

Special interview for Chowan Today

Metamorphosing Chowan athletics

Simultaneously entering the realm of NCAA competition and installing a new athletic director has reached the very core of Chowan College athletics. In this interview with Athletic Director Diane Morea, Jan Lefevre, *Chowan Today* editor, asks Morea about upcoming changes, growth and plans for the future.

Lefevre: As the new athletic director, it is your responsibility to lead the athletic life of the college. What do you see on the horizon for Chowan's future athletes regarding NCAA affiliation, conferences and programs?

Morea: We just made history last week with Chowan College voting for the first time at an NCAA convention. So, we're now officially in the record books. What that means to us, first, is that we are affiliated with an institution that establishes a fairer practice and playing field for everyone and supports the philosophy of Division III, including non-athletic-awarded aid and the support of a liberal arts education.

Secondly, what that means for us conference-wise, is that we have been accepted into the Atlantic Central Football Conference. What that will do for our football program as we look to hire a new coach and build a new stadium, is to really generate excitement, enthusiasm and a new feeling about football on campus. The NCAA is also looking at expanding the championship opportunities in football because the one area in championships that doesn't have an equal playing field is Division III football. Not enough schools have the opportunity to participate in post-season play with the current structure. That is a priority. Also, with the new football conference, we're looking at Coach-of-the-Year Award, player-of-the-week awards, all-team selection, etc. as a part of conference structure that gives student athletes more meaning to their playing talents and ability.

My hope is, for the rest of the teams, that we will have the opportunity to join a conference. Yes, we are going to go back and talk with the Dixie Conference. We did some extensive talking with some of the Dixie Conference schools and the commissioner at the [NCAA] convention. I think it was very important that Chowan College show them, with the attendance of myself, our faculty athletic representative and the president, that we are very, very committed to wanting to be a part of their conference, wanting to play by the rules and wanting to make the changes necessary to be a good conference member.

The future of Chowan athletics is based on all that, along with structural reorganization, reorganization and expansion of facilities and expansion of opportunities, especially on the women's side. That just means bigger and better things.

Lefevre: Chowan is readying itself for student body growth by preparing a strategic plan for physical plant expansion. In your opinion, what are the most critical athletic facility needs at this time?

Morea: The most critical need at this time, especially with the board's approval to go forward with a new student center in the location of the current football stadium, is the need for a new football facility. Along with that, opens the opportunity for some expansion in facilities such as, a weight training facility for all sports; such as, a reorganization of the athletic training room into a larger space; such as, the need for more office space for our coaches, and expanded areas for laundry facilities and cleaning and storage of athletic equipment and apparel.

One of the really important things is a field maintenance plan to upgrade our current fields; to have real grass growing and to have it green; to have a regular plan for aeration, fertilization and watering during the summer; to provide a real showcase for our student athletes.

Lefevre: With your prior marketing experience, I imagine that you might have a plan in mind to increase Chowan's athletic facilities use beyond institutional needs. Have you given it much thought?

Morea: One great opportunity is that Dan Surface will become the assistant athletic director after June 1, and the main focus of his job will be the Helms Center operation and game-day operations for athletic events. Helms Center operation will include community and external programming and the marketing of the internal facility for outside groups. A basic problem is that we have a large need ourselves for this facility and we can't always fill our own needs. But, there are times during the year that we can make this facility available to other groups and we need to have some policies and financial guidelines in place in order to do that. One of his jobs will be, along with myself, to sit down and develop those policies and market the center effectively when it's not in use by our athletic teams.

Lefevre: With time demands for practice and travel placed on student athletes, how does Chowan provide assistance for its participants with academic tutoring or time management?

Morea: Tutoring and academic assessment and assistance are provided for all student athletes at Chowan by professionals in the field. Is it enough? No, not currently. Our coaches are responsible for supervising team study halls. This is just one area where we need additional academic assistance. But, we need the assistance for all of our students, especially our incoming freshmen who are making a major transition to college life.

Lefevre: Do you visualize any changes in Chowan's athletic programming that would bolster students' chances for success in college and beyond?

Morea: I think the biggest opportunity for us will be to get into conference play. It would assist our efforts in aiming for conference championships and post-season play. As full members of the NCAA, we now have the opportunities to go into post-season play, but it's much more difficult as an independent to get that post-season bid. A post-season bid is important for anybody; it's a chance to go to a championship, it's a chance to put everything on the line, it's a chance to get a championship ring. Whether it is a conference championship or a national championship, it's an accomplishment that athletes strive for, to get to the highest level possible and be the most successful — to be the champion.

There's a big area of debate right now in Division III about automatic qualification; what the requirements should be in the future for conferences to get into the championships and how many bids should be allowed if a conference has more than 14 teams. It [getting into a conference] would be a real opportunity for us and a real opportunity to be successful. You're talking about media exposure, you're talking about alumni pride, you're talking about school pride and you're talking about rallying around an area that is experiencing success. It filters down all over campus.

Lefevre: In order to reward special efforts of student athletes, how would you like to alter recognition programs?

Morea: We need to award academic achievement. We need to be successful in the classroom as well as on the playing field and that's a priority here. Many of our student athletes will not go on to the pros, very few of them will. So, we need to emphasize to them the importance of being successful in the classroom and the need to perform well in all facets of their life. We want them to recognize good feelings about giving back to the community and helping others who need their assistance through such programs as Special Olympics, YMCA, YWCA, Big Brothers-Big Sisters, church youth groups, Habitat for Humanity, etc.

Lefevre: How do you view the connection between athletic programs and various physical education majors at Chowan?

Morea: We have a sport management curriculum in the physical education core and our hope is to continue to utilize some of those sport management students as interns to learn about athletic management and what happens behind the scenes. It [the internship] provides an opportunity for the



students to experience first hand what all goes into being a manager and how to run a program. An athletic program is a very complex program because you're dealing with not just students, but with athletes and egos, administrators, faculty, alumni, prospective students and their parents, community members and other outside constituencies. There's a lot that goes into the public relations aspect of athletics. We also provide student athletic trainers with on-the-job experience while assisting our athletic teams with the prevention and care of athletic injuries.

Lefevre: In your opinion, what are some of the critical issues facing Chowan athletics today and what are the solutions?

Morea: We do have some critical issues such as: expansion issues; full-time coaching issues dealing with the aspects of recruiting, coaching and teaching; budgetary constraints that I hope we'll be able to address in the future. Costs such as staffing, food, travel, equipment and field maintenance continue to rise.

Lefevre: Given the opportunity to speak to Chowan's alumni, what would you like to say to them?

Morea: There's excitement on the horizon. The pride that has been out there about athletics at Chowan College is re-energizing and resurfacing as a four-year institution. Come back and see us; come back and support us — not just in a financial sense, but in a physical sense as well. We're going to move forward and we're going to continue the Chowan tradition of academic and athletic excellence.

Football enrolls in Atlantic Central conference

Athletics Director Diane Morea announced Chowan's acceptance into the new Atlantic Central Football Conference November 17. Beginning with the inaugural 1998 fall season, the ACFC will start with six members: Chowan College, Ferrum College, Frostburg State University, Methodist College, Salisbury State University and Wesley College, all members of the NCAA Division III. Annual and weekly awards will be presented during the 1998 fall season with a Championship Trophy award beginning in 1999.

"I am delighted with the development of the Atlantic Central Football Conference and Chowan's position as a charter member," President Stanley Lott stated. "Competition in the context of a conference will elevate the level of play and result in a stronger program; one that will be more attractive to prospective students and that will be more rewarding for the coaches and current players."

Morea added, "This is a great opportunity for the continued growth of our football program. Along with the proposed stadium, the new football conference will provide our football staff and players the chance to take our program to a new level of competition that includes award incentives and the real possibility of NCAA post season competition."

"Conference affiliation will now allow our players to receive All-Conference recognition awards and the opportunity to play for a Conference Championship," declared Dan Surface, assistant athletics director and former head football coach. "This will be a positive influence on our program, and our recruitment efforts of student-athletes to Chowan."

Dr. Michael Welch, Commissioner of the Dixie Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, will administer the new football conference. Assisting Welch on the Executive Board will be Ferrum Athletics Director Ted Kinder, Morea, and Rita Wiggs, athletics director at Methodist College.

