different audiences helps authentically relate with diverse communities. Recommendations to enhance inclusion and respect with website content include the following:

- » Use athletics communication platform content to support diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging and accessibility.
- » Consider using pronouns that allow student-athletes to feel respected and that foster inclusive environments. While athletics is largely binary (e.g., men’s and women’s sports), student-athletes, coaches and staff are more gender diverse. Athletics can be a safe space for student-athletes, and thoughtfully considering and discussing pronoun use can be one way to positively impact a program and its culture.
- » To the best of your ability, intentionally understand, identify and eliminate biases and assumptions to assist in promoting inclusion.

Include LGBTQ+ student-athletes, staff and coaches in your human-interest stories.

- » Include LGBTQ+ student-athletes, staff and coaches in your human-interest stories. By embracing the diversity of your campus communities and sharing the lived experiences of all student-athletes, you are creating a space where all student-athletes feel valued and celebrated.
- » Use inclusive language and up-to-date knowledge in media interviews/reports/presentations (e.g., third-year outfielder; Chicago native; physical education major).

Developing an inclusive social media policy

Online social media platforms have fundamentally changed the way athletics departments communicate. These guidelines are designed to foster responsible, constructive communications via social media channels for all members of an athletics community.

Whether student-athletes, coaches or administrators choose to create or participate in any form of online discussion is their own decision. However, activities in or outside an athletics community that negatively affect job performance of coaches or administrators, athletic performance of student-athletes, a recruit's interest in a program, or public and alumni perception of the program are an integral focus for an athletics department's social media policy.

Objectives

- » Establish practical, reasonable and enforceable guidelines by which every athletics department member can conduct responsible, constructive social media engagement in both official and unofficial capacities.
- » Promote a safe and informed environment for student-athletes, coaches and administrators to participate appropriately in social media.
- » Prepare athletics departments to use social media to help one another and the campuses they serve, particularly in the event of a crisis, disaster or emergency.
- » Protect athletics departments from violating municipal, state or federal rules, regulations or laws through social media engagement.

Promote a safe and informed environment for student-athletes, coaches and administrators to participate appropriately in social media.

Guiding Principles

- » Each athletics department trusts and expects its student-athletes, coaches and administrators to exercise personal responsibility whenever they use social media, which includes not violating the trust of those with whom they are engaging.
- » All members of an athletics program using social media should be conscious of their position as public role models and representatives of their school, department and team.
- » Always avoid demeaning language when using social media. Taunts or expressions of hostility or disapproval reflect poorly on those who use them and their athletics departments.
- » Only those who are specifically designated may use social media to speak on behalf of an athletics department or university in an official capacity. However, student-athletes, coaches and administrators may use their own social media platforms to speak for themselves.

All members of an athletics program using social media should be conscious of their position as public role models and representatives of their school, department and team.

- » Members of an athletics community are responsible to ensure that their online activities do not interfere with their academic, athletic or professional commitments or those of their peers.
- » Athletics departments are responsible for ensuring that all student-athletes, coaches and administrators have received and agreed to abide by department social media guidelines in writing.

Quick Social Media Tips

- » Never assume someone's pronouns. If you are unsure, use they/them/theirs.
Example: "John Doe scores! This is their third goal of the game".
- » Use gender inclusive phrases.
Example: Use "Hey, students!" or "Hey, fans!" instead of "Hey, guys!"
- » When replying to comments or tweets, do not assume the respondent's gender. Use the respondent's name rather than gender.
- » Use emojis that support diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging and accessibility.

Resources

[Associated Press Stylebook](#)
[NCAA Division III OneTeam Program](#)
[NCAA Division III LGBTQ of the Year Award](#)
[NCAA Guidance on Inclusive Language](#)
[NCAA LGBTQ+ resources](#)

For questions or to provide feedback regarding the LGBTQ+ communication inclusive language recommendations, please email inclusion@ncaa.org.

Game Script Templates

Pregame Script

Fans, welcome to _____ on the campus of _____ for today's _____
(location) (host institution) (sport)

game between _____ and _____. The NCAA promotes good sportsmanship
(visiting team) (home team)

by its student-athletes, coaches and fans. Profanity, derogatory comments or other

intimidating actions directed at student- athletes, officials, team representatives or other

fans will not be tolerated and are grounds for removal. Thank you for your assistance in

providing a positive atmosphere. First from the visitors from _____ : _____.
(visiting team) (starters' names)

Now, the starters for your _____ (home team) _____ (mascot) : _____ (starters' names).

Today's officials are _____ , _____ and _____. And now, the

playing of the national anthem (performed by _____).

Regular-Season Championship Postgame Script

At this time, we welcome _____ to the field for today's awards presentation. At
(presenter)

this time, we ask _____'s captains to step forward and receive the _____
(team) (league)

championship trophy. _____ won the _____ tournament title with an overall record
(team) (league)

of _____. Congratulations to _____, the _____ champions!
(team) (league)

Tournament Championship Postgame Script

At this time, we welcome _____ to the field for today's awards presentation. The
(presenter)

_____ would like to thank the athletics staff from _____ for hosting this year's
(league) (host school)

championship. Let us give them a round of applause. (*clapping*) We would like to recognize
the student-athletes and coaches from _____, this year's runners-up on a
(runner-up team)

great game and season. (*clapping*) "Now, for the presentation of the _____ trophy. At
(league)

this time, we ask _____'s captains to step forward and receive the _____ tournament
(team) (league)

championship trophy. _____ won the _____ tournament title with a record of __ - __
(team) (league)

and earned the conference's automatic bid to the NCAA Division III national tournament.

Congratulations to _____, the _____ tournament champions!"
(team) (league)