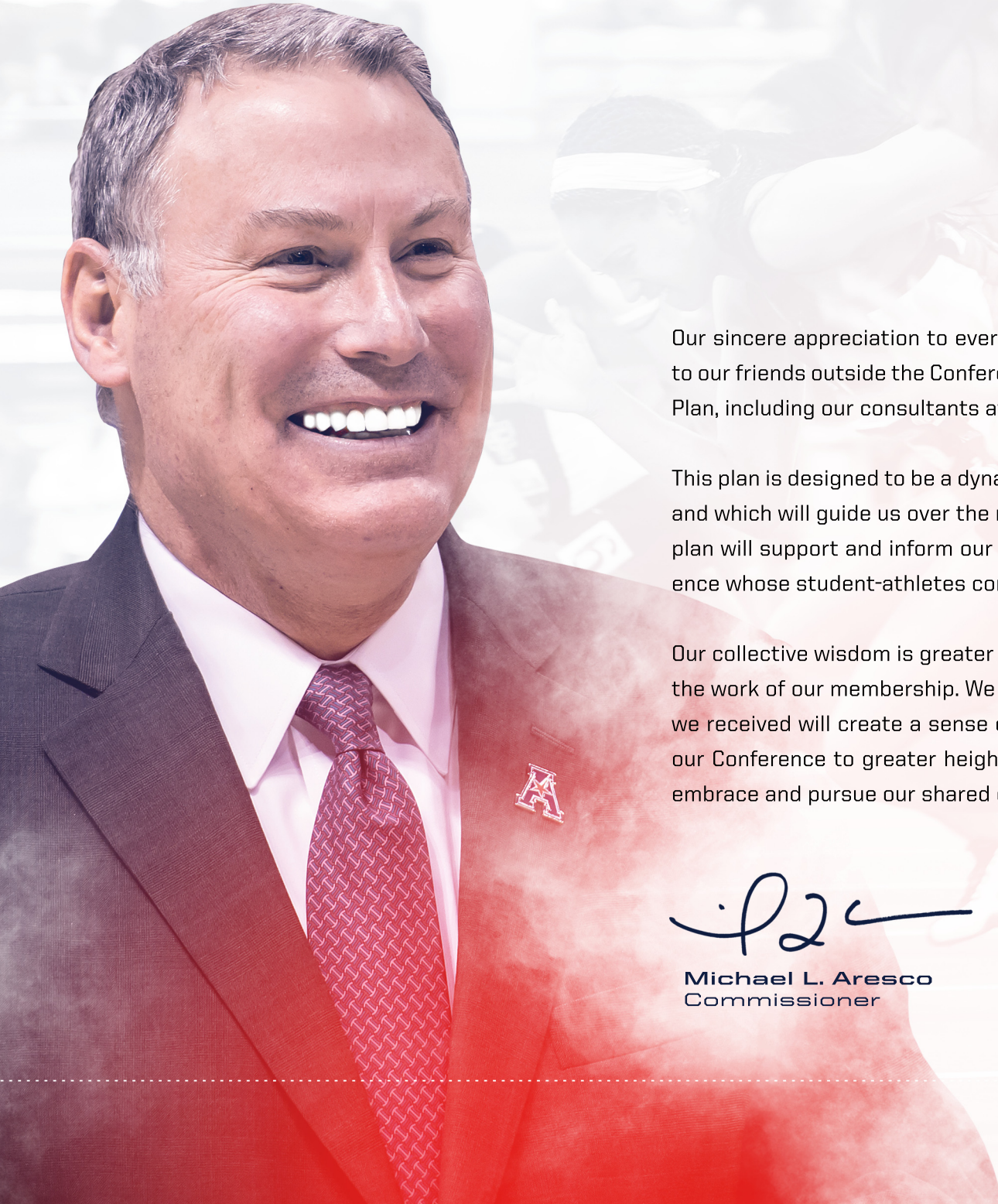




AMERICAN
POWER

THE AMERICAN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE STRATEGIC PLAN



Our sincere appreciation to everyone in the American Athletic Conference community and to our friends outside the Conference who contributed to the development of this Strategic Plan, including our consultants at Wasserman, who provided valuable insight and guidance.

This plan is designed to be a dynamic, working document which identifies a core philosophy and which will guide us over the next several critical years, where opportunities await. This plan will support and inform our mission to be and to remain a respected Power 6 Conference whose student-athletes compete at the highest level.

Our collective wisdom is greater than any one individual's. This collaborative effort reflects the work of our membership. We truly hope that the enthusiastic, broad and valuable input we received will create a sense of ownership and that the plan's implementation will take our Conference to greater heights and foster enhanced cohesion and camaraderie as we embrace and pursue our shared objectives.

Michael L. Aresco
Commissioner



MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to provide our students with the highest quality education and level of competition. Working together with a collective strength and spirit, our universities are committed to our students' health and well-being, and to providing the essential skills and training to empower them in their lives and careers after graduation.

As a Power 6 Conference, we will pursue academic and athletic excellence in the context of our core values of integrity and sportsmanship and in a culture of compliance, by being innovative in our approach, and by engaging constructively with our communities and with our peers in the greater college community.



INTRODUCTION

When the American Athletic Conference celebrated its first official day on July 1, 2013, a major question at the time was what kind of influence The American would have on the collegiate landscape. The Conference's accomplishments have been impressive and noteworthy, highlighted by UConn's national championship in men's basketball in 2014, an unprecedented four consecutive national titles, three earned in The American, for the UConn women's basketball team, UCF's Fiesta Bowl victory in 2014, Houston's win in the Peach Bowl in 2015, and SMU's Bryson DeChambeau's becoming the fifth golfer in history to win both the NCAA Division I championship and the U.S. Amateur in the same year. The Conference's continued success on the field, in the classroom and in the broader community can be seen across a variety of sports and through many significant academic and civic achievements.

The American's outstanding academic and athletic institutions joined together because there was a terrific opportunity to build a national brand, to compete at the highest level, and to do all this despite the challenges we faced. A key goal for our Conference has been to develop cohesion, a sense of camaraderie, and a level of competitiveness and success that would resonate nationally and create public and media interest and respect. This goal clearly has been met. We and others view us as a Power 6 Conference and our focus is to cement and enhance that status.

Looking ahead, there are five pillars on which The American must focus in order to fulfill its mission and to maintain and enhance its position: (1) student health, safety and well-being, (2) academic excellence, (3) athletic excellence, (4) effective branding, marketing, communications and public relations, and (5) revenue generation. This Strategic Plan will address each pillar and suggest effective ways to advance each area of focus.

PILLAR 1

Student Health, Safety and Well-Being

The American Athletic Conference is dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of its student athletes, which includes intellectual, emotional and social growth.

The strategic vision for The American is anchored in a commitment to provide the best athletic experiences for our students. A key component will be developing their overall mental and physical health. Further, we will deliver enhanced resources and opportunities so that our students can grow as well-rounded individuals, empowered to achieve success in their lives and careers.

STRATEGIES

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| <p>1.01 ▶ Continue to hold our annual sports medicine group meeting, with emphasis on such topics as concussion protocols, mental health, time demands, and nutrition, among others</p> | <p>1.05 ▶ Adopt autonomous legislation that enhances the well-being and opportunities for our student-athletes</p> | <p>1.10 ▶ Initiate periodic virtual town halls for students to hear from the Commissioner on the state of the Conference and to have the Commissioner answer questions directly from students</p> |
| <p>1.02 ▶ Continue to improve our concussion protocols in conjunction with the NCAA inter-association guidelines, and utilize replay technology or other technological advancements to determine if a student needs to be removed from a game in case of head injury or other medical issues</p> | <p>1.06 ▶ Propose NCAA Council legislation and suggest and advise on autonomy legislation that enhances the well-being and opportunities of our student-athletes</p> | <p>1.11 ▶ Partner with leading technology and social media companies to provide summer internships for American students. Identify prominent American alumni at major companies and startups in Silicon Valley, New York, and Los Angeles, and target their organizations for participation, thereby offering students a meaningful experience, and the ability to report back to The American at the end of the internships, enabling the Conference to stay up to date on trends in the technology industry</p> |
| <p>1.03 ▶ Continue to study and develop best practices to govern the conduct of athletic practices, including permitted amounts of practice contact in contact sports</p> | <p>1.07 ▶ Deliver all of the necessary resources to run first-class conference championship events for our student-athletes</p> | <p>1.12 ▶ Engage former professional athletes and business leaders from various fields to speak to and mentor American student-athletes at Championships and other events</p> |
| <p>1.04 ▶ Engage in a comprehensive review of the time demands of our student-athletes; identify and implement strategies aimed at expanding opportunities for students to engage in campus activities</p> | <p>1.08 ▶ Increase student involvement in our Conference governance structure</p> | <p>1.13 ▶ Create periodic days of service whereby students who participate in intercollegiate athletics in the Conference can commit to a charitable initiative</p> |
| | <p>1.09 ▶ Encourage Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) representatives to develop and present ideas for Conference-wide initiatives that address the particular desires, concerns, and needs of their student-athlete peers</p> | <p>1.14 ▶ Develop a Conference public service announcement (PSA) that focuses on the academic, athletic, and service contributions of various student-athletes</p> |



WE ARE
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PILLAR 2

Academic Excellence

The American is committed to the academic success of its students, which will contribute to their appetite for life-long learning and intellectual growth and development, and will enable them to experience success in their careers and in life.

ACADEMIC GOALS

- 2.01 ▶ Continued development of the American Athletic Conference Academic Consortium, of which a primary focus is student well-being
- 2.02 ▶ Earn an overall all-sport Graduation Success Rate of 90% or a federal rate that is at least 13 percentage points higher than the federal graduation rate of the student body at each institution
- 2.03 ▶ Continue to maintain and improve upon the annual all-sport Academic Progress Rate score of 985 or higher for all American teams
- 2.04 ▶ Continue to have multiple member institutions in the top 100 of the U.S. News & World Report rankings
- 2.05 ▶ Continue to identify, recruit, nominate and promote our student-athletes for regional and national academic awards



STRATEGIES

- 2.06 ▶ Develop, support and promote the Academic Consortium among member institutions that would, as its core focus, promote academic excellence and student-athlete well-being by developing opportunities for inter-campus collaboration and professional development across our 12 member institutions. The Consortium would provide a structure and processes for collaboration among faculty, students and staff from our member institutions that would foster partnerships among those institutions and would advance research initiatives related to our academic mission
- 2.07 ▶ Review and prepare legislation that would further student-athlete academic goals and opportunities, including time demands proposals
- 2.08 ▶ Contribute to the NCAA dialogue and governance discussions regarding academic standards for incoming and enrolled student-athletes
- 2.09 ▶ Focus on the enhancement of institutional life skills training at our member institutions
- 2.10 ▶ Continue to improve the interaction and cooperation between our faculty athletic representatives and our presidents, athletic directors, senior woman administrators and coaches to enhance the overall academic experience of our student-athletes
- 2.11 ▶ Schedule competitions that minimize missed class time and conflicts with final examinations
- 2.12 ▶ Identify and recognize the academic and research achievements, initiatives and milestones of the Conference's institutions

HOME OF THE **BRAVE**



PILLAR 3

Athletic Excellence

We remain willing and eager to set high standards for ourselves and it has been noticed by the college community, the various television and digital networks, selection committees, our fans and the general public.

Our goals are to provide a positive and memorable student experience, to provide intercollegiate competition at the highest level, to establish parameters that are sensitive to the time demands of our students and adhere to institutional academic policies, and to develop regular season scheduling models that maximize institutional resources, minimize missed class time and position teams for success.

By virtue of its competitive success and its adoption of autonomous initiatives, the American Athletic Conference has earned the Power 6 label. Pursuit of the following annual athletic goals will sustain cement and enhance our status as a Power 6 Conference.

FOOTBALL

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| 3.01 | ▶ Continue to encourage our teams to play a vigorous collective annual schedule against top teams, which enhances our College Football Playoff and New Year's Six bowl prospects. | 3.07 | ▶ New Year's Six bowl game |
| 3.02 | ▶ Continue to implement various scheduling requirements and make various best practices recommendations in order to enhance the resumes of our teams and to put them in position to compete for bowl berths and national championships | 3.08 | ▶ 2-4 top-25 teams |
| 3.03 | ▶ Average attendance of 70-80% of stadium capacity across the Conference | 3.09 | ▶ 7-8 Bowl teams |
| 3.04 | ▶ Commitment to improving replay and coaches' technologies | 3.10 | ▶ Above .500 bowl record |
| 3.05 | ▶ College Football Playoff contender | 3.11 | ▶ .500 vs. autonomy conference |
| 3.06 | ▶ One top-10 team | 3.12 | ▶ Television ratings in range of the autonomy conferences |
| | | 3.13 | ▶ Contenders for prestigious individual honors: Heisman, Maxwell, Outland, Bednarik, Nagurski and Doak Walker awards are examples |
| | | 3.14 | ▶ Occasional appearance of ESPN College GameDay on our campuses |



MEN'S BASKETBALL

- 3.13 ▶ Play strong non-conference schedules, which will improve our Conference RPI and lead to more tournament berths.
- 3.14 ▶ Average attendance of 75% of arena capacity across the Conference
- 3.15 ▶ Continue to have significant representation in the NCAA Championship field from our roster of officials
- 3.16 ▶ 70% non-conference winning percentage
- 3.17 ▶ 5-10 wins vs. RPI top 50 in non-conference play
- 3.18 ▶ 7-9 teams in RPI top 100 entering conference play
- 3.19 ▶ 6-8 teams in RPI top 100 on Selection Sunday
- 3.20 ▶ 4-6 teams in NCAA Championship
- 3.21 ▶ NCAA top 4 seeded team
- 3.22 ▶ Team(s) in the Sweet 16, vying for Final Four appearances and national championships





WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

- 3.22 ▶ Compete for the national title
- 3.23 ▶ Increase average attendance
- 3.24 ▶ NCAA Final Four team
- 3.25 ▶ 2-3 teams reach the NCAA Sweet 16
- 3.26 ▶ 4-5 teams advance to NCAA Tournament
- 3.27 ▶ 6 teams in contention for NCAA Championship bids
- 3.28 ▶ 2-3 WNIT teams
- 3.29 ▶ 5-10 overall wins vs top 50 RPI in non-conference play
- 3.30 ▶ 5-6 teams in top 100 RPI entering Conference play
- 3.31 ▶ All teams better than 200 RPI entering Conference play
- 3.32 ▶ Continue to have significant representation in NCAA Championship field from our roster of officials
- 3.33 ▶ Play strong non-conference schedules, which will improve our Conference RPI and lead to more tournament berths.

BASEBALL

- 3.33 ▶ A College World Series team
- 3.34 ▶ NCAA Super Regional Participant
- 3.35 ▶ Host of NCAA Regionals and NCAA Super Regionals

OLYMPIC SPORTS

- 3.36 ▶ Compete for team and individual national Championships
- 3.37 ▶ Women's Soccer: 3-4 teams in 64-team NCAA Championship; majority to host first-round matches
- 3.38 ▶ Men's Soccer: 3-4 teams in 48-team NCAA Championship; majority to host first-round matches; at least one team in top 16 and receive a first-round bye
- 3.39 ▶ Women's Volleyball - 2-3 teams in 64-team Championship
- 3.40 ▶ Softball - 2-3 teams in 64-team NCAA Championship; at least one team to host a regional
- 3.41 ▶ Cross Country/Indoor Track & Field/Outdoor Track & Field - multiple regional and national qualifiers, All-Americans
- 3.42 ▶ Swimming & Diving - multiple national qualifiers, All-Americans
- 3.43 ▶ Men's Tennis, Women's Tennis - qualify at least two teams each in NCAA Championship with at least one team advancing to round of 16; multiple singles and doubles All-Americans
- 3.44 ▶ Men's Golf, Women's Golf - qualify at least two teams in NCAA Championship with at least one team advancing to Match Play; multiple All-Americans
- 3.45 ▶ Women's Rowing - have automatic qualifying team compete for NCAA championship status in at least one of the NCAA events (e.g. V8, 2V8, V4)
- 3.46 ▶ Consider adopting Women's Lacrosse as a league sport to provide additional competitive opportunities and to expand the Conference's branding and TV exposure post Men's Basketball and Women's Basketball Final Fours.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR AMERICAN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE OLYMPIC PROGRAMS

- 3.47 ▶ Balance the creation and promotion of regular and postseason participation with protecting the top seeds and other at-large prospects for NCAA championship selection
- 3.48 ▶ Maximize opportunities for student-athlete and team participation in Conference and NCAA Championships
- 3.49 ▶ Prepare students for NCAA Championship competition by modeling American championship events similarly
- 3.50 ▶ Enhance the probability for institutions to host NCAA Championship events
- 3.51 ▶ Conference championship site selection will, within the context of fiscal responsibility, utilize the best available locations and venues
- 3.52 ▶ Changes to regular season and championship formats will be considered no sooner than every three years unless there are mitigating circumstances as determined by the Athletic Directors





THERE IS NO
SUBSTITUTE
FOR *VICTORY*

PILLAR 4

Branding, Marketing, Communications and Public Relations

BRANDING AND MARKETING

We recognize the need for high-quality, cutting-edge marketing campaigns that will involve all of our schools and that will focus on our achievements and on our identity. We have a great story to tell, and we will tell it in innovative ways that will reach the maximum number of people.

STRATEGIES

- 4.01 ▶ Consolidate our branding and marketing efforts and develop strategies to activate our brand marketing elements
- 4.02 ▶ Select respected national agencies to assist us with our branding campaigns
- 4.03 ▶ Hold annual media seminars with university sports information directors (SIDs) and students to discuss best practices for distributing content across a variety of platforms
- 4.04 ▶ Conduct periodic SID and school digital director calls with the Conference office to share stories related to students, teams, coaches, and campus events
- 4.05 ▶ Meet with producers and marketing executives at network partners prior to each sport's season in order to provide background and greater insight into the student-athletes and the storylines to follow. This initiative can be duplicated by schools on the local level with local media in their respective markets

- 4.06 ▶ Provide messaging points to the coaches the night before weekly coaches' calls so they can promote the same themes about the Conference's successes
- 4.07 ▶ Have the Commissioner participate on selected coaches' media calls to provide an introduction and a recap of recent stories, and to discuss narratives for the upcoming weeks
- 4.08 ▶ Create a consistent look for our various marks, logos, television PSAs, electronic videos, print ads and other forms of communication
- 4.09 ▶ Utilize consistent brand marks and ensure that each school places Conference patches and logos on uniforms and facilities where required in a timely fashion and without exception
- 4.10 ▶ Produce compelling PSAs that differentiate the Conference from its peers while emphasizing the values and characteristics of our schools

- 4.11 ▶ Develop student-produced PSAs
- 4.12 ▶ Produce military-themed PSAs and other forms of communication featuring our relationship with the Naval Academy
- 4.13 ▶ Utilize well-known former student-athletes and alumni in PSAs, videos, print and online spots, etc. in order to advance our brand
- 4.14 ▶ Produce PSAs that have a taggable 5-second ending periodically refreshed with upcoming game information telling audiences on what platform a related game can be seen
- 4.15 ▶ Develop appropriate and attractive taglines, catch phrases and Conference championship logos
- 4.16 ▶ Use football and basketball to promote student athletes in other sports
- 4.17 ▶ Increase the Conference's effort to generate exposure for players, coaches, athletic directors, administrators, and prominent alumni on both national and local media platforms
- 4.18 ▶ Provide behind-the-scenes, longer-form content on the athletic programs and institutional endeavors of each school, thus enabling fans to develop a deeper connection to all Conference institutions
- 4.19 ▶ Support youth and other organizations by providing unused tickets to our sporting events
- 4.20 ▶ Advocate for the use of American assets (e.g., clothing, banners, cups, etc.) in television and online partner non-sports programming

- 4.21 ▶ Search for promotional partners who will agree to receive exposure through certain league assets in exchange for promoting the Conference and its Championships (e.g. newspapers with special sections, grocery chains and their circulars)
- 4.22 ▶ Continue to connect and associate the Conference with major National Championship events (e.g. Final Four, College Football Playoff) by strategic placement of signage, billboards and other advertising in the host cities
- 4.23 ▶ Explore office relocation if it serves our Conference's best interests, provides greater visibility and if it better positions us for overall success



COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

In an increasingly media-driven world, media relations are a critical part of a Conference's strategy. Our communications and public relations strategy will focus on the continued creation and refinement of a favorable media narrative describing and celebrating our Conference as a nationally competitive, respected and relevant Power 6 Conference.

How The American promotes itself is a core component of how the Conference defines itself. There are several elements to any Conference's successful outreach. Because media relations are different from advertising, where the Conference can craft its own message and distribute it, we must shape public opinion in various ways through our media relationships. Part of such an effort is the creation and fostering of cooperation and cohesion among our schools with respect to media communications which will lead to an increased national reach and the likelihood that various items will be amplified as Conference stories as well as team stories.

STRATEGIES

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| 4.24 | ▶ Protect and enhance our brand | 4.30 | ▶ Keep in close touch with the major national writers at important publications who cover sports or the business of sports, as well as with all significant writers in all of our local team markets |
| 4.25 | ▶ Tell our stories and alert the media to favorable stories about the Conference | 4.31 | ▶ Continue to nurture relationships with local media and have regular communication with those outlets in order to promote The American on a frequent basis |
| 4.26 | ▶ Bring attention to our significant achievements on the field and court and in the classroom, celebrate our successes as a Power 6 conference | 4.32 | ▶ Enlist our athletic directors, coaches, administrators and all other relevant Conference personnel to help promote our Conference, to tell our stories, and to join in all of our efforts |
| 4.27 | ▶ Maintain a Power 6 narrative, which our significant wins, especially in football and basketball, will support and reinforce | 4.33 | ▶ Continue to have the Commissioner promote the The American in all forms of media |
| 4.28 | ▶ Use relevant forms of social media to tell our stories and to reinforce the identity and quality of our brand, our name and logo, and the identity of the schools in our Conference | 4.34 | ▶ Ensure that our television networks and media outlets use our latest logos and branding |
| 4.29 | ▶ Enlist electronic media, including radio and internet, and the announcers of our television partners' games and various studio analysts to promote us and to applaud us when we deserve applause. | | |

MULTIMEDIA

The Conference will continue to be a leader in the multimedia space, and will continue to search for the best means to brand and publicize our Conference and its member institutions through emerging technologies. Our efforts in this area will encompass the interlocking worlds of web, social and video content and we will engage with industry leaders. We will continue to use social media, digital media and other new media platforms and cutting-edge technology to tell our stories, to build awareness of our schools and of our Conference, to strengthen our intra-conference relationships and those outside the Conference, to expand our connections to our alumni, our fans, the general public and the media, and to continue to build our brand equity as a Power 6 Conference.

We will effectively brand our Conference and member schools by reaching fans where they spend most of their time and by regularly launching innovative social media campaigns. As more media rights deals are emphasizing content being produced by the institutions, The American will be prepared for this when it negotiates with traditional or emerging media partners.

STRATEGIES

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| 4.35 | ▶ Produce on The American Digital Network otherwise untelevised Conference events with excellent production values | 4.38 | ▶ Take advantage of the high levels of excitement among football and basketball fans before their seasons start with digital content that highlights the relevant and engaging storylines of the upcoming seasons |
| 4.36 | ▶ Invest in live and on-demand video content and in our in-house technology capabilities and increase our output of content which will highlight the achievements of our student-athletes in all sports | 4.39 | ▶ Leverage video content, including highlights, to generate excitement prior to and during Conference play |
| 4.37 | ▶ Explore putting The American Digital Network exclusively on a prominent over-the-top offering as a precursor to a broader future arrangement involving live football and basketball games | 4.40 | ▶ Emphasize content distribution on meaningful days in the Conference's sports calendar |
| | | 4.41 | ▶ Remain active daily on social media, especially during practice time and camps before seasons start and during the regular season |
| | | 4.42 | ▶ Use the Conference's social media platforms to engage fans |



ARTISTIC



PILLAR 5

Revenue Generation

With the disparity in financial resources among Conferences a serious concern, growing existing revenue streams and finding additional ones is paramount. Media rights clearly will comprise our most important source of revenue, but sponsorships, ticket sales and merchandising sales are also among the key categories. We have reinforced our already strong relationships with our television network partners and are building significant value to position ourselves favorably for our next media rights negotiation, which will involve exciting new platforms as well as traditional media. We will continue to schedule innovatively and intelligently to build this value while not disadvantaging any of our schools..

STRATEGIES

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| 5.01 | Continue to strengthen our relationship with our television networks and create value for them by striving to increase our ratings | 5.07 | Reinforce the identity of our teams | 5.13 | Explore a sponsor program similar to that of the International Olympic Committee whereby the Conference and its schools carve out certain categories to be sold across The American and its institutions, thus widening the potential footprint for corporate partners to reach their audiences |
| 5.02 | Identify competition for our rights by evaluating traditional media platforms and staying attuned to the latest trends and emerging media platforms in order to prepare ourselves prior to entering the marketplace | 5.08 | Continue to schedule aggressively and creatively; continue to schedule quality non-conference football and basketball games | 5.14 | Explore barter relationships, particularly in the hotel, airline, rental car, and office supplies categories |
| 5.03 | Visit regularly with prominent digital and technology companies in order to understand their future content and distribution strategies as it relates to live and pre-packaged sports content | 5.09 | Utilize and leverage the exclusive windows of Thursday-Friday football games | 5.15 | Explore affiliate deals with ad exchange networks to help sell unsold digital inventory |
| 5.04 | Monitor the media marketplace and embrace new, emerging technologies that will differentiate the Conference from its peers and help it reach new fans | 5.10 | Explore production companies and software that may provide less expensive ways to produce games independently | 5.16 | Sell against the Conference's social media channels by creating branded content that can be posted to Facebook, Instagram, etc. |
| 5.05 | Explore developing multiple rights packages when we next enter the marketplace | 5.11 | Develop corporate partnerships by working with the Conference's marketing representatives to create compelling and financially reasonable sponsorship packages around tent-pole events in the Conference's sports calendar including, but not limited to, our major conference championships | 5.17 | Explore distribution partners for the dissemination of the American Digital Network content and other multi-media assets |
| 5.06 | Explore the best way to market our significant amount of ancillary highlights and other Conference product | 5.12 | Coordinate the Commissioner's schedule in order to enable him to attend meetings with potential sponsors when he is traveling around the country | 5.18 | Develop hospitality experiences at our football, men's and women's basketball and Olympic sports championships that can be utilized for entertainment and enhanced food, beverage and other offerings |
| | | | | 5.19 | Create Championship ticket packages that have VIP experiences and utilize social commerce companies such as SocialCativ or Groupon to sell tickets |
| | | | | 5.20 | Establish a Recent Alumni Program whereby graduates from Conference schools, who are no more than three years out of college or graduate school, can buy discounted tickets to Championship events |





THERE IS NO
VICTORY
WITHOUT A
BATTLE





#AMERICANPOWER

**Chick-fil-A
PEACH
BOWL**

AMERICAN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE

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TheAmerican.org

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