NOVEMBER 2026

SPORT LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

WILLIAMS STADIUM
NOVEMBER 2-3, 2026

Department of Hospitality & Sport Management
Liberty University
Lynchburg, Virginia

NOVEMBER 2026

02

SCHEDULE

Monday, November 2, 2026
Williams Stadium - Club Level - 3rd Floor

8:45 - 9:10 a.m. – Check-In
9:15 - 10:00 a.m. – Panel 1: Breaking In and Moving Up: Young Professionals in Sports
10:15 - 11:00 a.m. – Panel 2: Inside the Program: A Look at Collegiate Softball Operations
11:15 - 12:00 p.m. – Panel 3: Know Your Fans: A Conversation on Turning Fan Intelligence into Better Decisions
12:00 - 12:50 p.m. – Lunch & Keynote: Nick Garner
1:00 - 1:50 p.m. – International Sport Events – Q&A Session
2:00 - 2:45 p.m. – Panel 4: Sport Management Speed Networking
3:00 - 3:45 p.m. – Panel 5: From Vision to Venue: Facilities That Strengthen Communities and Local Economies
3:45 - 4:00 p.m. – Closing Remarks

Tuesday, November 3, 2026
Williams Stadium - Club Level - 3rd Floor

8:45 - 9:10 a.m. – Check-In
9:15 - 10:00 a.m. – Panel 6: A New Playing Field: The Impact of NIL and Revenue Sharing on G6 Athletics
10:15 - 11:00 a.m. – Panel 7: From Vision to Kickoff: Building a Sports Franchise from the Ground Up
11:15 - 12:00 p.m. – Panel 8: Leading with Purpose: Women in Sport Outreach
12:00 - 12:50 p.m. – Lunch
1:00 - 1:50 p.m. – Research Poster Presentations
2:00 - 2:50 p.m. – Panel 9: Leading Beyond the Sidelines: The Role of the Athletic Director
3:00 - 3:45 p.m. – Panel 10: More Than a Logo: The Business of Building (and Rebuilding) a Team Brand
4:00 - 4:30 p.m. – Wrap-Up

NOVEMBER 2026

03

PANEL 1: BREAKING IN AND MOVING UP: YOUNG PORFESSIONALS IN SPORTS

MODERATOR: PROF. CHRIS AMOS



Christian Light
Premium Hospitality Coordinator – Seminoles Boosters, Inc

Christian Light graduated from Liberty University in May 2025 with a B.S. in Sport Management. While at Liberty, he gained experience in game operations, equipment management, and corporate partnerships. In May 2025, he joined the Seminole Boosters as a Premium Hospitality Coordinator at Florida State University. In his role, he oversees premium suite operations at Doak S. Campbell Stadium, working to provide exceptional experiences for donors and guests on gamedays. His responsibilities include gameday operations, staff recruitment and management, and coordinating premium experiences across Florida State Athletics.



Faith Bouch
Director of Operations – Liberty Athletics

Faith Bouch assumed her role as Director of Operations in Aug. 2026. In her current role, she manages the team logistics for Liberty field hockey and men's tennis. This includes organizing travel, lodging and food as well as ordering team apparel and equipment and managing team budgets. Prior to her current role, she interned with the Liberty field hockey team during the 2025-26 school year.



Zach McLearen
Athletic Director – Madison County High School

Zachary McLearen serves as the Athletic Director for Madison County Public Schools in Virginia, where he oversees athletic and extracurricular programs while supporting coaches and student-athletes. Previously, he served as Assistant Athletic Director for the City of Burlington, North Carolina, and Intramural Sports Coordinator at Liberty University. He also has experience in sport marketing and communications, including serving as Director of Social Media for A Sea of Red.

04

PANEL 2: INSIDE THE PROGRAM: A LOOK AT COLLEGIATE SOFTBALL OPERATIONS

MODERATOR: DR. DANA HOWARD



Keely McMillon
Director of Operations – University of Texas Softball

Keely McMillon is entering her seventh season as the Director of Operations for Texas Softball ahead of the 2027 season.

The Vermontville, Michigan, native ventured to the Forty Acres after serving as the Director of Softball Operations at the University of Iowa from 2017-2020.

Prior to that McMillon spent four years (2013-16) as the Director of Operations for Olympic Sports at Liberty University, working with softball, volleyball, women's tennis and swimming & diving. Her responsibilities included arranging all travel for her four sports, including hotels, buses and flights. She also assisted her programs with the scheduling of official visits, including travel arrangements, host money requisitions, itinerary preparation and submission of official visit information. McMillon coached softball in 2012 at Heritage High School in Lynchburg, Va.

A standout catcher at Liberty from 2008-11, McMillon was a four-year starter and helped power the Flames to the 2011 Big South Conference title. As a senior, she was selected to the All-Big South Conference First Team and was a second team VaSID All-State choice. For her efforts in the 2009 Big South Conference Championship, McMillon was tabbed to the all-tournament squad.

McMillon graduated from Liberty with both a bachelor's (2011) and master's degree (2013) in sport management.

05

PANEL 3: KNOW YOUR FANS: A CONVERSATION ON TURNING FAN INTELLIGENCE INTO BETTER DECISIONS

MODERATOR: DR. LANCE HATFIELD



Nick Garner
Executive Vice President – Two Circles

Nick Garner is Executive Vice President at Two Circles, where he leads Two Circles College, the global sports marketing agency's collegiate business. He oversees the business's overall strategy, growth, and client partnerships, helping universities professionalize and modernize their commercial operations to drive long-term audience and revenue growth.

A trusted advisor in the transformation of college athletics, Nick brings deep expertise in commercial strategy, revenue growth, client development, and organizational management.

Nick holds an M.Ed. in Sport Management from Wichita State University and a B.S. from Kansas State University.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

MONDAY, OCTOBER 27



Nick Garner
Executive Vice President – Two Circles

Nick Garner is Executive Vice President at Two Circles, where he leads Two Circles College, the global sports marketing agency's collegiate business. He oversees the business's overall strategy, growth, and client partnerships, helping universities professionalize and modernize their commercial operations to drive long-term audience and revenue growth.

With more than 20 years of experience driving commercial value across college sports, including multimedia rights, commercial strategy, and NIL, Nick has partnered with hundreds of universities, administrators, athletes, and brands nationwide. He is known for his athlete-first approach, deep industry relationships, and expertise in building data-driven, revenue-focused NIL programs, and was recently named one of the 100 Most Influential People in the NIL Space for 2026 by Silver Waves Media.

A trusted advisor in the transformation of college athletics, Nick brings deep expertise in commercial strategy, revenue growth, client development, and organizational management.

Nick holds an M.Ed. in Sport Management from Wichita State University and a B.S. from Kansas State University.

NOVEMBER 2026

07

INTERNATIONAL SPORT EVENTS – Q&A SESSION



Aiyana Welsh
Trivandi, Associate Director – Planning and Live Operations

With over 15 years of international event experience, Aiyana has worked across the Olympic and Paralympic Games, FIFA World Cup, Super Bowls and World Championships, with a focus on venue operations, project management and transport. She is currently Associate Director, Operations & Delivery at Trivandi, based in Los Angeles. Previously, Aiyana served as Senior Operations Manager at the International Paralympic Committee and held operational roles with the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee, Special Olympics World Games and TrackTown USA. Her career has spanned the United States, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

NOVEMBER 2026

08

PANEL 4: SPORT MANAGEMENT SPEED NETWORKING

FACILITATOR: DR. LAURA HATFIELD

Session: Speed Networking

Duration: 45 minutes

- **Networking Rounds: 7 mins**

Participants: Board Members + Attendees

Goals: Maximize personal interaction, quick introductions, and meaningful follow-up connections.

Conversation Starters...

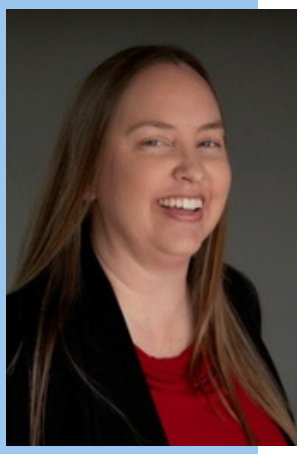
1. What inspired your career path in this industry?
2. What skills do you believe students should develop early?
3. Describe a leadership challenge you've overcome.
4. What emerging trends are changing your organization?
5. How can students best prepare for networking opportunities?

NOVEMBER 2026

09

PANEL 5: FROM VISION TO VENUE: FACILITIES THAT STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL ECONOMIES

MODERATOR: DR. LANCE HATFIELD



Halle Paauw

Owner and General Manager - Hill City Sports Center

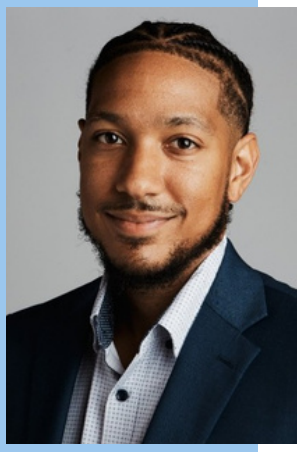
Halle Paauw oversees private investment and development initiatives through NAV Real Estate and NAV Sports. With nearly two decades of experience in athletics, education, and sports leadership, she brings direct knowledge of community facility demand and program development. Her professional background includes leadership roles in cross country and track and field programs. Halle owns and currently serves as the General Manager of Hill City Sports Center (HCSC), a multi-sport facility featuring basketball, volleyball, pickleball, and aquatics spaces. HCSC is the first privately owned facility of its kind in Lynchburg, VA, catering to both the community and elite athletes seeking high-quality training spaces. Halle earned her Master's degree in Sport Management from Liberty University.



Andy Ballard

Chief Operating Officer - Eastern Sports Management

Andy Ballard is a visionary executive with over 25 years of proven expertise in strategic business transformation and sports facility management. As Chief Operating Officer of Eastern Sports Management, he leads comprehensive operational oversight of over $1 billion in assets and more than $30 million in revenue, orchestrating business rehabilitation for multiple organizations and consistently delivering annual EBITDA improvements and revenue growth. His strategic leadership encompasses management of complex, multi-state portfolios, including 13 strategic projects with cumulative economic impact exceeding $250M, while guiding clients in securing over $150M in capital for strategic recreation and sports infrastructure projects. Notable projects include the Memphis Sports and Events Center, Virginia Beach Sports Center, Mylan Park, United Sports Training Center, and Virginia Beach Field House. Andy earned his undergraduate degree in Sport Management at Liberty University, and his MBA at Radford University.



Nick Ferguson

Board Chair and Project Manager - Off Season

Nicholas Ferguson works at the intersection of real estate, community development, and youth sports. Through FergWay Solutions, LLC, his work includes property evaluation, development planning, and project coordination, with a focus on turning community needs into feasible projects. As Board Chair and Project Manager for Off Season, a Virginia nonprofit, Ferguson is helping advance a proposed sports campus in Gretna that brings together athletics, education, training, nutrition, and character development. The initiative reflects his commitment to creating places that expand opportunities for young people and families. His youth basketball coaching experience with CVA Team Loaded, Heritage High School, and Virginia Episcopal School informs his understanding of the facilities and support athletes need. Ferguson brings a community-centered perspective to sport facility development, connecting real estate planning, collaborative partnerships, and youth development to help shape lasting community assets.

NOVEMBER 2026

10

UNCOMMON SPORTS GROUP REGIONAL GATHERING

Monday, November 2, 2026

6:00 P.M.

Williams Stadium | Club Level

Fellowship, Guest Speaker, and Meal

Registration is required and can be completed through the QR Code below, but attendance is completely free!

Uncommon Sports Group (USG) brings together Christians working in college and professional sports to grow in their faith and build Christ-centered relationships.

USG's Regional Gatherings connect sports professionals who live and work in the same cities. These in-person events foster meaningful fellowship through a shared meal, thoughtful discussion, worship through music, and a message from a guest speaker.

NOVEMBER 2026

11

PANEL 6: A NEW PLAYING FIELD: THE IMPACT OF NIL AND REVENUE SHARING ON G6 ATHLETICS

FACILITATOR: DR. LANCE HATFIELD



Dr. Tim Wilson, Moderator
Clinical Assistant Professor – Middle Tennessee State University

Wilson serves as a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Sport and Hospitality Management at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. He has 25+ years of Higher Education experience as a Sport Management/Business Professor at MTSU, Bethel University (TN), Tusculum University (TN), and Martin Methodist College (now the University of Tennessee Southern). His leadership positions throughout his tenure have included serving as a Department Chair, Division Chair, and Program Coordinator. In addition to his teaching experience, Wilson has 18 years of Intercollegiate Athletics experience working with national office staff, university presidents, conference commissioners, athletic directors, coaches, and student-athletes within the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) and National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division II as a Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR). Currently, he serves on the Blue Raider Athletic Association (BRAA) Board of Directors.



Darryl Keckler
Associate AD - Development – Middle Tennessee Athletics

Keckler serves as the Associate Athletic Director/Development for Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) Athletics. He joined MTSU after a distinguished career in athletic administration and coaching, including 14 years at Drew University as Associate Director of Athletics, where he launched donor clubs, fundraising events and new sport programs. Most recently as the Head Men's Basketball Coach at Moravian University, he led program fundraising, donor communications and community engagement for Greyhound Basketball. Keckler is a graduate of Trevecca Nazarene (B.S.), where he played basketball for four years, and McDaniel College, where he received his M.S.



Mike Hagen
VP of Development for Athletics Engagement – Liberty Athletics

Mike Hagen serves as the Vice President of Development for Athletics Engagement at Liberty University. Hagen provides leadership to the Flames Club staff, as well as the University Development officers. In his current role, he has helped the Flames Club achieve record success and led initiatives to launch the Letterwinners Association for former student-athletes and the department's first Giving Day in fall 2019. Hagen returned to Liberty in 2017 after five years with the ASUN Conference, where he served as Associate Commissioner for Institutional Services. He also served as the Executive Director of the Coastal Collegiate Sports Association (CCSA). He holds a bachelor's degree in sport management and an MBA from Liberty University, where he was a four-year member and senior captain of the track & field program.

NOVEMBER 2026

12

PANEL 7: FROM VISION TO KICKOFF: BUILDING A SPORTS FRANCHISE FROM THE GROUND UP

MODERATOR: PROF. CHRIS AMOS



Anthony Catalano
Co-Founder – Hill City FC

Anthony Catalano is a Lynchburg native, former NCAA Division I soccer player at Elon University, and former professional soccer player with experience in the United States and England. He founded Apotheos FC in Atlanta and later partnered with Michael Hitchcock to establish Hill City FC in his hometown. His work focuses on growing the game of soccer and creating opportunities for athletes and communities.



William Hitchcock
Business Operations Manager – Hill City FC

William Hitchcock serves as Business Operations Manager for Hill City FC and brings experience in sport marketing, event operations, and soccer development. A former NCAA Division I soccer player and team captain at Virginia Commonwealth University, he earned both a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a master's degree in Sport Leadership from VCU. His professional experience includes positions with VCU Athletics, Annapolis Blues FC, Virtual Veep, and youth soccer organizations.

NOVEMBER 2026

13

PANEL 8: LEADING WITH PURPOSE: WOMEN IN SPORT OUTREACH

MODERATOR: DR. DANA HOWARD



Chyncia Smith
Fellowship of Christian Athletes

Chyncia Smith is a natural motivator driven by excellence, relationship building and genuine care for those around her. After playing field hockey at Bucknell University, she earned her CPA license, worked in accounting in the Philadelphia area and taught as an adjunct business professor at the University of Valley Forge. Chyncia enjoys outdoor activities, getting to know people in those spaces and has been a leader in Outdoor Afro for eight years, an organization built on celebrating and inspiring Black connections and leadership in nature. She has coached high school softball and field hockey over the last 15 years and has her Level 2 certification with USA Field Hockey. Chyncia has volunteered with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) since 2012 coaching at their multi-sport camps and clinics and is in her fourth year as the FCA Huddle Coach at Hunterdon Central Regional High School. In addition to coaching sports, Chyncia finds it a joy and privilege to coach hearts through the platform of sport. She especially appreciates experiences when her passion for Jesus Christ is brought face to face with her athletic enjoyment. She serves as a chaplain for Gotham FC and Brooklyn FC, two professional women's soccer teams in the NJ/NY area. Gotham FC competes in the NWSL while Brooklyn FC competes in the Gainbridge Super League (formerly known as the USL Super League). As a chaplain for these teams, Chyncia leads match-day chapels, facilities team Bible studies, and seeks to care for all team personnel.



Aleah Dillard
Fellowship of Christian Athletes

Aleah Dillard is originally from Waco, Texas. She attended the University of Texas at El Paso for 6 years where she majored in Physical Education with an Education Minor and was a member of the Women's Soccer Team. During her time in college, she got involved with Fellowship of Christian Athletes. As a sophomore, she gave her life to Jesus, a decision that transformed the trajectory of her life and has shaped her heart for the work she now gets to do with FCA.

Today, Aleah has been on staff with FCA for the last nine years, serving the first six years in Abilene, Texas, and the last three years here in Lynchburg, specifically at the University of Lynchburg and Randolph College. She invests in female college athletes and coaches by discipling, mentoring, and walking alongside them in their faith. She is married to her husband, Kristian, and they have a five year old daughter, Charlie.

NOVEMBER 2026

14

POSTER SESSION

MODERATOR: DR. CLARK ZEALAND

Poster Presentations by Liberty University Students (Works in Progress)

- **Money in the Locker Room: How NIL Pay Gaps Impact Team Culture in Power 4 College Football Teams**
  - Ryan Barnes, Jack East, Ethan Riley, Austin Scearce

- **The Relationship Between Exercise Frequency and Perceived Stress Among College Students in Lynchburg, Virginia**
  - Josiah Faber, Lemley Himaya, Abrielle Janaros, Chloe Morris

- **Is It Worth It? An Examination of UFC Fighters' Perceptions and Awareness of Regulations Surrounding Extreme Weight Cutting**
  - Evan Fleming, Jahvon Lewis

- **Fan Engagement and Attendance: A Study of Smaller NCAA Division 1 Sports at Liberty University**
  - Brandann Gilbert, Andrew Flauter, Joshua Hanes, Mitchell Lange

- **Investing in the Dream: A Qualitative Exploration of Travel Baseball Costs and Perceived Scholarship Payoff**
  - Jenna Jolly, Josh Campos, Garet Thompson, Matthew Knowles

- **A Study on Guest Perception and Reception of Technology in Luxury Hotels**
  - Carys Jones, Maggie Armstrong, Katie Cardozo, Samantha Pack

NOVEMBER 2026

15

POSTER SESSION

MODERATOR: DR. CLARK ZEALAND

Poster Presentations by Liberty University Students (Works in Progress)

- **Gen Z Chicago Bears Fan Perceptions: An Exploration of Community Outreach and Its Role in Fan Loyalty**
  - Ella McBride, Kyria DeGrow, Anyssa Peters

- **Beyond the Portal: Examining the Determinants of Transfer Decisions Among Power 4 Football Players**
  - Lucas McCraney, Nathaniel Moody, Wes Norton, Hunter Batt

- **Welcoming the World: An Analysis of Residents' Receptiveness to Hosting the World Cup**
  - Joseph Pickell, Hannah Campagna, Hunter Etienne, Christian Sehlke

- **Can AI Create More Effective Coaching Plans in D-I College Football?**
  - Seth Sharp, Elijah Roach, Chandler Thomas, Jamari Person

- **An Examination of the Factors that Prevented Statistically Dominant College Quarterbacks from Replicating their Success in the NFL**
  - Seth Vang, Andrew Biro, Luke Jezek, Khalid White

NOVEMBER 2026

16

PANEL 9: LEADING BEYOND THE SIDELINES: THE ROLE OF THE ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

MODERATOR: DR. DANA HOWARD



Jeremy Sink

Athletic Director – Jefferson Forest High School

Jeremy Sink serves as the Athletic & Activities Director at Jefferson Forest High School since 2022. Prior to becoming the AD at JFHS, Coach Sink taught Health & PE the majority of his 19 years in the classroom, but also taught Economics & Personal Finance, Business Management, and Computer Information Systems. Sink received his Bachelor's Degree in Health & Movement Science from Lynchburg College in 2003 and began a coaching career that spanned 20 years and 53 total seasons. The majority of those came in baseball at the high school level, as well as a stint at Lynchburg College as an assistant. Also during that stretch, Sink led Botetourt American Legion baseball for five summers, while also leading the Roanoke Rails of the Carolina Virginia Collegiate League, a summer collegiate wood bat league that has since blended into the Southern Baseball League. Coach Sink also coached high school football for 10 years and high school boys and girls basketball for 12 years. He emphasizes the importance of relationships, teamwork, and surrounding yourself with people who share a common vision.



Elijah Kester

Assistant Athletic Director – New Covenant Schools

Originally from Jamestown, New York, Elijah Kester, guided by his faith, moved to Virginia to pursue a career in athletics, earning both his bachelor's and master's degrees in Sport Management and Administration from Liberty University. His experience includes serving as a graduate student assistant at Liberty, consulting on NIL fundraising with NOCAP Sports, and working in personal finance at Lynchburg Wealth Management. Most recently, he serves as the Assistant Athletic Director at New Covenant Schools, where he oversees gameday operations, social media, and athletic marketing.



Phillip Doss

Assistant Athletic Director – Liberty Christian Academy

Phillip is a Lynchburg native who attended Liberty Christian Academy (LCA) for 12 years. He went on to attend Liberty University, where he played football for four years while also working in the Athletics Department within Student-Athlete Development and gaining experience in sports radio with 93.3 FM. In addition to balancing his responsibilities as a full-time student-athlete, Phillip worked at a coffee shop throughout college, which he describes as a very rewarding experience. Following his graduation in Spring 2025, Phillip worked in Liberty University's Events Office before accepting his current position as Assistant Athletic Director at Liberty Christian Academy. Outside of athletics, Phillip is also a coffee enthusiast!

NOVEMBER 2026

17

PANEL 10: MORE THAN A LOGO: THE BUSINESS OF BUILDING (AND REBUILDING) A TEAM BRAND

MODERATOR: DR. LANCE HATFIELD



Allen Lawrence
General Manager - Salem RidgeYaks

Allen Lawrence has spent his career in professional baseball and has a unique connection to the Salem community. His baseball journey began working gamedays for the Salem Avalanche while he was in high school and college. After graduating from Elon University with a degree in Business, Allen joined the organization as an intern. Over the years, he has worked his way through virtually every aspect of the operation, serving as Food & Beverage Director, Director of Stadium Operations, and Assistant General Manager. He became Interim General Manager prior to the 2019 season and was named General Manager following the 2019 season. Today, Allen leads the Salem RidgeYaks and brings decades of experience in baseball operations, leadership, and community engagement. In 2026, he was inducted into the Roanoke-Salem Baseball Hall of Fame, recognizing his longtime contributions to baseball in the Roanoke Valley and Salem community.



Brian Krow
Co-Owner - Charlottesville Blues FC

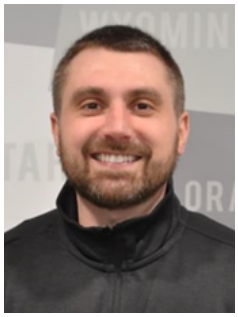
Brian Krow is an EMMY®-nominated producer, brand strategist, and entrepreneur who builds brands, audiences, and partnerships through storytelling. As co-owner of Charlottesville Blues FC, he helps shape the club's brand, sponsorships, and fan experience, connecting the game with the community and driving growth on and off the pitch. He is also co-founder of The Fox Den Sports Bar and Soccer Fields, a distinctive model in American soccer where a club invests in its own supporters group and community hospitality hub, bringing fans, players, and local businesses together year-round. His work on ABC's Extreme Makeover: Home Edition blended storytelling with national brand partnerships, including a soccer-themed episode featuring MLS and David Beckham. As founder of KROW., he combines brand strategy and storytelling with immersive experiences to help organizations engage audiences in new ways. From network television to sports ownership, Krow brings a practical perspective on leadership: find the story, build relationships, and create something people believe in.

18

SPORT MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD



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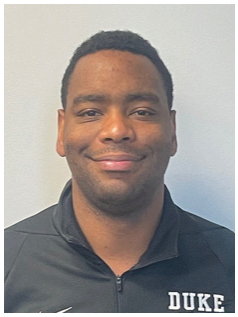
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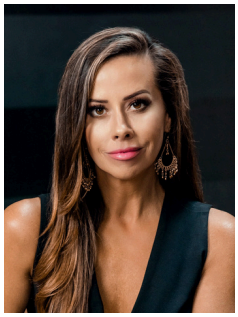
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Department of Hospitality & Sport Management

Special thanks to the faculty and graduate assistants in the Department of Hospitality & Sport Management. The Sport Leadership Summit is made possible through the collective dedication, expertise, and teamwork of many. Your collaborative efforts create an engaging and memorable experience for all participants.

University Events

Special thanks to the University Events staff. Their partnership, expertise, and proactive support are vital to the success of the Sport Leadership Summit, helping to create an exceptional experience in a remarkable venue.

Hospitality Management Students

EMGT 420 Conference & Meeting Management
SETM 497 Business Summits

Special thanks to the hospitality management students for your work on the Sport Leadership Summit. Your creative ideas, logistics management, and guest service are greatly appreciated.