2017-19 Southern States Athletic Conference Strategic Plan

The Southern States Athletic Conference (SSAC) has a rich history of academic and athletic achievement from its valued membership. It is our strong desire to continue its excellence within the NAIA character driven athletics structure. This strategic plan is a roadmap for the conference leadership in facilitating its institutions as we continue to strive to be the premier conference in the NAIA.

GOAL 1. MEMBERSHIP - To further strengthen the SSAC brand and fortify the allegiance of current member institutions, to recruit quality prospective members while maintaining geographic balance and compatibility.

a. Objective: Marketing and Communications - Expand and improve marketing and communications among all constituencies, including faculty, staff, students, alumni and local communities to highlight athletic and academic achievements, to promote campus events, to promote conference achievements that can assist in retention and recruitment of conference members.

Strategies: Maximize the use of user-friendly athletic websites, streaming of athletic events, updating database information and use of social media – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

b. Objective: Sports Sponsorship – Sponsor a robust offering of sport participation opportunities including traditional and emerging sports and demonstrate a commitment to gender equity.

Strategies: Strategically grow and align SSAC sport sponsorships with the NAIA championships

c. Objective: Stability and Expansion – Maintain stability among current members and as appropriate expand by adding new members within the geographic region.

Strategies: Develop travel partners based on geographic proximity to encourage reduced travel cost and missed class time.

GOAL 2. GOVERNANCE – Provide structure, policies and procedural guidance for members identifying best practices and promoting ethical behavior and professionalism.

a. Objective: Leadership – Conference schools’ athletic administrators shall be active leaders on their campuses, within their given communities and on conference and NAIA governance committees.

Strategies: Participate actively in local community events; volunteer for assignments in conference committees, raters, oversight, sport chairs, eligibility review committees, champion of character committees, etc.

b. Objective: Competitive Integrity – Conference members comply with all NAIA rules and procedures and conduct competitions and other athletic activities with extraordinary attention to detail.

Strategies: Provide support to coaches that encourages character-driven leadership. Provide opportunities for rules education sessions. Provide oversight for eligibility. Provide properly trained support staff for effective game management for on campus and conference championship events.

c. Objective: Fiscal Integrity – The SSAC aspires to be fiscally prudent in policy making, scheduling and conducting its championships. Within NAIA guidelines each conference member will have the latitude to set scholarship, operational and salary budgets based on their institutional mission and available resources.

Strategies: Adhere to conference and NAIA fiscal reporting guidelines. Monitor members’ athletic budgets to ensure competitive balance and growth.

d. Objective: Ethical Integrity – Conference members ensure appropriate institutional oversight and involvement by Presidents, Athletic Directors, Faculty Athletic Representatives and Commissioner’s office in all conference and campus athletic matters.
Strategies: Increase communication between Presidents and Athletic Directors with in-person and conference call meetings on conference membership and policy decisions.

GOAL 3. ENHANCE THE STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT – SSAC members and student-athletes strive to achieve excellence in both academic and athletic pursuits while maintaining the appropriate balance between academic and athletic endeavors. Resulting in SSAC student-athlete graduates being better prepared to be servant-leaders in their communities.

a. Objective: Academic Achievement – Conference members will recruit, retain and graduate outstanding young women and men who are academically and athletically talented.

Strategies: Promote academic achievement through a vigorous awards and recognitions program and encourage member institutions to recognize momentous academic achievement.

Assessment: Number of awards and/or student athletes recognized. Work with institutions to add conference awards to transcripts and graduation regalia/information. Increase the four and six-year graduation rates annually.

b. Objective: Scheduling – Conference schedules promote fiscal responsibility, minimize missed class time, promote the health and safety of student-athletes and provide outstanding competitive opportunities.

Strategies: Build competition schedules using travel partners and divisional play where appropriate. Utilize Sunday play as agreeable with participating institutions.

Assessment: Decrease the number of missed class days from the previous year.

c. Objective: Champions of Character – Support and promote member participation in the NAIA Champions of Character program and emphasize the LIVE FIVE values of integrity, respect, responsibility, sportsmanship and servant leadership. SSAC members shall strive to achieve “5-Star” status.

Strategies: Promote active participation by members and student-athletes in webinars and on-line sessions. Conduct and share the wide variety of effective, on-campus Champion of Character events. Recognize the Champions of Character events as they take place across all institutions.

Assessment: Increase the Number of 5-Star institutions from previous year.

d. Objective: Game-Day Experience – Members provide a wholesome, healthy atmosphere for both home and visiting competitors, fans and officials. Members strive to provide the highest quality competition venues possible (courts, fields, courses, etc.) Conference members and its fans shall promote good sportsmanship before, during and after each athletic contest.

Strategies: Use public address announcements at SSAC athletic events to emphasize our priority on character and sportsmanship. Conduct risk management audits on our athletic facilities.

Assessment: Conduct annual surveys from each visiting team about their experience on other campuses. Each campus should strive to address the issues before the next season of competition, within reason.

e. Objective: Sponsorship – Actively seek financial and in-kind support from corporate sponsors and others who provide resources necessary to ensure student-athletes have outstanding competitive experiences at SSAC venues and at all conference championships.

Strategies: Use our conference successes, reputation and traditions to garner financial support from corporate entities. The conference will help find the best quality and fiscally efficient corporate sponsors to introduce to member institutions. Institutions will be strongly encouraged to include the SSAC corporate sponsors in their bid processes.

Assessment: Increase the Number of sponsorships, sponsor revenue annually.
GOAL 4. MAINTAIN A HIGH LEVEL OF COMPETITIVENESS – SSAC members are recognized as being among the nation’s best, most fierce and well-respected competitors

a. **Objective: Athletic Financial Aid** – SSAC members provide the opportunity for talented student-athletes to pursue their athletic and academic talents through the award of athletic financial aid at a level that facilitates high-level achievement on the playing fields.

**Strategies:** Encourage members to provide the maximum scholarships allowable under NAIA guidelines while maintaining appropriate institutional financial oversight.

**Assessment:** NAIA Financial Aid Report?

b. **Objective: Championships** – Conduct outstanding championships in SSAC-sponsored sports that lead to highly competitive teams and individuals who successfully compete for NAIA national championships. Championships will strive to be located at neutral sites to promote a level playing field for our student athletes.

**Strategies:** Use automatic bids strategically to advance the best SSAC teams to the NAIA championships. Create Championship Committees to discuss details to make the SSAC championship the best experience possible for the players, coaches and fans.

**Assessment:** Number of teams appearing in NAIA post season. Feedback from coaches on SSAC championship experience.

c. **Objective: National Recognition** – SSAC members, teams and individuals perform at the highest possible level with the goal of achieving national recognition for individuals, teams, schools and the SSAC.

**Strategies:** Nominate and promote, student-athletes, member institutions and the SSAC for both academic and athletic achievement.

**Assessment:** Increase the Number of institutions, coaches, and student athletes honored each year.