

Moran enjoys his role in helping both USD and its athletes

By David Lias

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Mike Moran has just completed his third year as the University of South Dakota's NCAA compliance officer. He's been a part of the university community since Dec. 15, 2008.

"I work in the office of the Registrar, and I certify all academic eligibility for all students athletes – not the freshmen that come in, but all of the transfers that come in," he said. "And going forward, once they are at USD for at least one semester, I have to follow the rules on what they do and following the percentages toward degree."

On occasion, Mike may help with student advising, "but that's few and far between," he said. "I am really the liaison between all of the academic advisors who speak to the student athletes and the athletic department."

Mike is part a system that has helped student involved in sports at USD and other institutions in South Dakota achieve success both in the classroom and in athletic competition.

A report issued by the South Dakota Board of Regents last fall says the academic performance of athletes matches that of

Spotlight



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA

non-athletes at the state's public universities.

The board has studied the academic performance of athletes since 2002. The board's director of institutional research, Daniel Palmer, says the report dispels a common misconception that athletes perform worse than other students academically.

Palmer says in some cases, athletes perform better academically than other students.

The most recent study found athletes had an average grade point of 2.75, well above the average 2.45 for non-athletes.

"There are a lot of things that the athletic department and the university have in place in order to help student athletes. There's required study halls and study tables – I don't get involved in that kind of

stuff, but since I used to be a coach at the D-2 and D-1 level, I know that such things like that exist and that's pretty commonplace for all Division 1," Mike said.

When USD teams on area road trips, it may not be unusual for them to have mandatory study time. Coaches may even ask athletes to crack open their books and study while traveling by bus to their next competition.

"The coaches have some freedom in that regard, from what I know, and there are some rules in the NCAA book about how many hours should be devoted to academics – there are a lot of things that can be done so that student athletes don't lose focus," Mike said.

Mike's first role at USD was as an admission's

counselor in the university's admissions office. "I worked there until June of 2010, and then I got this job," he said.

Mike is a native of Brown Deer, WI, and knows firsthand some of the challenges student athletes must face.

"I was a swimmer in college for four years, and when I got out of school, I had a business degree and I didn't know what to do," he said. "I got a 'real' job – I actually sold radio advertising for a year, but I didn't like it. I got involved in coaching quite a bit, and my first coaching job began on Sept. 11, 2001 – at the club level. I was an assistant coach for a big club, and I worked my up and was eventually given the head swimming coach job at a high school."

Mike said he realized he a greater passion for coaching than for selling advertising. He applied for coaching jobs "all over the country" and was accepted at the University of North Dakota, where he served as a graduate assistant for two years as a swim coach while studying there.

For about 18 months, he was employed as a full time assistant swimming coach at UND before moving to USD.

"My background in



MIKE MORAN

sports, to do this job here, came from that experience at UND," Mike said. "At the time, USD was going through the D-1 transition, and we were going through the same thing up there (at UND) so there was a lot of new legislation, in NCAA words, on what you can and cannot do."

"When I was up there (at UND), I was in charge of recruiting, so I was really in charge of making sure we passed all of the rules for recruiting," he said. "At the same time, I also knew about the rules for academic eligibility and compliance ... and that background really set me up well for the job I have now."

Having the ability to help people, Mike said, is the favorite part of his work

at USD.

"I talk to the advisors and the academic staff every day," he said. "Trying to help them, and making sure they have what they need just makes me feel good; plus I really enjoy being involved with athletics."

During his time in Vermillion, Mike has served as head coach of the Vermillion Area Swim Team (VAST) and has helped numerous local young people find success while competing in swimming.

"I get to coach at night, but my day job is pretty cool, too," Mike said. "The aspect of helping people and helping to make sure the university is doing the right thing is really the best part of it all."



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RIBBON-CUTTING CELEBRATION



A ribbon cutting was recently held at Builders Choice, Inc. Builders Choice is located at 1212 North Norbeck Street in Vermillion.

The Vermillion Builders Choice plant produces modular units to serve a variety of commercial applications, from worksite housing, hotels and apartments, to office and administration facilities. Builders Choice, Inc. is based out of Anchorage, Alaska.

Local Manager is Greg Stirn and Vermillion Builders Choice, Inc. can be found at 1212 North Norbeck St., Vermillion. Office telephone number is 866-522-3214.