

## **Gene Smith, Senior Vice President and Wolfe Foundation Endowed Athletics Director**

Ohio State's student-athletes continue to excel in the classroom and on the fields of play under the leadership of Gene Smith, who directs the nation's largest and one of its elite athletic programs.

Smith is proud of the high-performance culture that has developed with the leadership of what he often refers to as "the best coaching staff in America." Record achievements by individuals, teams and the entire athletic program attest to Ohio State's commitment to the development of the total student-athlete in a holistic way.

As the institution's academic profile has increased, so too has the academic profile of its student-athletes. In the classroom, student-athletes continue to distinguish themselves with record numbers earning university, conference and national honors. Last year, Ohio State boasted a record 674 Ohio State Scholar Athletes and 461 Academic All-Big Ten selections and 231 student-athletes earned their degrees.

During Smith's tenure, Ohio State has dominated Big Ten Conference play, with 102 team and 310 individual conference championships. Nothing delights Smith more than seeing student-athletes proudly display their championship rings, forever a reminder of their Ohio State experience.

On the national stage, Ohio State teams have won 24 team and 93 individual national championships during Smith's tenure, a mark of competitive excellence, and collected 1,310 All-America honors. By doing so, Ohio State has established itself as a perennial Top 5 contender in the Learfield Director's Cup.

Smith, a former student-athlete and coach, keeps a keen focus on the more than 1,000 student-athletes he serves. He is driven to provide for them all they need to grow academically, athletically and socially during their time at Ohio State, and graduate with skills that transfer to success in life. Smith's focus is "recruitment to career" as the department strives to support student-athletes in post-graduation job placement, graduate or professional studies, or professional sport pursuits.

Smith's business acumen has resulted in strong fiscal performance and new resources have been used to enhance the student-athlete experience. Record setting third party agreements – with NIKE, IMG, LEVY and COKE, among others – have allowed for innovative and trend setting programs offered to student-athletes.

The new Eugene D. Smith Leadership Institute – funded by private support - provides leadership, character and career development for all Ohio State student-athletes in order to best prepare them for life after graduation. Institute programs include: Bucks Go Pro internships, job shadows/micro-internships, Buckeye road trip, career fairs, Sundays in the Shoe, and Lead Like a Buckeye, among others.

Fund raising is one of Smith's gifts, and along with his development team, he has recently raised more than \$130 million for the construction of the: Schumaker Complex; Covelli Arena and Ty Tucker Tennis Center; and a renovation at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center – the Wandell Family Player's Suite. Next on Smith's agenda is completion of fund raising for a new lacrosse stadium, another addition to the growing Athletics District.

Smith's duties extend beyond the athletic department, with Business Advancement also reporting to him. Business Advancement is comprised of the Schottenstein Center, Nationwide Arena, Trademark & Licensing, Affinity Agreements, Drake Event Center, Blackwell Inn and Fawcett Center. Smith's team has increased revenues through innovation, collaboration and operational efficiencies.

Smith oversees a total of 566 employees in athletics and business advancement, with an annual budget of \$334 million, and a football program with a \$1.5 billion valuation, as estimated by the *Wall Street Journal*. But what Smith is most proud of is the exemplary culture within his units, recognized by *Forbes* as "one of the best ten organizations to work for in sports" and the only college program on its list.

After 34 years serving in the role of athletics director, Smith still delights in ensuring the student-athlete experience at Ohio State is exemplary and that its

high-performance culture truly inspires young men and women to achieve their vast potential.

Smith is the father of four children with his wife, Sheila: Matt, Nicole, Lindsey and Summer, and they are grandparents to seven: Marshall, Steele, Addison, Grayson, Tyson, Elijah and Maya. Outside of work Smith enjoys travel, golf and spending time with family.

Smith currently serves on the Boards of Directors of the Columbus Sports Commission, Columbus Cub, and Columbus Museum of Art.