

VIEWPOINTS

USD has yet to learn how to act 'Division I'

There are certain assumptions that go along with the term "Division I."

Colleges and universities with athletic departments that are competing at the D-I level have their eye on achieving excellence. It is bigger. It is hopefully better.

Division I is the highest level of intercollegiate athletics sanctioned by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in the United States. D-I schools include the major collegiate athletic powers, with larger budgets, more elaborate facilities, and more athletic scholarships than Divisions II and III as well as many smaller schools committed to the highest level of intercollegiate competition.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Division_I_%28NCAA%29)

USD, naturally, falls in that "many smaller schools" category. And, the school is still fairly new when it comes to running in this premiere "league" of university athletics.

In the fall of 2012, South Dakota became a full Division I member, completing a process begun in late 2006.

That decision resulted in significant costs to the university and its athletic department. It has also led to greater revenues, which are expected to increase as the school begins to reap the full benefits of belonging to the NCAA's top tier of colleges and

BETWEEN THE LINES



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administrators helped tarnish that prestige this week, during a time when USD athletics is shining very brightly.

In back-to-back news cycles, the sports departments of local media have had mostly glowing things to report about South Dakota athletics.

The groundbreaking of a new \$66 million basketball arena and Science, Health and Research Laboratory to be constructed near USD's DakotaDome will be held this May.

It's hard to beat such good news. However, that announcement was overshadowed by the South Dakota women's basketball team, who claimed the Summit Tourney crown by defeating Denver 82-71 in Tuesday in Sioux Falls. Next stop for the team: the NCAA Tournament.

universities.

We can all agree that USD's move from Division II to Division I brought greater challenges. It's also brought added prestige to the university.

We fear university

What could possibly put a damper on such an achievement?

How about a rather vague announcement, via press release, made about an hour before the women's game began Tuesday, that "The University of South Dakota will conduct a national search for its head men's basketball coaching position. The process will begin immediately."

Evidently, the neck of Joey James, USD's interim head men's basketball coach, was on the chopping block as the Coyotes began Summit Tourney play. The team's 71-55 loss to Denver Sunday evidently was enough to cause university administrators to swing the axe.

That is, at least, how it appears. It's difficult to know exactly what has happened. James himself indicated Monday night, in one of the briefest forms of expression available – a tweet on Twitter – that he likely lost his job.

There's really no way to know for sure. We understand that this falls into the realm of "personnel matters" – where discussions and decisions are made in private, and sometimes just tidbits of information from those private meetings are made public.

All we know for certain is that USD is about to begin a search for a new head men's coach. What that means, exactly, is open to interpretation. The university's

release took great care to not mention James, nor discuss what his current status may be.

The talk about the men's coaching position has run the gamut since the Coyotes' loss Sunday, and such tongue-wagging is a natural part of the sporting world. There would be no ESPN or hours of pre-game talk before NFL broadcasts if there was not a constant, 24-7 chatter among fans about all things one may consider when talking about athletics.

By late Monday, however, it appeared that James was out of a job. "Coyotes target national search for coaching job, interim coach James let go," read the headline over a story written earlier this week by Argus Leader sportswriter Mick Garry.

The unclear status of James, however, has led our sister paper, the Yankton Press & Dakotan, to state that USD has "apparently" parted ways with James.

James has a long association with USD, having played on its men's team himself in the late 1990s. He had been a coach with the program for a dozen years when long-time head coach Dave Boots suddenly, to everyone's surprise, retired immediately last September.

James was thrust into a difficult situation just as suddenly as Boots' mysterious departure. The Coyotes under James, in his interim role,

went 12-18 this season before losing to Denver Sunday. The team finished with six conference wins, the most in USD's three years in the league.

So, is James out of a job at USD? Is he being offered his old job as assistant? Is he going to be given the opportunity to throw his name in the hat when the national search for a new coach begins?

We don't know. We realize there's a certain amount of privacy in affairs that involve hiring and firing and personnel changes.

But the University of South Dakota is not a private entity. It is driven by funding provided by taxpayers, and from students in the form of tuition and fees, and from alumni who generously support athletics and other important facets of the institution.

So, yes, the decision to move from Division II to Division I was our business. The effort to build a new basketball arena is our business. The ups and downs, the joy of winning, the agony of defeat of all USD sports teams are our business. So is the way they are managed.

We'll continue using a bit of sporting parlance when we say USD certainly didn't give the appearance of being at Division I level this week, despite all the good things that happened.

University administrators fumbled badly, and gave Joey James bush-league treatment, at best.

Capitol Notebook:

Legislators are seeking a fair fight

By Bob Mercer
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE – The Legislature's desire to gain a better balance of power with the executive branch in South Dakota can be easily achieved.

That is, if lawmakers are willing to put in more time during the nine months outside of legislative session and pay themselves more for working more.

And if they are willing to spend more on more staff, more interns, more research and more communications.

That is a lot of more. The legislative branch of state government holds the power to appropriate and therefore holds the answer to the challenge.

When lawmakers talk about the executive branch and power, they are really talking about the governor and the vast administration that runs state government day by day.

Much of the administration's powers resulted from the Legislature giving them away. Just as significant, the legislature doesn't fully and effectively use its powers.

The 105 members of the legislature can put themselves to much greater use.

They can divide responsibilities and attend all meetings of state boards and commissions, including all rules hearings, and report back to the other lawmakers on a regular basis.

For this they should receive additional pay. A rate of \$200 per workday, plus normal legislative expenses, would be fair compensation.

This would help address another issue: Low pay to legislators. They make \$6,000 annually. Thirty days of paid non-session work can double that.

This also might encourage candidates for the Legislature who are interested in a higher level of activity during the months outside of session.

The legislature's interim committees should compile and distribute in-depth reports on their work.

Likewise, reports should be required from legislators

who travel to regional and national meetings so the information can be shared among all 105.

The senate should strengthen its process regarding governor's appointees who require Senate confirmation.

Nominees should be required to appear before committees. Senators should inquire about the recent activities and future direction of the state agency or the board or commission.

This could be done throughout the year, when more time is available, rather than waiting for legislative session. The confirmation hearing report could be submitted to the full Senate for its decision during the session.

The legislature could require state boards and commissions to meet in the capitol's legislative committee rooms when the meetings are in Pierre.

This would make the proceedings available live and through digital archives to listeners through the Internet system, similar to legislative hearings, and reduce expenses for boards and commissions.

The state Public Utilities Commission already does this.

The Legislative Research Council needs more staff, starting in the fiscal review sector, and more space.

Expanding the Legislature's internship program to provide opportunities during the nine months outside of session would be another important step.

The off-session interns could be assigned to specific projects. The legislature could coordinate with the professional faculty at the state universities for specific research and analysis.

The legislature would benefit from a communications office to assemble and provide a steady flow of reports to the 105 members.

Lawmakers need to publicize legislative achievements.

None of this is beyond the legislature's ability, if there is the will.



Feeling like a lump of ice

Last week, I shared with readers my husband's pursuit of a college degree in art, which has catapulted him into the local art scene.

What follows is an exchange of emails from Arlene, a reader and friend of mine, who is an artist and a piano teacher.

March 3, 2014

Paula,
Where has the time gone? This column [published the week of March 3, 2014] is so appropriate for me. I think Brian's painting is beautiful. And so large!

But I don't understand it. Do I need to read Don Quixote? It is making an impact I feel, but it hasn't hit me yet. I love it!

What happened at Orange City and what is he painting next?
Arlene

March 8, 2014

Thanks, Arlene. A lot happened in Orange City and it was a wonderful launching pad for Brian's entrance into the world of art exhibits. He also met a lot of artists and found out about art clubs in the area.

I'm including his e-mail, pauladamon@iw.net, so he can reply to you directly. Another thing that came from Orange City is that we need to establish an e-mail account with his own name and not mine – soon!

MY STORY YOUR STORY



PAULA DAMON
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In a separate email, I will try sending you photos of the watercolor and acrylic paintings that won first place and honorable mention in the Orange City show.
Paula

March 3, 2014

Dear Paula,
I should have read the entire column before I asked my questions – directed as they were to Brian. I hope he sells his paintings for \$\$\$\$. It is hard to part with what you have processed something of yourself into. It is time to get together – for coffee when the painting is home.

I feel like a lump of ice. The cold is getting to me. I watch a lot of TV – which isn't me. I was looking for poems and found a book – third edition "Three Genres" by Stephen Minot. I took a writing class in college and this was our text book. I don't remember what is in it. I must read it. Maybe the book will shake me loose and invigorate my body.

We just had our yearly piano contest on Saturday. I tried not to

look out the window but when I did the snow was still falling, still falling.

Are you finding any time for playing piano? I loved this story. See ya.
Arlene

March 8, 2014

Hi Arlene,
I loved your expression, "I feel like a lump of ice." It is a beautifully poetic way to describe how we all have felt during the recent cold snap. I do hope you will find time to read your college poetry book.

If you have a chance, ask the library to purchase books by Ted Kooser or I could lend you mine. Ted is retired now and lives outside of Lincoln, NE.

During his long career, he wrote poetry evenings and weekends. When he retired, he focused full time on his writing and was awarded U.S. Poet Laureate. He is one of several authors I look to for inspiration.

I miss piano and have started playing when I can fit it in, reacquainting myself with contest pieces. Would love to pick up lessons again but my schedule for the time being is stretched.

Plus, my brain struggles with counting notes and measures and that makes me feel stupid and sad.

We will have to get together because I miss you so much!
Paula

Vermillion

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TALK

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