

Blake James
Director of Athletics

Since taking over as the University of Miami's Director of Athletics in 2013, Blake James has transformed The U, spearheading significant advances in all aspects of the department, including postseason appearances, student-athlete support, facility upgrades, ticket sales, broadcast capabilities and academic achievement.

Miami's recent success continues to garner both James and UM national recognition. This past summer, James concluded a two-year term as Chair of the NCAA Division I Council, the group responsible for the day-to-day decision-making for all of Division I Athletics. This year he was one of five nominees for the 2019 SportsBusiness Journal Athletic Director of the Year. In 2017, James was selected as one of four Division I recipients of the 2016-17 Under Armour Athletic Director of the Year award from the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA).

In the most recent academic year, Miami continued to achieve excellence both on and off the field. Hurricane student-athletes earned four Atlantic Coast Conference Player of the Year honors, 68 All-ACC selections, 11 individual ACC titles and 35 All-America accolades. Two Hurricanes captured individual NCAA championships – Michelle Athlerley in the women's indoor pentathlon and Estela Perez-Somarriba in women's tennis. Two UM divers – David Dinsmore and Briadam Herrera – placed second at the NCAA Championships. Miami has now captured five NCAA individual championships, six ACC team titles and 62 individual ACC titles since James became Director of Athletics.

James has always placed a strong emphasis on academics and community outreach during his six-plus years as Miami's Director of Athletics. A record 200 UM student-athletes made the 2017-18 ACC Honor Roll. In the most recent Graduation Success Rate figures released by the NCAA, Miami student-athletes posted a GSR mark of 90 percent. Nine programs were recognized for perfect single-year scores of 1,000 in the 2017-18 Academic Progress Report (APR). In addition, six of those programs – men's and women's cross country, golf, men's and women's tennis and volleyball – earned perfect multi-year scores of 1,000 for the four-year period from 2014-15 to 2017-18.

In 2018, Hurricane student-athletes ranked first among all Division I schools in the NCAA Team Works Helper Helper Community Service Competition and posted another Top 10 finish in 2019 – logging more than 3,600 hours of service.

On the development front, the Hurricane Club continues to support UM's student-athletes and coaches in record numbers. The Hurricane Club raised more than \$16 million in 2018-19 and now boasts a record 12,500 members, an increase of 140 percent since 2010. Philanthropic

annual fund gifts increased to \$5.9 million in 2018-19 and the Hurricane Club secured 10 seven-figure leadership gifts.

In August 2018, the new, state-of-the-art Carol Soffer Indoor Practice Facility opened for use. The \$40-plus million facility encompasses not just indoor practice fields for football, but also new football coaches offices, new football reception and recruiting areas, weight room renovations and new coaches offices for golf, rowing, soccer and volleyball.

During James' tenure, Miami has completed several other facility enhancements, including the opening of the Schwartz Center for Athletic Excellence; the completion of the student-athlete training table, fueling station and dining hall; new artificial and natural playing surfaces and lights on the Greentree Practice Fields; a center-hung scoreboard inside the Watsco Center; renovations to the men's and women's basketball offices at Watsco Center; renovations to the Hecht Athletic Center; and a new videoboard for the Neil Schiff Tennis Center.

In 2018, UM set a record for season tickets at Hard Rock Stadium (46,738) and also posted the school's highest average attendance at Hard Rock Stadium (61,469). Since James took over as athletic director, football season ticket sales have increased 101 percent. From 2015-18, men's basketball tickets sold out for three consecutive seasons for the first time in school history.

In addition, Miami has built its broadcast, communications and marketing departments into one of the nation's leaders in digital media and video production. Miami has continually ranked at the top of the conference in number of live ACC Network Extra broadcasts each year as it gears up for the launch of the new ACC Network, which debuts in August. James was also instrumental in helping Miami strike one of the largest apparel deals in the country with adidas.

Prior to being named AD, James served Miami Athletics in the roles of Interim AD and Senior Associate AD for Development and Ticket Operations, where he oversaw the day-to-day operations of development, ticket sales and ticket operations. He also was a member of the Hurricanes' senior staff and provided sport supervision.

James returned to UM after spending seven years at the University of Maine, where he first served as Senior Associate Athletic Director before serving as Director of Athletics from 2005 to 2010. During his tenure at Maine, athletics experienced tremendous success, including three trips to the Frozen Four for the men's ice hockey program and NCAA playoff berths for football, baseball (two), women's basketball and softball. James implemented a comprehensive \$17 million facility improvement plan at Maine, which included an indoor practice facility and numerous other facility upgrades and renovations. Academically, the program flourished, earning the conference academic cup twice and student-athletes maintaining a 3.0 GPA or above.

Prior to his stint at Maine, James worked in athletic development at Providence College, where he established the “Friars Forever” campaign and the Friar Athletic Fund.

James is no stranger to South Florida, beginning his athletic career with UM, working in ticket sales, corporate sales and athletic development. In 1995, he was hired as Miami’s Director of Ticket Sales, serving in that capacity until 1997, when he was named an athletic development officer at the University of Nebraska. He returned to Miami in 1998 as the Director of Major Gifts and Corporate Sales and was promoted to the Director of Athletic Development at Miami in 2000 before moving on to Providence in 2002.

James graduated from Minnesota State University - Mankato with a Bachelor’s degree in Marketing in 1992, and later received his Master’s degree in Sports Administration from St. Thomas University in 1994. He and his wife, Kelly, have two children -- daughter, Haley, and son, Ryan.