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LEAD1 Association Announces Diversity Fellowship Program to Increase Diversity in FBS Leadership

Association's announcement stems from its January 2021 released white paper on actionable recommendations to increase senior-diverse leadership in FBS college sports.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The LEAD1 Association (“LEAD1”), which represents the athletic directors of the 130-member schools of the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS), announced today the creation of the “LEAD1 Diversity Fellowship Program.” This new program will result in a year-long opportunity for each class of people of color and female administrators to better prepare to assume the athletics director position. The announcement stems from LEAD1’s previously released white paper on actionable recommendations to increase diversity in FBS college sports administration. It included a recommendation to create this type of highly selective diversity program for senior-level administrators.

The LEAD1 Diversity Fellowship Program will pair each member of the class with a mentor from among LEAD1 athletic directors. Those ADs will assist the fellows in assessing their readiness to become athletics directors, while also serving as valuable references in the future.

LEAD1 has created an oversight Committee that will select each class, beginning this Summer, and match athletics director mentors with particular fellows. The Committee is comprised of five experienced and successful athletics administrators. They include Sean Frazier, Director of Athletics at Northern Illinois University, China Jude, Vice President of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion for the Denver Broncos, (both of whom co-chaired LEAD1’s Diversity Working Group that released the white paper), Doug Knuth, Director of Athletics at the University of Nevada, Debbie Yow, athletics director emerita for NC State and Dan Guerrero, former athletics director at UCLA , who now serves as president of the U.S. International University Sports Federation.

The committee will select 12 fellows for the inaugural class. That class will be announced at the end of this year’s annual LEAD1 Institute, which will be held virtually. Selected fellows benefit in multiple ways: they will have the opportunity to attend part of LEAD1’s future in-person events, be paired with an outstanding mentor, and also participate in virtual monthly discussions with college sports leaders. Every year, a new class of fellows will be selected following the annual Summer Institute.

“We are thrilled to announce the creation of the LEAD1 Diversity Fellowship Program,” said LEAD1 President and CEO, Tom McMillen. “Since we released our white paper, we have worked tirelessly to try to implement the paper’s recommendations. The creation of this program demonstrates our commitment to helping make college sports more equitable for all.”

For more information regarding the program, please contact, Hannah Dewey, (hannah@lead1a.com).

About the LEAD1 Association: LEAD1 represents the athletics directors of the 130 member universities of the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS). Key to the LEAD1 mission are influencing how the rules of college sports are enacted and implemented, advocating for the future of college athletics, and providing various services to our member schools. For more information, please visit www.LEAD1Association.com.