



The Behind-the-Scenes Dream Team: Strengthening the Partnership Between Compliance Administrators and Sports Information/Athletics Communications

From the Desk of Erica Baldaray

Assistant Director of Athletics & Senior Woman Leader, Soka University of America

Within the college athletics ecosystem, one vital partnership often flies under the radar: the collaboration between Athletics Compliance Administrators and Athletics Communications/Sports Information. While their day-to-day tasks may differ, their shared goal is the same: to ensure accuracy, integrity, and excellence in everything that represents their athletic programs. The teamwork between Athletics Compliance Administrators and SIDs quietly works to help keep departments running with precision, reliability, and veracity; and while this dynamic duo might not always be the flashiest team on campus, together, they can make everything shine a little brighter.

During my 18 years serving the Soka University Athletics community, I had the unique opportunity to wear both hats as the SID and Compliance Administrator for 12 of them. That experience gave me a deep appreciation for how interconnected these roles truly are. Today, I'm fortunate to collaborate with Soka's current SID, Angel Zazueta, who has been nothing short of a gift to the department.

Angel and I meet regularly, not only to align key deadlines and eligibility reviews, but also to anticipate needs and streamline processes. One of our favorite joint projects has been creating compliance-focused sections on our athletics website. This initiative has supported both of our roles by simplifying procedures for gathering vital information we both need to do our jobs effectively and by improving overall transparency, efficiency, and accessibility.

Collaboration between Athletics Compliance and Communications isn't just about checking boxes; it's about creating accuracy, consistency, and security across the department. Among many aspects, a strong partnership can make all the difference when it comes to:

- Postseason Roster Submissions: Confirming eligibility and ensuring names, statistics, class years, and any other required fields match official compliance records before submission.
- 20% Rule Monitoring: Communicating regularly about participation limits so reported statistics align with compliance documentation.
- Awards and Nominations: Working together to confirm eligibility and share supporting materials that showcase student-athletes accurately and compellingly.

- Eligibility Clearance for Competition: Perhaps one of the most critical yet overlooked areas, providing the SID with a cleared-to-compete roster ensures the accuracy of game-day lineups, prevents accidental inclusion of ineligible athletes, and adds an extra layer of security and accountability.

Now that I have had the opportunity to relinquish the Sports Information Director hat to Angel for the last year-and-a-half, we have adopted some best practices for developing a strong compliance and athletics communications partnership that have helped our day-to-day operations at Soka University:

1. Meet Regularly: Schedule recurring check-ins to stay ahead of eligibility cycles, postseason timelines, and award submissions.
2. Create Shared Systems: Use shared drives, files, or calendars to track deadlines, rosters, and clearance updates.
3. Educate and Cross-Train: Help each other understand core processes such as how eligibility is verified, how stats are entered, and how data is shared. Understanding these procedures can help streamline both roles' efficiency.
4. Communicate Proactively: A quick "heads-up" about a roster change or a clearance update can prevent major headaches later.
5. Acknowledge Each Other's Wins: Compliance keeps athletes eligible and SIDs tell the student-athletes' stories. Together, they ensure those stories can be told authentically and proudly...so celebrate the teams behind both.

At the end of the day, the partnership between Compliance and Sports Information is all about trust, teamwork, and shared accountability. When these two areas operate in harmony, the result is a department that's efficient, accurate, and aligned.

So, here's my challenge to you: grab a couple coffees, pull up a chair, and schedule that check-in with your SID or Compliance counterpart. Because when Compliance and Communications work together, eligibility stays clean, rosters remain right, and your season runs smoother than a fresh gym floor on game day.