SAAC Spring Meeting  
Harrisonburg, Virginia  
April 9, 2016

Attendance:
Shannon Strosser, Bridgewater College  
Melynda Boren, Bridgewater College  
Nick Eckstein, Guilford College  
Emily Gann, Guilford College  
Jacqueline Hockman, Randolph College  
Matthew Gussiaas, Shenandoah University  
Mary Severin, Shenandoah University  
Robert Wingert, National SAAC Representative  
Bethany Dannelly, ODAC  
JJ Nekoloff, ODAC

Informational Items:

National SAAC Update
Robert updated the group on the most recent national SAAC meeting. He encouraged schools to report SAAC events involving Special Olympics through the NCAA website. He also encouraged them to report DIII week activities that they had on campus. In the future they are going to try to get DIII week more organized on a national level. They are hoping to add live snap chats for DIII week among other things. He updated everyone about the new SAAC initiative surrounding student-athlete mental health as well.

National SAAC Representative Position
Robert spoke with the group about his position as the National SAAC Representative. He explained that his term will be up next January and the ODAC will need to have someone fill the position. Being the national SAAC representative involves four committee meetings each year. Robert spoke about all of the contacts he has made and the opportunities that have opened up for him as the national SAAC representative. He has thoroughly enjoyed his time in this position.

ODAC SAAC Involvement on Campuses
The SAAC representatives discussed the initiatives that have been taking place on their campuses:

- Nick Eckstein, Guilford – Their SAAC had a meet and greet at the elementary school with 3rd graders and ate lunch with them. They are also planning the spring awards ceremony and have adopted a Hollywood theme for the ceremony this year.
- Shannon Strosser, Bridgewater – Their SAAC did a bingo card for DIII week. They also put on some clinics and did acts of kindness at the elementary school. They have a Special Olympics bowling event two times a year and help with Special Olympics swimming. They also have each team choose one big game which the SAAC promotes so they have more student support for the big competition. They are planning their athletics ceremony next year as well.
- Jacqueline Hockman, Randolph – They just finished up their It’s On Us video. They also have had some cancer awareness games.
Matthew Gussiaas and Mary Severin, Shenandoah – They had a kids day out where second graders came to the turf field and they were introduced to four different sports. They also talked about anger management with the kids. They have pen pal letters with fourth graders and had lunch with those pen pals one time this year. They hold seminars for first-year athletes. They attempted a DIII week video but it did not come to fruition. They want to make more of an effort with this in the future.

SAAC Involvement on Campuses
The group discussed their roles as SAAC leaders on their respective campuses and challenges that they have faced. It seems that everyone has similar problems in terms of consistent involvement and participation from the student-athletes. Some of the schools have a core group of 5-10 student-athletes who participate on a regular basis. Other schools often have just the SAAC leaders at the meetings and very few other attendees. They talked about ways to try and improve consistent attendance and involvement, including having food at the meetings. Robert said that they always have root beer floats for every meeting, which people look forward to. One roadblock to having food at every meeting is funding. Someone suggested that if SAAC applies to become a club then they will get funding similar to every other club. It is one avenue to pursue so the group has additional money for t-shirts, food at meetings, etc. Someone else mentioned that you can receive Tier 2 grant money if you have a speaker come to your awards ceremony and speak on a particular topic. The group also expressed an interest in using the conference facebook page more often as a way to share ideas and find out things that are working on other campuses in the conference.

Future Meetings
The group discussed ways to increase attendance for future meetings. The current date that was chosen was difficult due to the fact it was a Saturday in the spring. Everyone agreed that this meeting was very productive to share ideas, but it will be even more beneficial if there is participation from more member institutions. Sundays are better days for everyone. Robert mentioned that the MAC has meetings on Friday afternoon and includes lunch with their meetings. They also have more formal meetings. The group expressed a desire to continue having meetings with Special Olympics involvement and they like pairing community outreach with the conference meeting. They were not receptive to having more formal meetings in conference rooms like the MAC has. Some ideas for future Special Olympics activities involved a track and field event, disc golf or corn hole, bocce, or some sort of social engagement like a prom or pizza party. The group also discussed the most logical time of year to have meetings and the frequency of meetings. Robert said the MAC has two in person meetings per year and two conference calls per year. The group actually thinks that having more meetings might help with attendance because more frequency could improve overall engagement. The suggested times were to have in-person meetings in October and February and conference calls in December and April.