



# The Pipeline Project

## 2024 Employment Overview NCAA Football Bowl Subdivisions

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# Meet the Team



**Dr. Meg Hancock** (she/they), an associate professor at the University of Louisville, is passionate about gender and diversity in the workplace. With 40+ publications and 50+ conference presentations, Meg aims to create inclusive and inspiring communities within sports organizations. She helps individuals achieve career goals in collegiate and professional sports. Outside work, Meg enjoys coffee, outdoor activities, and traveling with spouse Bridget, and their dogs, Chaco and Roux.



**Nick Kopka** (he/him), a doctoral student at the University of Louisville, is researching the social impact of sport tourism. Before pursuing his doctoral degree, he gained experience with the Louisville Sports Commission, the 500 Festival, and the Shreveport-Bossier Sports Commission. He has experience in event management, sales, volunteer recruitment, and budget oversight. He is an alum of Ball State University (BS) Ohio University (MBA, MS).



**Dr. Ehren Green** (she/her), an assistant professor at Temple University, has a deep passion for creating positive work environments in sports organizations. As a former student-athlete, intercollegiate athletics employee, and spouse of a coach, sports run in her blood. She's also a proud mom and enjoys dominating on the soccer field with her 2 boys. When not playing soccer, they're busy planning their next travel adventures. In addition to her love for sports, she enjoys good comedies and engaging conversations.

## How to Cite

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# About The Pipeline Project

Over the past decade (2015-2024), athletic departments within NCAA Football Bowl Subdivisions (FBS), Power 4 (Autonomy) and Group of 5 (Non-Autonomy) institutions, have seen significant growth in leadership roles. More than 1,000 new assistant and associate athletic director (AD) positions have been added (1). Specifically, assistant AD roles have increased by 80%, while associate AD positions have grown by 43%. This expansion reflects both the overall growth of athletic departments and new opportunities for staff to develop leadership skills.

Notably, women's representation in these roles has also grown, though not quite at the same pace as the positions themselves. In 2015, women held 29.7% of assistant AD roles and 25% of associate AD roles. By 2024, those numbers have risen to 35% and 31% (2), respectively. While this shows progress—women have gained around 6% in both categories—these increases are still modest compared to the overall growth of the positions. Moreover, only 11.7% of FBS athletic departments are led by women. This data suggests women are systematically underrepresented and continue to encounter barriers to advancement in intercollegiate athletic departments.

*The Pipeline Project* is a study on the state of women in intercollegiate athletic administration. Historically, the “pipeline” has referred to title positions of assistant athletic director and associate athletic director (3). Individuals holding senior-level positions are perceived to be more likely to achieve an Athletic Director position because the skill sets associated with senior-level administration, such as budgeting, fundraising, and supervisory responsibility, are perceived to be more transferable to the position of Athletic Director (4). This report extends the pipeline to look at all job areas and four managerial tiers (i.e.g, entry-level, mid-tier I, mid-tier II, executive; see page 6 for definitions) as the representation of women throughout athletic departments is critical to understand how the pipeline flows and contributes to representation.

For this inaugural report, we analyzed data for all NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) institutions designated as Power 4 and Group of 5 to better understand how and where women are represented in intercollegiate athletic department staff structures and leadership. *The Pipeline Project* offers an in-depth look at how men and women are distributed across athletic department roles (excluding head coaches and coaching staffs) with specific emphasis on managerial progression and job areas associated with a pipeline to athletic department leadership.

A key goal of the project is to uncover “leaks” in the talent pipeline, where women are systematically underrepresented (5) or encounter barriers to advancement (6). These leaks occur both within specific job areas and at critical career stages (entry-level, mid-level tier I and II, and executive roles), underscoring a broader issue of gender equity in college sports leadership.

*The Pipeline Project* serves as a vital resource for those committed to advancing gender equity in intercollegiate athletics. It provides athletic administrators, professional organizations, and sports managers with data-driven insights into gender representation, employment trends, and diversity within leadership structures. Moreover, it acts as a benchmarking tool, allowing institutions to compare their progress in achieving gender equity against others. Athletic department and industry leaders can identify gaps and develop strategies to create more inclusive and equitable pathways for women. *The Pipeline Project* also encourages researchers and educators to use its data for future research on gender dynamics in college sports leadership. This focus on gender equity is essential for building a sustainable, diverse leadership pipeline in college athletics—one where women have equal opportunities to advance, lead, and shape the future of the industry.

**PLEASE NOTE:** This document contains hyperlinks to additional resources for industry practitioners, prospective employees, and students, with further references listed in the appendices. Any text that is underlined is hyperlinked to a resource.

# Key Findings

- Women comprise 38% of employees in FBS intercollegiate athletic departments.\*
- 44% of entry-level positions in intercollegiate athletics are held by women, suggesting initial accessibility to the field.
- Women represent more than 50% of entry-level employees in 3 Group of 5 conferences (Sunbelt, Mid-American, American Athletic). While there are no Power 4 conferences with this level of representation, there are more opportunities for employment given the size of athletic departments.
- While women appear to move less (or more slowly) from entry-level (44%) to mid-tier II positions (assistant director, facility manager) across FBS, women's proportional representation increases from mid-tier II (32%) to mid-tier I (40%) positions, which include the titles of assistant athletic director or senior director.
- Compliance, name image and likeness offices (NIL), and sports medicine have the most equal representation (48-52%) of women across FBS departments. None of these areas, however, have been identified as building key skills for athletic department leadership. It should also be noted sports medicine comprises a wide variety of positions from assistant athletic trainers to team physicians.
- Women represent 64% of employees in student-athlete services (e.g., academic advising, career advising, leadership, life skills). Similar to compliance, NIL, and sports medicine, positions within student-athlete services have not been identified as building skills necessary for athletic directors.
- There are more executive level positions in Power 4 (2,268) athletic departments than Group of 5 (867) athletic departments and women are more represented in these positions in Power 4 (34%) when compared to Group of 5 (30%).
- Women represent 38% of FBS employees, yet there is not a single conference in which women exceed this representation at the executive level. However, women exceed this representation (38% or more) in mid-tier I positions (e.g., titles including assistant athletic director, senior director) in ALL Power 4 conferences.
- Name, Image, and Likeness positions appear to be an opportunity for women to build skills both internal and external to the athletic department as these offices continue to grow.

As women move through the administrative ranks, their representation declines significantly, raising concerns about barriers to advancement. Some research has found factors such as limited access to leadership development opportunities, unequal career progression pathways, and gendered expectations around work-life balance may contribute to this disparity (7). Other studies suggest women may choose to remain in particular areas rather than seek advancement because their responsibilities are more in line with their values, work-life balance, and life priorities (8). Optimistically, there are more opportunities for women in athletic department administration and leadership than ever before; thus, opening the pipeline to explore professional interest and, perhaps, leadership.

\*Not inclusive of head coaches or coaching staffs.

# 06 The Pipeline Project Overview



**The Pipeline Project** currently provides aggregated data on career stages and positions within intercollegiate athletic departments. The following section defines career stages for staff and athletic administrators, as well as how positions were accounted for within athletic department divisions (e.g., compliance, marketing, facilities). With new challenges posed with the implementation of name, image, and likeness and current litigation (e.g., *House v NCAA*), we expect this data to evolve in the coming years.

**Career Stages**

In this study, the career stages of staff and administrators working in intercollegiate athletics were categorized as entry-level, mid-level tier II, mid-level tier I, and executive (9). Given there is only one Athletic Director for every institution and that there are often multiple administrators involved in the decision-making process for the athletic department, our research included the Athletic Director, variations of Associate Athletic Director (e.g., senior, deputy, executive), and the Senior Woman Administrator as those in executive positions in the department. Table 1 categorizes the staff and administrators with a sample title used in the pipeline study.

**Table 1**  
**Staff and Athletic Administrator Career Stages**

<b>Career Stage</b>	<b>Sample Job Title</b>
Entry	Academic advisor, compliance coordinator, marketing assistant, event coordinator, graphic designer, administrative specialist, account executive
Mid-Level Tier II	Assistant director of marketing, Associate director of development, equipment manager, director of ticketing, business manager, facility manager, associate athletic trainer
Mid-Level Tier I	Assistant athletic director of compliance, senior director of events
Executive	Athletic director, senior/deputy athletic director, associate athletic director, senior woman administrator

Data for this project was collected from online institutional athletic department directories (e.g., department, name, title) from May to June 2024. The department refers to the specific office under which the staff member or athletic administrator was listed. For example, the department heading might be titled “compliance;” therefore, all employees listed under “Compliance” would be assigned to that department for further analysis. If a person such as an Associate Athletic Director was listed in two areas (e.g., compliance and athletic administration), that administrator was counted ONLY in athletic administration.

**Table 2**  
**Athletic Department Divisions**

Athletic Administration	Marketing & Fan Engagement/ Creative Services
Building and Grounds/Facilities/Equipment	Media/Broadcasting
Business Office	Strength & Conditioning/Nutrition/Mental Health
Campus recreation	Sports Medicine
Communications	Student Athlete Services
Compliance	Technology Support
Name, Image, and Likeness	Ticket Sales/ Ticketing
Corporate Sales and Sponsorships	Travel
Event Operations	Concessions
Fundraising	

# How to Use this Data

The Pipeline Project 2024 data can be used in several impactful ways by sport administrators, researchers, and students, depending on their roles and objectives.

## 1. College Athletic Administrators

- **Talent Retention and Development:** Universities and athletic departments can use this data to address high turnover rates by creating retention programs, professional development opportunities, and leadership pathways that encourage both entry- and mid-level staff to remain in the field.
- **Hiring and Promotion Policies:** By understanding where women and other underrepresented groups are less likely to advance (e.g., mid- to executive-level positions), administrators can develop targeted strategies to improve hiring and promotion practices, ensuring a more inclusive environment.
- **Benchmarking Against Peers:** Administrators can compare their department's gender diversity metrics with other departments in their conference or across the NCAA Division I FBS to gauge their progress in fostering equitable work environments. This can help identify areas where their departments may fall short in promoting gender equity.

## 2. Sports Management Professionals

- **Strategic Career Planning:** Professionals in the sports industry can use the data to understand career progression trends, helping them identify potential challenges and opportunities at various career stages. This can guide their professional development and networking strategies.
- **Mentorship and Advocacy:** Senior professionals can identify gaps in the pipeline and create mentorship programs or advocacy initiatives to support women and underrepresented groups, helping them navigate career advancement more effectively.
- **Sport Segmentation:** Sport management professionals in other segments of the industry (e.g., professional, interscholastic) can utilize the pipeline to examine their own pipeline.

## 3. Researchers and Educators

- **Building Research Agendas:** Scholars can use this data as a foundation for new research on gender diversity, career progression, and employment trends in sports management. This could include deeper investigations into the factors driving high turnover rates or barriers to advancement for women.
- **Identifying Research Gaps:** The report highlights areas where data on race, ethnicity, and non-binary identities are lacking, offering scholars the opportunity to expand future studies into these critical areas of diversity and inclusion.

## 4. Policy Makers and Advocacy Groups

- **Shaping Inclusion & Engagement Initiatives:** Organizations focused on gender equity in sports can use this data to create or refine advocacy programs aimed at increasing the representation of women in leadership roles within intercollegiate athletics.

**Informed Decision-Making:** By using this report's findings, policymakers can make data-driven decisions to implement diversity standards and enforce more equitable hiring practices at institutional and conference levels.

## 5. Prospective Employees in College Athletics

- **Career Navigation:** Aspiring professionals can use the data to understand the gender distribution across career stages, helping them navigate their paths and identify which departments or conferences may offer more inclusive environments.

In summary, *The Pipeline Project* data should be used as a tool to foster more equitable, inclusive environments in intercollegiate athletics to drive meaningful change at both organizational and industry-wide levels.



# 09 FBS Aggregated Overview



# FBS Aggregated Conference Data

**9**

**Conferences**

**130**

**Colleges and Universities**

**\$81,517,254**

**Median Athletic Department Budget (1)**

Range \$21,116,234 (Louisiana Monroe) to \$274,948,554 (Ohio State)

**76**

**Median Conference  
Learfield Ranking**

Range #1 (Texas) to  
#304 (Kennesaw State)

**18,956**

**Total Athletic Department  
Staff & Administration**

Does not include head coaches or  
coaching staffs

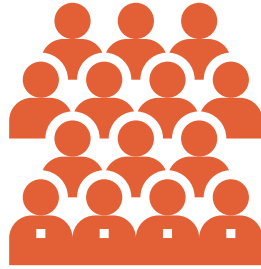
**12**

**Women Athletic  
Directors**

# FBS Employee Career Stages

**Total Administrative Employees**  
**18,956**

Representing all Power 4 and Group of 5 Athletic Departments

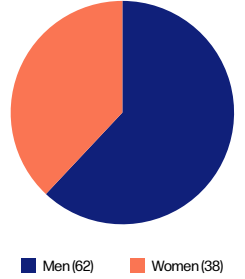


**Gender Diversity**

**7,248** **11,708**

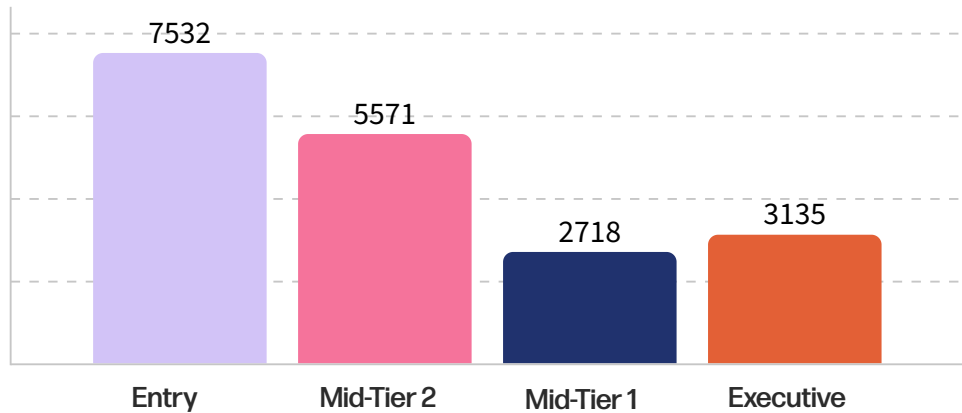
**Women**

**Men**



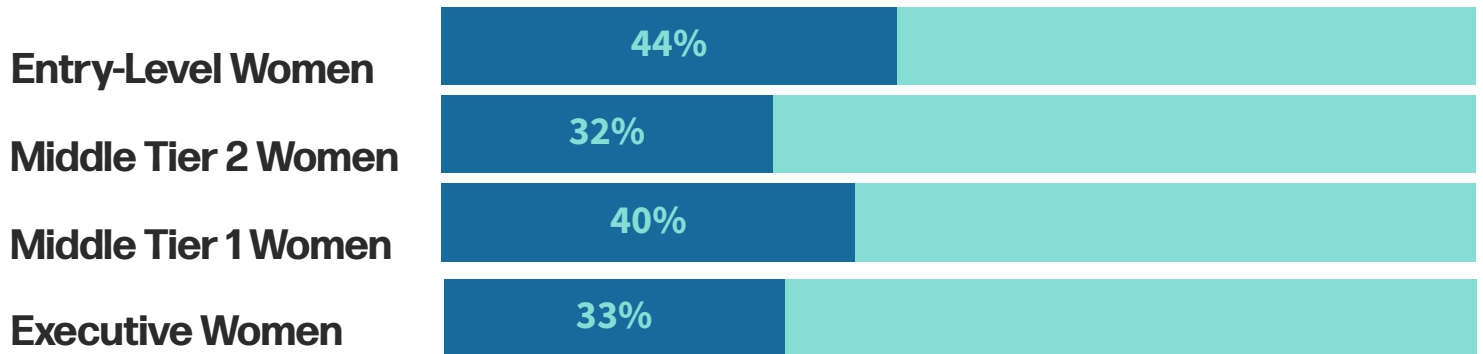
## Career Stage

Number of employees in entry, middle, and executive management



## Gender in Career Stage

Percentage of women in entry, middle, and executive management



# Department Overview

This table illustrates the aggregated proportion and percentage of men and women employed in staff and administrative positions in athletic departments across all FBS institutions.

	TOTAL	Total Men	Total Women	% Men	% Women
Athletic Administration	1875	1160	715	62%	38%
Buildings and Grounds/Facilities/Equipment Room	2646	2188	458	83%	17%
Business Office	943	356	587	38%	62%
Campus Recreation	122	58	64	48%	52%
Communications	941	689	252	73%	27%
Compliance	511	246	265	48%	52%
NIL	55	28	27	51%	49%
Corporate Sales and Sponsorships	702	505	197	72%	28%
Event Operations	333	210	123	63%	37%
Fundraising	1220	680	540	56%	44%
Marketing and Fan Engagement/Creative Services	1383	891	492	64%	36%
Media	616	486	130	79%	21%
S&C/Nutrition/Mental Health	1850	1204	646	65%	35%
Sports Medicine	2555	1305	1250	51%	49%
Student Athlete Services	1743	635	1108	36%	64%
Technology Support	325	289	36	89%	11%
Ticket Sales	978	692	286	71%	29%
Travel	57	19	38	33%	67%
Concessions	101	67	34	66%	34%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18956</b>	<b>11708</b>	<b>7248</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>38%</b>

13

# Power 4 Aggregated Overview



# Power 4 Aggregated Conference Data

**4**

**Conferences**

**ACC  
Big Ten  
Big XII  
SEC**

**68**

**Colleges &  
Universities**

**\$144,796,685**

**Median Athletic Department Budget (1)**

Range \$81,517,354 (Houston) to \$274,948,554 (Ohio State)

**37**

**Median Conference  
Learfield Ranking**

Range #1 (Texas) to  
#259 (Cincinnati)

**13,933**

**Total Athletic Department  
Staff & Administration**

Does not include head coaches or  
coaching staffs

**7**

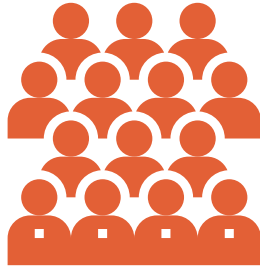
**Women Athletic  
Directors**  
(includes interim title)

# Power 4 Career Stages

## Total Administrative Employees

**13,933**

Representing all Power 4 Athletic Departments

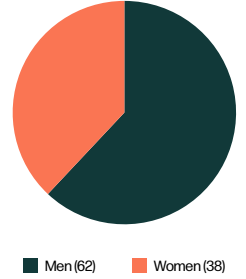


## Gender Diversity

**5,304** **8,629**

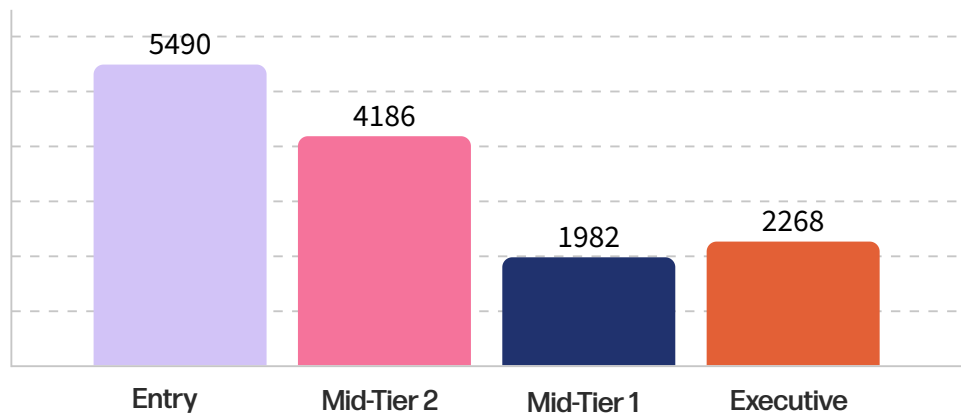
Women

Men



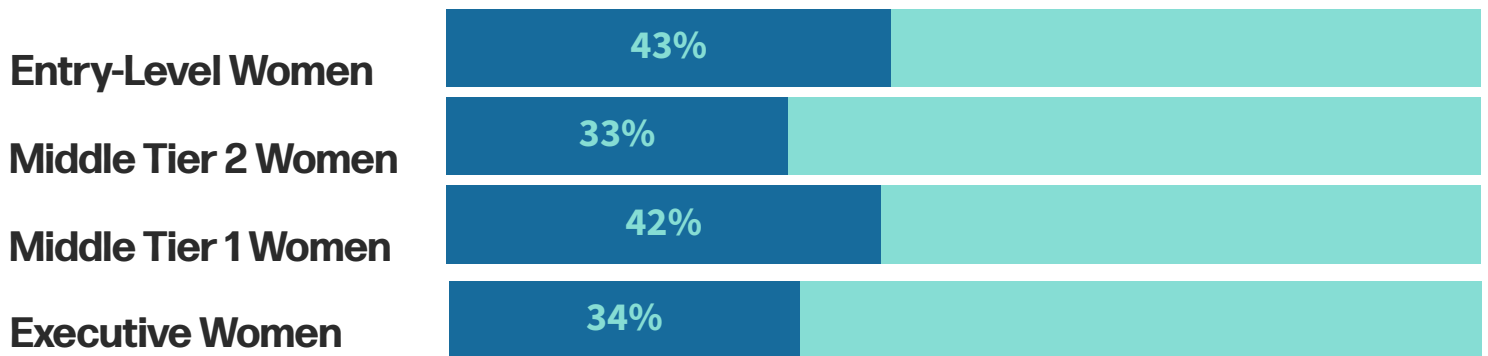
## Career Stage

Number of employees in entry, middle, and executive management



## Gender in Career Stage

Percentage of women in entry, middle, and executive management



# Power 4 Department Overview

This table illustrates the aggregated proportion and percentage of men and women employed in staff and administrative positions in athletic departments across all Power 4 institutions.

Department	TOTAL	Total Men	Total Women	% Men	% Women
Athletic Administration	1108	666	442	60%	40%
Buildings and Grounds/Facilities/Equipment Room	2161	1791	370	83%	17%
Business Office	671	258	413	38%	62%
Campus Recreation	109	53	56	49%	51%
Communications	686	485	201	71%	29%
Compliance	374	181	193	48%	52%
NIL	45	22	23	49%	51%
Corporate Sales and Sponsorships	505	364	141	72%	28%
Event Operations	289	181	108	63%	37%
Fundraising	993	541	452	54%	46%
Marketing and Fan Engagement/Creative Services	972	613	359	63%	37%
Media	515	403	112	78%	22%
S&C/Nutrition/Mental Health	1307	830	477	64%	36%
Sports Medicine	1773	925	848	52%	48%
Student Athlete Services	1249	450	799	36%	64%
Technology Support	301	268	33	89%	11%
Ticket Sales	728	516	212	71%	29%
Travel	52	19	33	37%	63%
Concessions	95	63	32	66%	34%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13933</b>	<b>8629</b>	<b>5304</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>38%</b>



# 17 **Power 4 Conferences**

**ACC  
Big Ten  
Big 12  
SEC**



# ACC Aggregated Conference Data

**18**

**Colleges &  
Universities**

**Boston College  
U. California  
Clemson  
Duke\*  
Florida State  
Georgia Tech  
Louisville  
Miami  
NC State**

**North Carolina  
Notre Dame  
Pittsburgh\*  
Southern Methodist  
Stanford  
Syracuse  
Virginia\*  
Virginia Tech  
Wake Forest**

**\$138,225,818**

**Median Athletic Department Budget (1)**

Range \$116,947,347 (Virginia Tech) to \$174,276,658 (Clemson)

**38**

**Median Conference  
Learfield Ranking**

Range #2 (Stanford) to  
#80 (Pittsburgh)

**3,533**

**Total Athletic  
Department Staff &  
Administration**

Does not include head coaches or  
coaching staffs

**2**

**Women Athletic  
Directors\***

# Atlantic Coast Conference

## Total Administrative Employees

**3,533**

Representing all Athletic Departments in the Conference



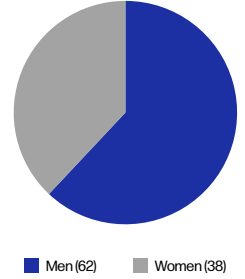
## Gender Diversity

**1,360**

Women

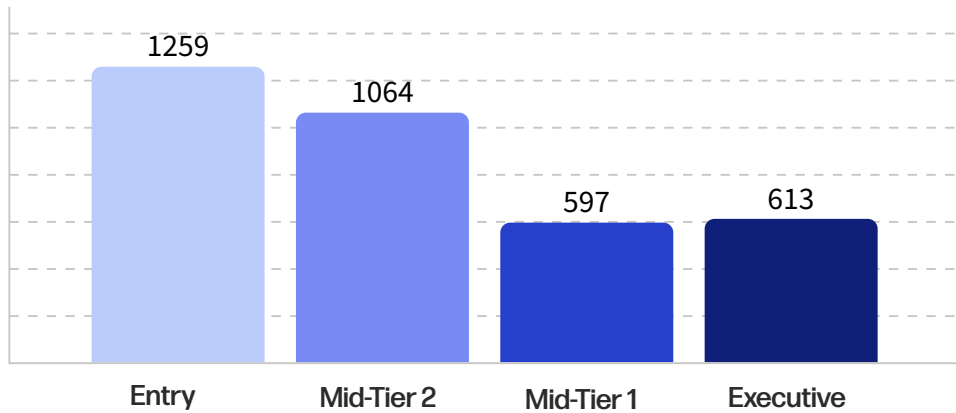
**2,173**

Men



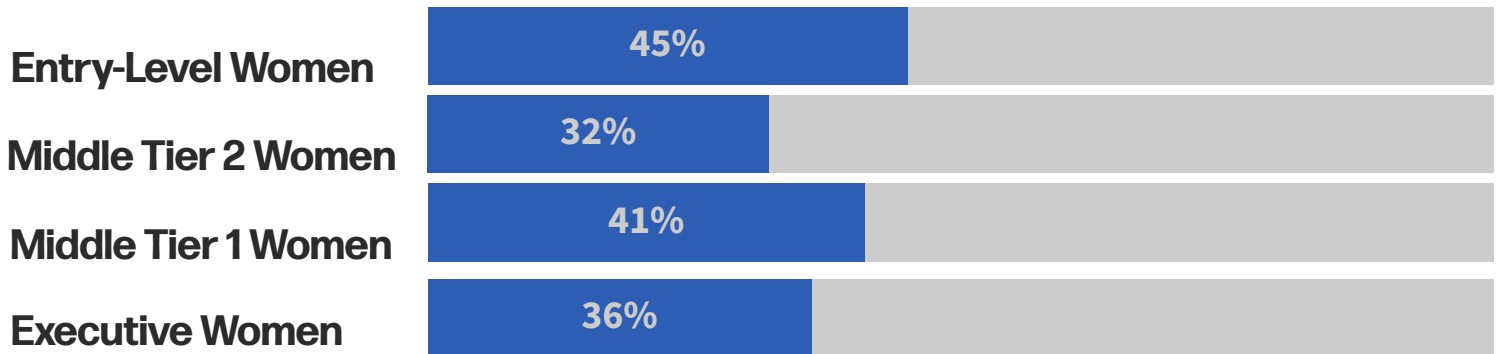
## Career Stage

Number of employees in entry, middle, and executive management



## Gender in Career Stage

Percentage of women in entry, middle, and executive management



# Atlantic Coast Conference Department Overview

This table illustrates the aggregated proportion and percentage of men and women employed in staff and administrative positions in athletic departments in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

	Total Men	Total Women	% Men	% Women
Athletic Administration	186	123	60%	40%
Buildings and Grounds/Facilities/Equipment	389	79	83%	17%
Business Office	58	106	35%	65%
Campus Recreation	41	44	48%	52%
Communications	123	52	70%	30%
Compliance	50	37	57%	43%
NIL	2	4	33%	67%
Corporate Sales and Sponsorships	100	33	75%	25%
Event Operations	34	18	65%	35%
Fundraising	173	142	55%	45%
Marketing and Fan Engagement/Creative Services	136	86	61%	39%
Media	113	31	78%	22%
S&C/Nutrition/Mental Health	221	132	63%	37%
Sports Medicine	237	222	52%	48%
Student Athlete Services	101	183	36%	64%
Technology Support	61	13	82%	18%
Ticket Sales	144	52	73%	27%
Travel	3	3	50%	50%
Concessions	1	0	100%	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2173</b>	<b>1360</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>38%</b>

# Big Ten Aggregated Conference Data

**18**

**Colleges & Universities**

Illinois  
Indiana  
Iowa\*  
Maryland  
Michigan  
Michigan State  
Minnesota  
Nebraska  
Northwestern

Ohio State  
Oregon  
Penn State  
Purdue  
Rutgers  
UCLA  
USC\*  
Washington  
Wisconsin

**\$153,166,733**

**Median Athletic Department Budget (1)**

Range \$119,773,814 (Purdue) to \$274,948,554 (Ohio State)

**33**

**Median Conference**

**Learfield Ranking**

Range #8 (Michigan) to  
#66 (Rutgers)

**4,055**

**Total Athletic  
Department Staff &  
Administration**

Does not include head coaches or  
coaching staffs

**2**

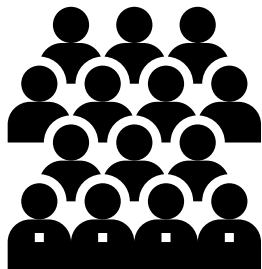
**Women Athletic  
Directors\***  
(includes interim title)

# Big Ten Conference

## Total Administrative Employees

**4,055**

Representing all Athletic Departments in the Conference



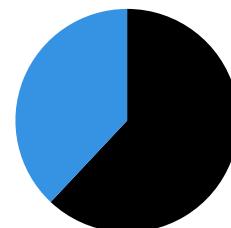
## Gender Diversity

**1,552**

Women

**2,503**

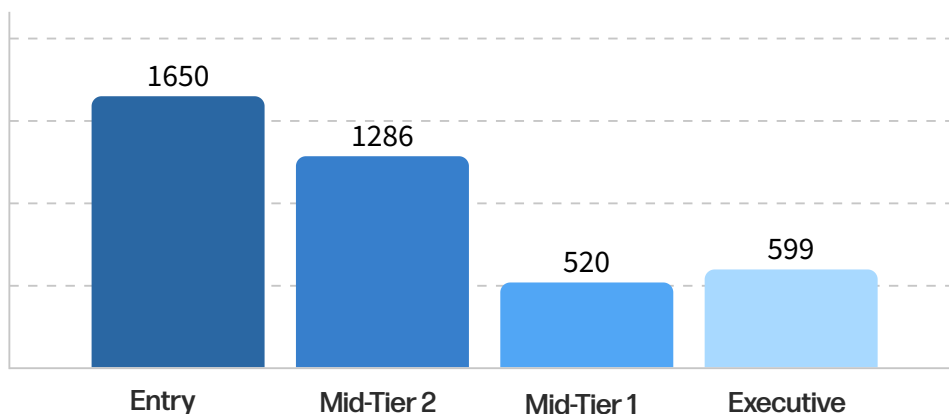
Men



Men (62) Women (38)

## Career Stage

Number of employees in entry, middle, and executive management



## Gender in Career Stage

Percentage of women in entry, middle, and executive management

### Entry-Level Women

**41%**

### Middle Tier 2 Women

**35%**

### Middle Tier 1 Women

**42%**

### Executive Women

**35%**

# Big Ten Conference Department Overview

This table illustrates the aggregated proportion and percentage of men and women employed in staff and administrative positions in athletic departments in the Big Ten Conference.

	Total Men	Total Women	% Men	% Women
<b>Athletic Administration</b>	158	117	57%	43%
<b>Buildings and Grounds/Facilities/Equipment Room</b>	584	125	82%	18%
<b>Business Office</b>	65	110	37%	63%
<b>Campus Recreation</b>	10	8	56%	44%
<b>Communications</b>	134	58	70%	30%
<b>Compliance</b>	53	62	46%	54%
<b>NIL</b>	10	12	45%	55%
<b>Corporate Sales and Sponsorships</b>	120	49	71%	29%
<b>Event Operations</b>	64	42	60%	40%
<b>Fundraising</b>	139	123	53%	47%
<b>Marketing and Fan Engagement/Creative Services</b>	151	86	64%	36%
<b>Media</b>	78	24	76%	24%
<b>S&amp;C/Nutrition/Mental Health</b>	210	142	60%	40%
<b>Sports Medicine</b>	299	254	54%	46%
<b>Student Athlete Services</b>	141	223	39%	61%
<b>Technology Support</b>	106	9	92%	8%
<b>Ticket Sales</b>	135	72	65%	35%
<b>Travel</b>	2	11	15%	85%
<b>Concessions</b>	44	25	64%	36%
	2503	1552	62%	38%

# Big 12 Aggregated Conference Data

**16**

**Colleges & Universities**

Arizona\*  
Arizona State  
Baylor  
BYU  
Cincinnati  
Colorado  
Houston  
Iowa State

Kansas  
Kansas State  
Oklahoma State  
TCU  
Texas Tech  
UCF  
Utah  
West Virginia

**\$121,003,194**

**Median Athletic Department Budget (1)**

Range \$88,199,644 (UCF) to \$142,814,430 (Arizona)

**50**

**Median Conference**

**Learfield Ranking**

Range #19 (Oklahoma State)

#259 (Cincinnati)

**2,708**

**Total Athletic Department Staff & Administration**

Does not include head coaches or coaching staffs

**1**

**Women Athletic Directors\***

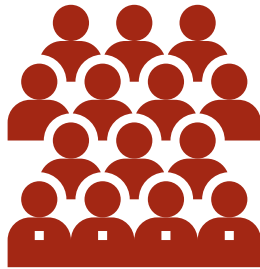
(includes interim title)



# Big 12 Conference

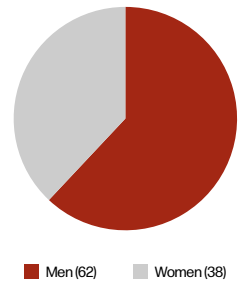
**Total Administrative Employees**  
**2,708**

Representing all Athletic Departments in the Conference



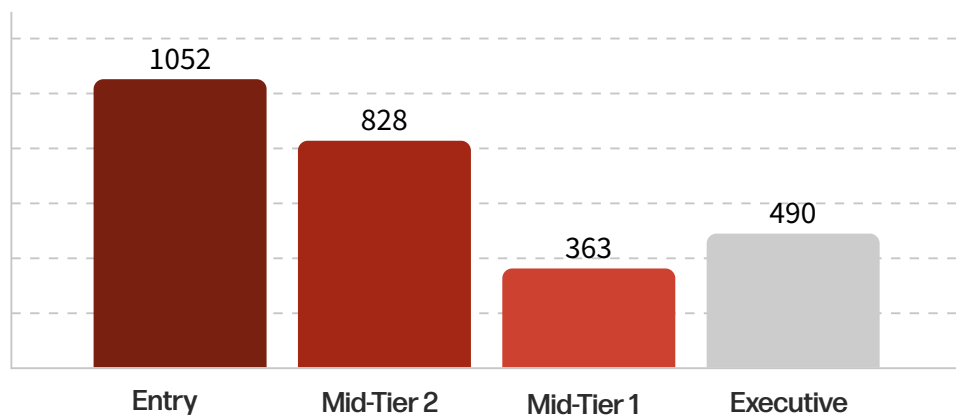
**Gender Diversity**

**1,041** **1,667**  
**Women** **Men**



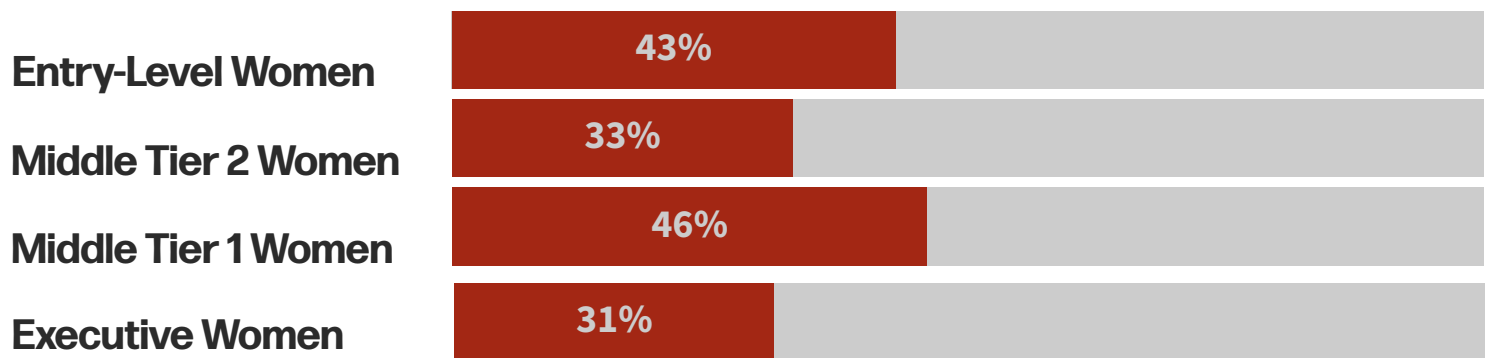
## Career Stage

Number of employees in entry, middle, and executive management



## Gender in Career Stage

Percentage of women in entry, middle, and executive management



# Big 12 Conference Department Overview

This table illustrates the aggregated proportion and percentage of men and women employed in staff and administrative positions in athletic departments in the Big 12 Conference.

	Total Men	Total Women	% Men	% Women
<b>Athletic Administration</b>	146	86	63%	37%
<b>Buildings and Grounds/Facilities/Equipment Room</b>	319	85	79%	21%
<b>Business Office</b>	53	84	39%	61%
<b>Campus Recreation</b>	2	4	33%	67%
<b>Communications</b>	112	43	72%	28%
<b>Compliance</b>	40	42	49%	51%
<b>NIL</b>	5	3	63%	38%
<b>Corporate Sales and Sponsorships</b>	78	33	70%	30%
<b>Event Operations</b>	28	10	74%	26%
<b>Fundraising</b>	109	72	60%	40%
<b>Marketing and Fan Engagement/Creative Services</b>	119	92	56%	44%
<b>Media</b>	66	17	80%	20%
<b>S&amp;C/Nutrition/Mental Health</b>	180	94	66%	34%
<b>Sports Medicine</b>	184	163	53%	47%
<b>Student Athlete Services</b>	83	159	34%	66%
<b>Technology Support</b>	25	4	86%	14%
<b>Ticket Sales</b>	109	36	75%	25%
<b>Travel</b>	1	10	9%	91%
<b>Concessions</b>	8	4	67%	33%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1667</b>	<b>1041</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>38%</b>

# SEC Aggregated Conference Data

# 16

**Colleges &  
Universities**

Alabama  
Arkansas  
Auburn  
Florida  
Georgia  
Kentucky  
LSU  
Mississippi State

Missouri  
Oklahoma  
Ole Miss  
South Carolina  
Tennessee  
Texas  
Texas A&M  
Vanderbilt\*

# \$188,818,379

**Median Athletic Department Budget (1)**

Range \$141,558,286 (Mississippi State) to Texas (\$232,323,521)

# 21

**Median Conference  
Learfield Ranking**

Range #1 (Texas) to #60  
(Mississippi State)

# 3,637

**Total Athletic Department  
Staff & Administration**

Does not include head coaches or  
coaching staffs

# 1

**Women Athletic  
Directors\***

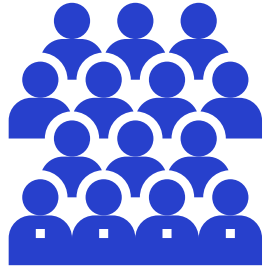
(includes interim title)

# Southeastern Conference

## Total Administrative Employees

**3,637**

Representing all Athletic Departments in the Conference



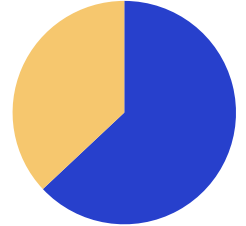
## Gender Diversity

**1,351**

Women

**2,286**

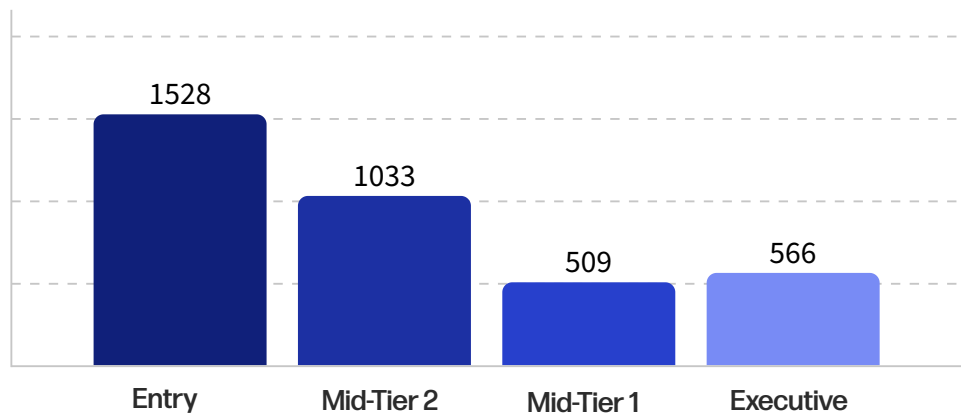
Men



■ Men (63) ■ Women (37)

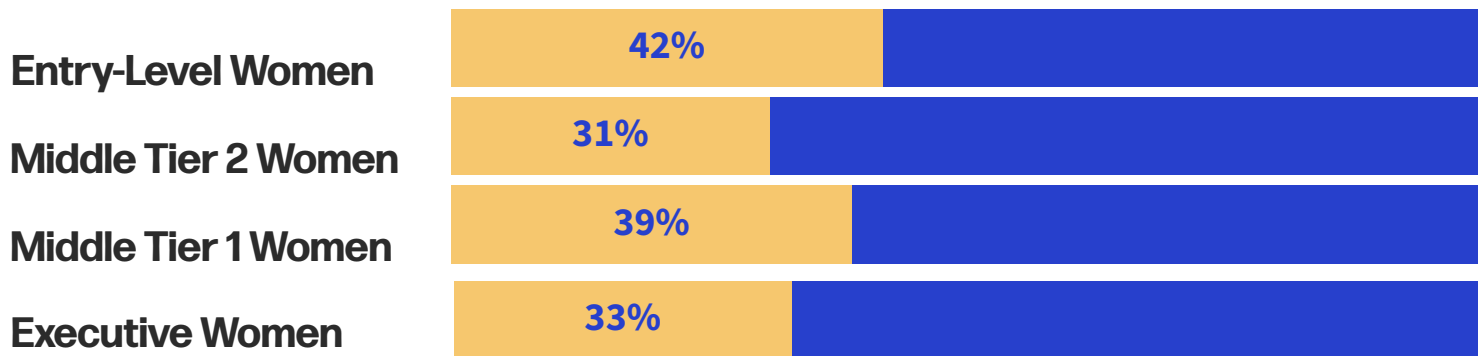
## Career Stage

Number of employees in entry, middle, and executive management



## Gender in Career Stage

Percentage of women in entry, middle, and executive management



# Southeastern Conference Department Overview

This table illustrates the aggregated proportion and percentage of men and women employed in staff and administrative positions in athletic departments in the Southeastern Conference.

	Total Men	Total Women	% Men	% Women
Athletic Administration	146	86	63%	37%
Buildings and Grounds/Facilities/Equipment Room	319	85	79%	21%
Business Office	53	84	39%	61%
Campus Recreation	2	4	33%	67%
Communications	112	43	72%	28%
Compliance	40	42	49%	51%
NIL	5	3	63%	38%
Corporate Sales and Sponsorships	78	33	70%	30%
Event Operations	28	10	74%	26%
Fundraising	109	72	60%	40%
Marketing and Fan Engagement/Creative Services	119	92	56%	44%
Media	66	17	80%	20%
S&C/Nutrition/Mental Health	180	94	66%	34%
Sports Medicine	184	163	53%	47%
Student Athlete Services	83	159	34%	66%
Technology Support	25	4	86%	14%
Ticket Sales	109	36	75%	25%
Travel	1	10	9%	91%
Concessions	8	4	67%	33%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1667</b>	<b>1041</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>38%</b>

30

# Group of 5 Aggregated Overview



# Group of 5 Aggregated Conference Data

**5**

**Conferences**

**AAC  
CUSA  
MAC  
MWC  
Sunbelt**

**62**

**Colleges &  
Universities**

**\$42,642,154**

**Median Athletic Department Budget (1)**

Range \$21,116,234 (Louisiana Monroe) to \$96,611,742 (San Diego State)

**156**

**Median Conference  
Learfield Ranking**

Range #76 (Air Force) to  
#304 (Kennesaw State)

**5,023**

**Total Athletic Department  
Staff & Administration**

Does not include head coaches or  
coaching staffs

**5**

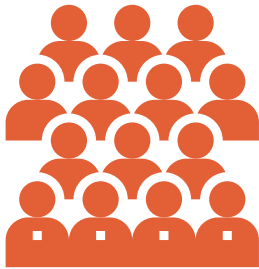
**Women Athletic  
Directors**  
(includes interim title)

# Group of 5 Career Stages

## Total Administrative Employees

**5,023**

Representing all Group of 5 Athletic Departments

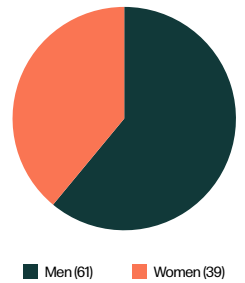


## Gender Diversity

**1,944** **3,079**

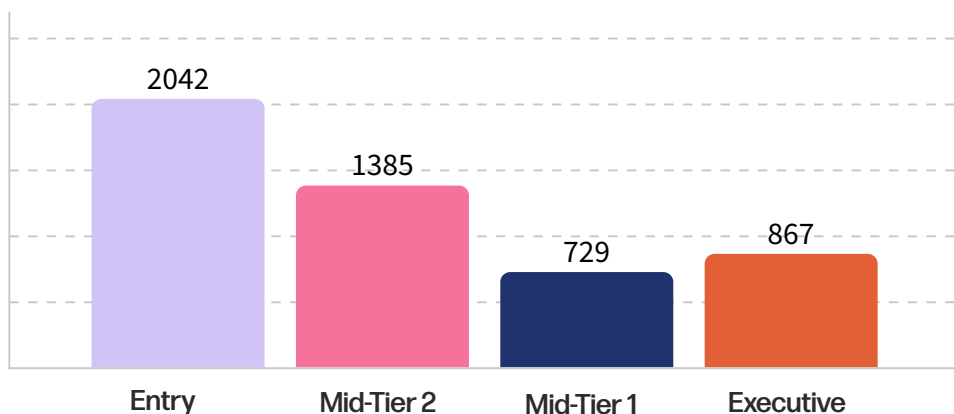
Women

Men



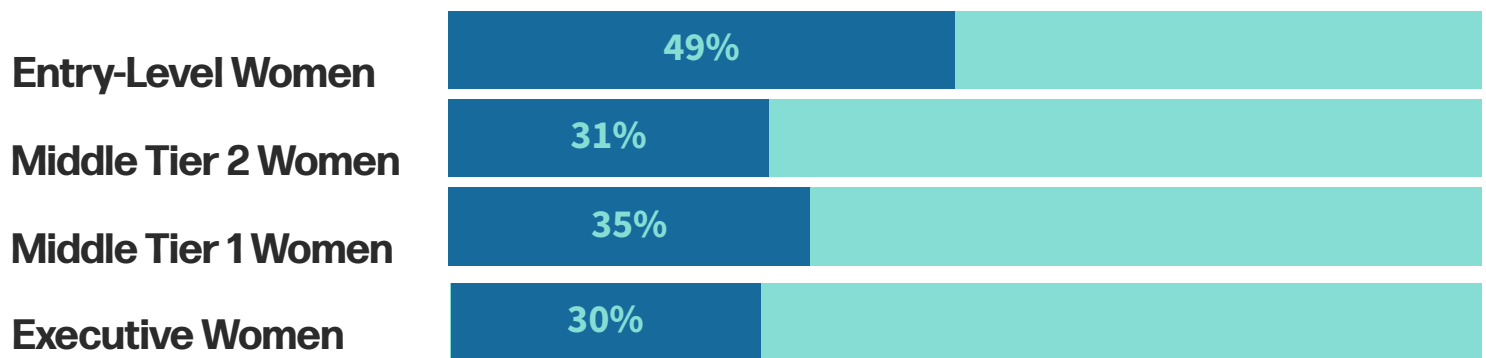
## Career Stage

Number of employees in entry, middle, and executive management



## Gender in Career Stage

Percentage of women in entry, middle, and executive management





# Group of 5 Department Overview

This table illustrates the aggregated proportion and percentage of men and women employed in staff and administrative positions in athletic departments across all Group of 5 conferences.

	TOTAL	Total Men	Total Women	% Men	% Women
Athletic Administration	767	494	273	64%	36%
Buildings and Grounds/Facilities/Equipment Room	485	397	88	82%	18%
Business Office	272	98	174	36%	64%
Campus Recreation	13	5	8	38%	62%
Communications	255	204	51	80%	20%
Compliance	137	65	72	47%	53%
NIL	10	6	4	60%	40%
Corporate Sales and Sponsorships	197	141	56	72%	28%
Event Operations	44	29	15	66%	34%
Fundraising	227	139	88	62%	38%
Marketing and Fan Engagement/Creative Services	411	278	133	68%	32%
Media	101	83	18	82%	18%
S&C/Nutrition/Mental Health	543	374	169	69%	31%
Sports Medicine	782	380	402	49%	51%
Student Athlete Services	494	185	309	37%	63%
Technology Support	24	21	3	88%	13%
Ticket Sales	250	176	74	71%	29%
Travel	5	0	5	0%	100%
Concessions	6	4	2	60%	40%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5023</b>	<b>3079</b>	<b>1944</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>39%</b>

34

# Group of 5 Conferences

**AAC**

**CUSA**

**MAC**

**MWC**

**Sunbelt**



# AAC Aggregated Conference Data

# 14

**Colleges &  
Universities**

Army  
Charlotte  
East Carolina  
Florida Atlantic  
Memphis  
Navy  
North Texas

Rice  
Temple  
Tulane  
Tulsa  
Alabama-Birmingham  
South Florida  
UT San Antonio\*

# \$50,725,276

**Median Athletic Department Budget (1)**

Range \$42,207,368 (Alabama-Birmingham) to \$70,722,257 (South Florida)

# 175

**Median Conference  
Learfield Ranking**

Range #92 (Memphis) to  
#262 (Alabama-Birmingham)

# 1,296

**Total Athletic Department  
Staff & Administration**

Does not include head coaches or  
coaching staffs

# 1

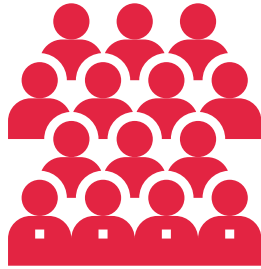
**Women Athletic  
Directors\***  
(includes interim title)

# American Athletic Conference

## Total Administrative Employees

**1,296**

Representing all Athletic Departments in the Conference



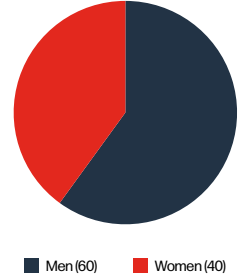
## Gender Diversity

**521**

Women

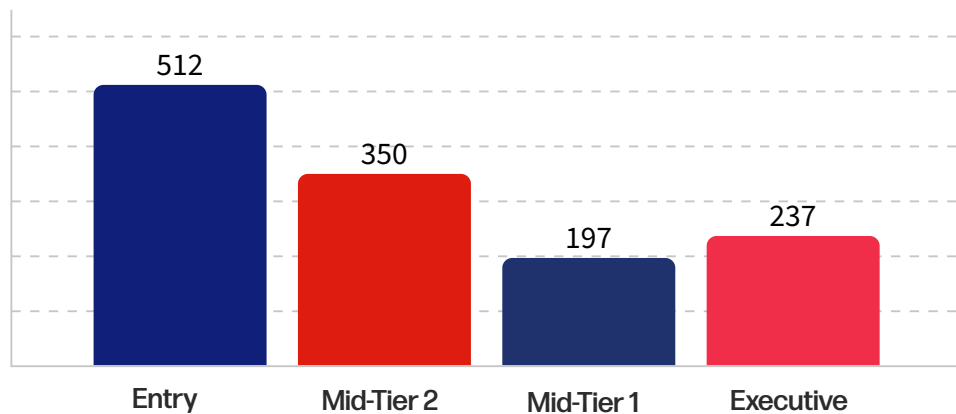
**775**

Men



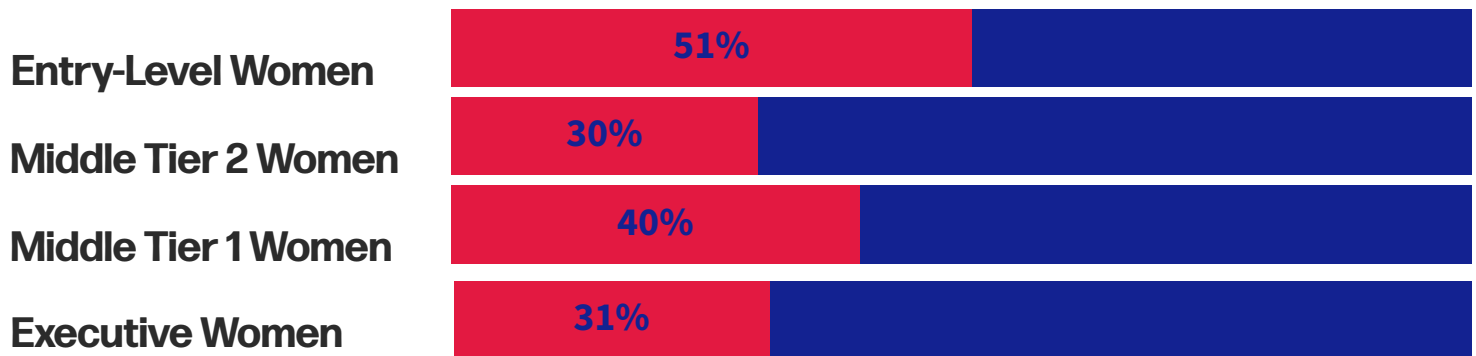
## Career Stage

Number of employees in entry, middle, and executive management



## Gender in Career Stage

Percentage of women in entry, middle, and executive management



# American Athletic Conference Department Overview

This table illustrates the aggregated proportion and percentage of men and women employed in staff and administrative positions in athletic departments in the American Athletic Conference.

	Total Men	Total Women	% Men	% Women
Athletic Administration	103	59	64%	36%
Buildings and Grounds/Facilities/Equipment Room	107	29	79%	21%
Business Office	31	42	42%	58%
Campus Recreation	0	0	0%	0%
Communications	66	12	85%	15%
Compliance	16	20	44%	56%
NIL	1	2	33%	67%
Corporate Sales and Sponsorships	16	4	80%	20%
Event Operations	12	7	63%	37%
Fundraising	50	35	59%	41%
Marketing and Fan Engagement/Creative Services	80	36	69%	31%
Media	21	4	84%	16%
S&C/Nutrition/Mental Health	85	46	65%	35%
Sports Medicine	99	110	47%	53%
Student Athlete Services	47	98	32%	68%
Technology Support	7	0	100%	0%
Ticket Sales	34	17	67%	33%
Travel	0	0	0%	0%
Concessions	0	0	0%	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>775</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>40%</b>

# CUSA Aggregated Conference Data

**10**

**Colleges &  
Universities**

**Florida International  
Jacksonville State  
Kennesaw State  
Liberty  
Louisiana Tech**

**Middle Tennessee State  
New Mexico State  
Sam Houston  
UT El Paso  
Western Kentucky**

**\$38,765,513**

**Median Athletic Department Budget (1)**

Range \$30,741,026 (Louisiana Tech) to \$45,274,382 (Florida International)

**156**

**Median Conference  
Learfield Ranking**

Range #118 (Liberty) to  
#304 (Kennesaw State)

**711**

**Total Athletic Department  
Staff & Administration**

Does not include head coaches or  
coaching staffs

**0**

**Women Athletic  
Directors**  
(includes interim title)

# Conference USA

## Total Administrative Employees

711

Representing all Athletic Departments in the Conference



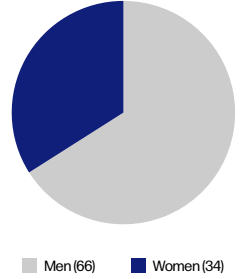
## Gender Diversity

244

Women

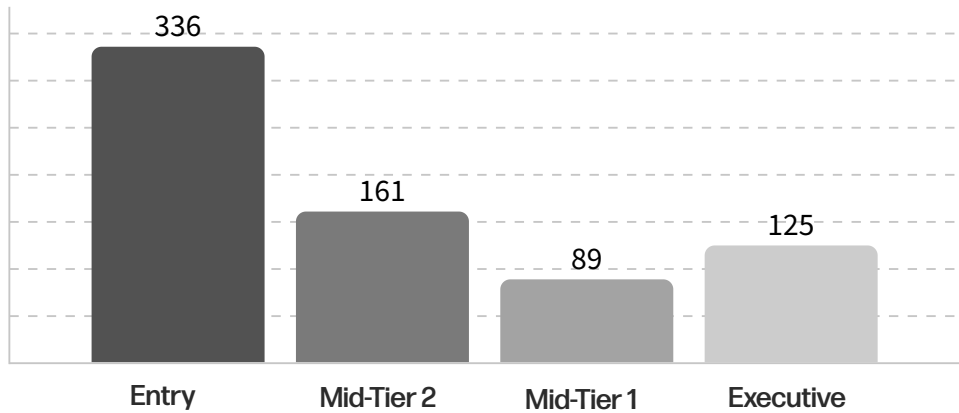
467

Men



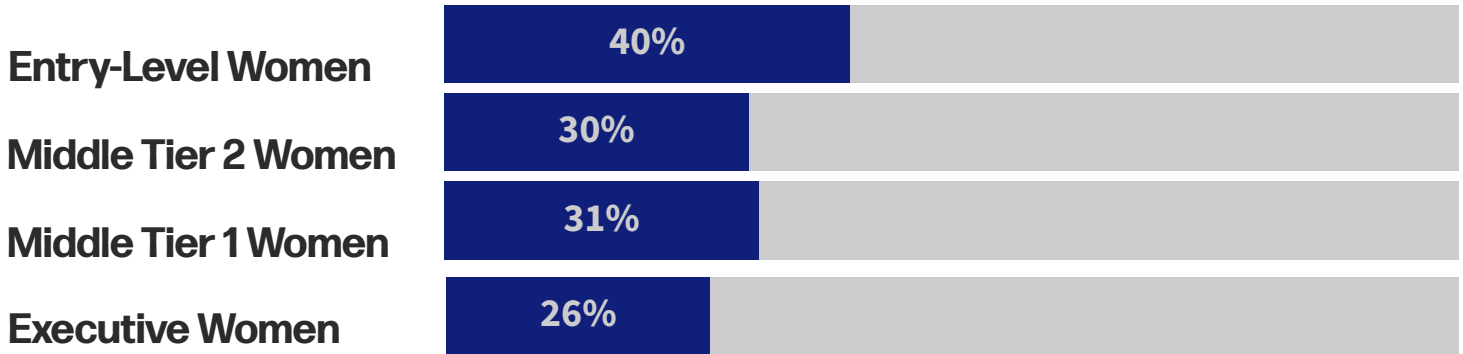
## Career Stage

Number of employees in entry, middle, and executive management



## Gender in Career Stage

Percentage of women in entry, middle, and executive management



# Conference USA Department Overview

This table illustrates the aggregated proportion and percentage of men and women employed in staff and administrative positions in athletic departments in Conference USA

	Total Men	Total Women	% Men	% Women
Athletic Administration	90	36	71%	29%
Buildings and Grounds/Facilities/Equipment Room	38	6	86%	14%
Business Office	4	31	11%	89%
Campus Recreation	0	0	0%	0%
Communications	45	7	87%	13%
Compliance	11	6	65%	35%
NIL	1	0	100%	0%
Corporate Sales and Sponsorships	17	6	74%	26%
Event Operations	4	0	100%	0%
Fundraising	11	7	61%	39%
Marketing and Fan Engagement/Creative Services	57	20	74%	26%
Media	3	0	100%	0%
S&C/Nutrition/Mental Health	45	15	75%	25%
Sports Medicine	63	51	55%	45%
Student Athlete Services	47	49	49%	51%
Technology Support	0	0	0%	0%
Ticket Sales	31	10	76%	24%
Travel	0	0	0%	0%
Concessions	0	0	0%	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>34%</b>



# MAC Aggregated Conference Data

**12**

**Colleges &  
Universities**

**Akron  
Ball State  
Bowling Green State  
Buffalo  
Central Michigan\*  
Eastern Michigan**

**Kent State  
Miami (OH)  
Northern Illinois  
Ohio\*  
Toledo  
Western Michigan**

**\$34,695,795**

**Median Athletic Department Budget (1)**

Range \$26,413,529 (Northern Illinois) to \$41,235,356 (Western Michigan)

**196**

**Median Conference  
Learfield Ranking**

Range #110 (Western  
Michigan) to #300 (Buffalo)

**834**

**Total Athletic Department  
Staff & Administration**

Does not include head coaches or  
coaching staffs

**2**

**Women Athletic  
Directors\***  
(includes interim title)

# Mid-American Conference

## Total Administrative Employees

**834**

Representing all Athletic Departments in the Conference



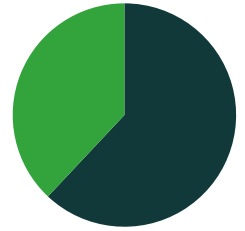
## Gender Diversity

**314**

Women

**520**

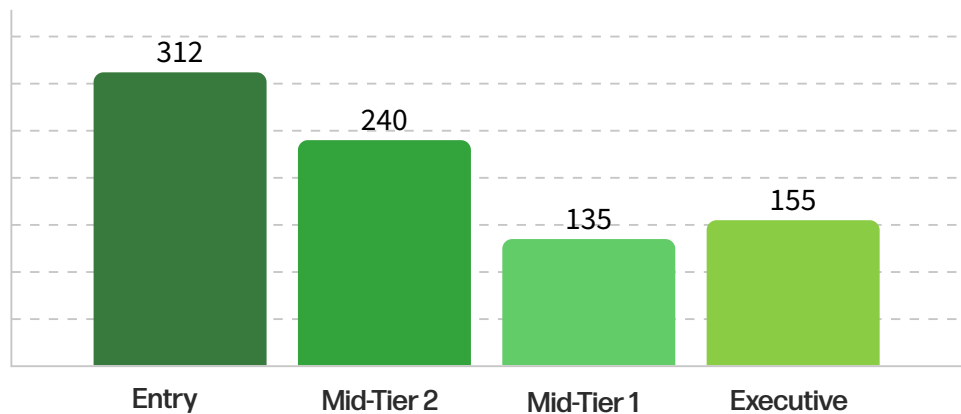
Men



Men (62) Women (38)

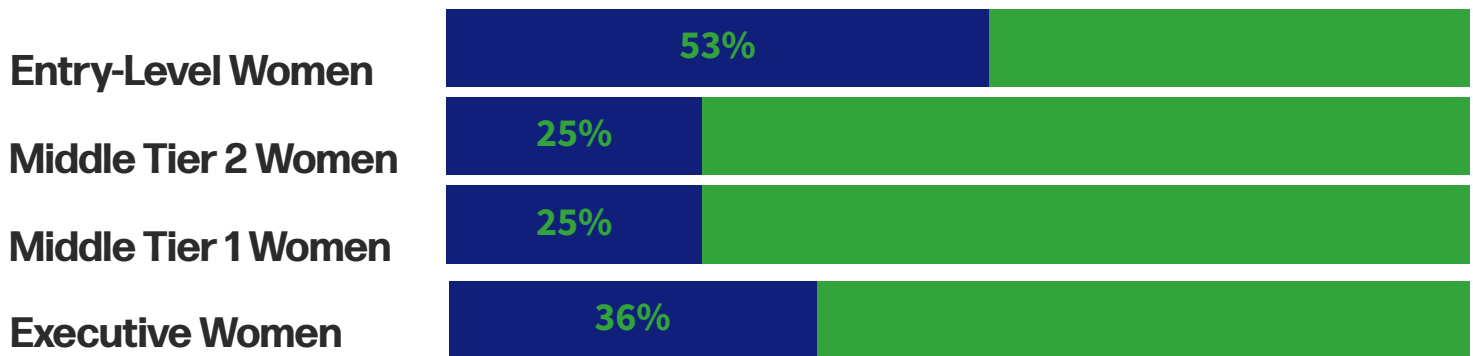
## Career Stage

Number of employees in entry, middle, and executive management



## Gender in Career Stage

Percentage of women in entry, middle, and executive management



# Mid-American Conference Department Overview

This table illustrates the aggregated proportion and percentage of men and women employed in staff and administrative positions in athletic departments in the Mid-American Conference.

	Total Men	Total Women	% Men	% Women
Athletic Administration	99	60	62%	38%
Buildings and Grounds/Facilities/Equipment Room	68	16	81%	19%
Business Office	11	23	32%	68%
Campus Recreation	5	8	38%	62%
Communications	17	10	63%	37%
Compliance	11	10	52%	48%
NIL	2	0	100%	0%
Corporate Sales and Sponsorships	19	7	73%	27%
Event Operations	1	1	50%	50%
Fundraising	24	14	63%	37%
Marketing and Fan Engagement/Creative Services	49	24	67%	33%
Media	10	1	91%	9%
S&C/Nutrition/Mental Health	61	28	69%	31%
Sports Medicine	79	67	54%	46%
Student Athlete Services	33	36	48%	52%
Technology Support	2	1	67%	33%
Ticket Sales	28	8	78%	22%
Travel	0	0	0%	0%
Concessions	1	0	100%	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>38%</b>

# Mountain West Aggregated Conference Data

**12**

**Colleges & Universities**

**Air Force  
Boise State  
Colorado State  
Fresno State  
Hawai'i  
Nevada\***

**New Mexico  
San Diego State  
San Jose State  
UNLV  
Utah State\*  
Wyoming**

**\$57,373,594**

**Median Athletic Department Budget (1)**

Range \$44,546,341 (San Jose State) to \$96,611,742 (San Diego State)

**134**

**Median Conference**

**Learfield Ranking**

Range #76 (Air Force) to  
#205 (Nevada)

**1,129**

**Total Athletic Department  
Staff & Administration**

Does not include head coaches or  
coaching staffs

**2**

**Women Athletic  
Directors**  
(includes interim title)

# Mountain West Conference

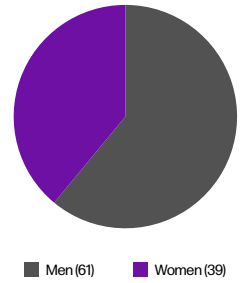
**Total Administrative Employees**  
**1,129**

Representing all Athletic Departments in the Conference



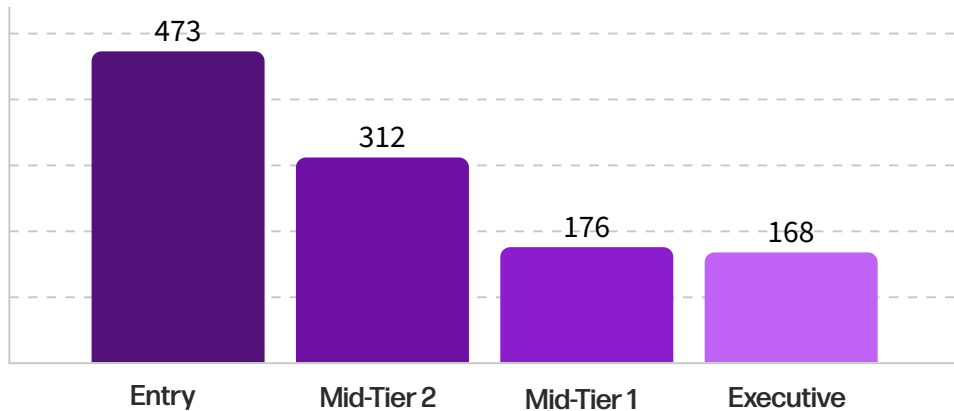
## Gender Diversity

**439** **690**  
**Women** **Men**



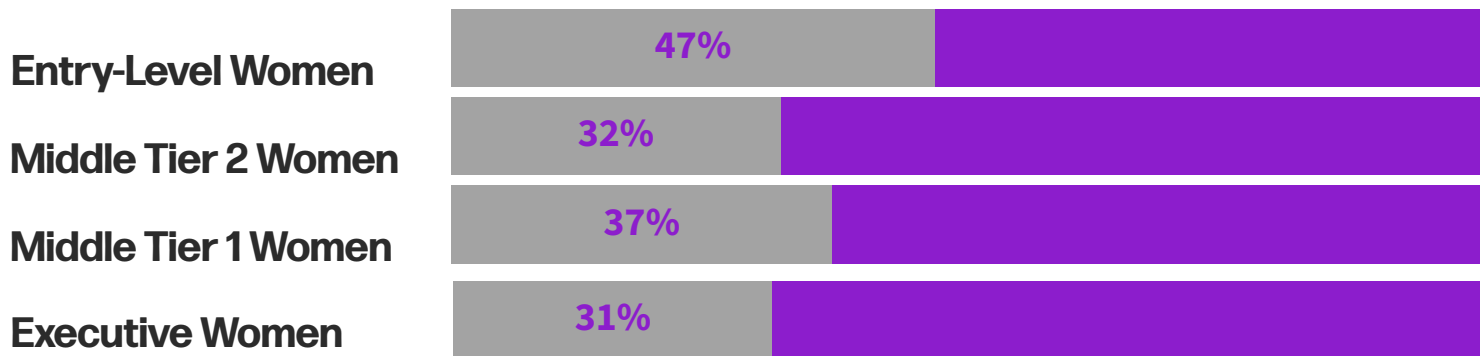
## Career Stage

Number of employees in entry, middle, and executive management



## Gender in Career Stage

Percentage of women in entry, middle, and executive management



# Mountain West Conference Department Overview

This table illustrates the aggregated proportion and percentage of men and women employed in staff and administrative positions in athletic departments in the Mountain West Conference.

	Total Men	Total Women	% Men	% Women
Athletic Administration	109	57	66%	34%
Buildings and Grounds/Facilities/Equipment Room	103	28	79%	21%
Business Office	33	53	38%	62%
Campus Recreation	0	0	0%	0%
Communications	33	11	75%	25%
Compliance	13	18	42%	58%
NIL	1	1	50%	50%
Corporate Sales and Sponsorships	36	9	80%	20%
Event Operations	3	2	60%	40%
Fundraising	37	25	60%	40%
Marketing and Fan Engagement/Creative Services	48	27	64%	36%
Media	18	7	72%	28%
S&C/Nutrition/Mental Health	91	50	65%	35%
Sports Medicine	69	74	48%	52%
Student Athlete Services	27	44	38%	62%
Technology Support	12	2	86%	14%
Ticket Sales	54	24	69%	31%
Travel	0	5	0%	100%
Concessions	3	2	60%	40%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>39%</b>

# Sunbelt Aggregated Conference Data

**14**

**Colleges &  
Universities**

**Appalachian State  
Arkansas State  
Coastal Carolina  
Georgia Southern  
Georgia State  
James Madison  
Louisiana Lafayette**

**Louisiana Monroe  
Marshall  
Old Dominion  
South Alabama  
Southern Miss  
Texas State  
Troy**

**\$39,111,867**

**Median Athletic Department Budget (1)**

Range \$21,116,234 (Louisiana Monroe) to \$68,035,339 (James Madison)

**141**

**Median Conference  
Learfield Ranking**

Range #77 (James Madison) to  
#301 (Louisiana Monroe)

**1,053**

**Total Athletic Department  
Staff & Administration**

Does not include head coaches or  
coaching staffs

**0**

**Women Athletic  
Directors**  
(includes interim title)

# Sunbelt Conference

## Total Administrative Employees

**1,053**

Representing all Athletic Departments in the Conference



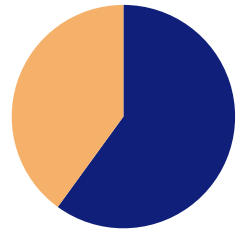
## Gender Diversity

**426**

Women

**627**

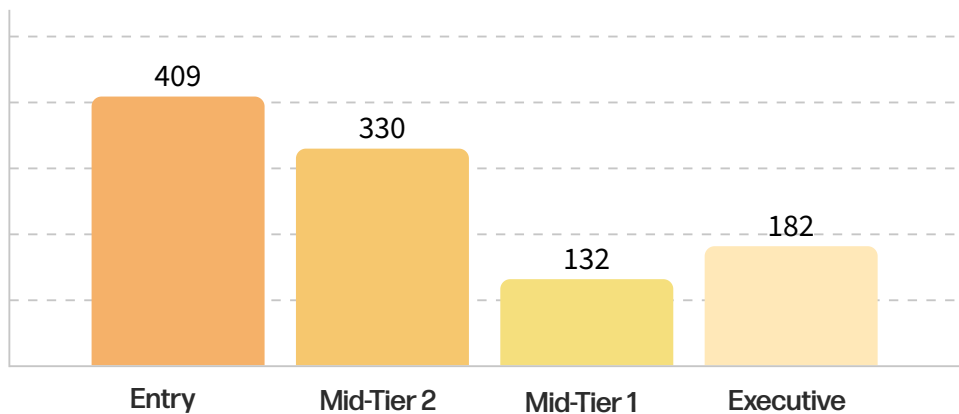
Men



Men (60) Women (40)

## Career Stage

Number of employees in entry, middle, and executive management



## Gender in Career Stage

Percentage of women in entry, middle, and executive management

### Entry-Level Women

**53%**

### Middle Tier 2 Women

**35%**

### Middle Tier 1 Women

**36%**

### Executive Women

**27%**



# Sunbelt Conference Department Overview

This table illustrates the aggregated proportion and percentage of men and women employed in staff and administrative positions in athletic departments in the Sunbelt Conference.

	Total Men	Total Women	% Men	% Women
Athletic Administration	93	61	60%	40%
Buildings and Grounds/Facilities/Equipment Room	81	9	90%	10%
Business Office	19	25	43%	57%
Campus Recreation	0	0	0%	0%
Communications	43	11	80%	20%
Compliance	14	18	44%	56%
NIL	1	1	50%	50%
Corporate Sales and Sponsorships	53	30	64%	36%
Event Operations	9	5	64%	36%
Fundraising	17	7	71%	29%
Marketing and Fan Engagement/Creative Services	44	26	63%	37%
Media	31	6	84%	16%
S&C/Nutrition/Mental Health	92	30	75%	25%
Sports Medicine	70	100	41%	59%
Student Athlete Services	31	82	27%	73%
Technology Support	0	0	0%	0%
Ticket Sales	29	15	66%	34%
Travel	0	0	0%	0%
Concessions	0	0	0%	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>40%</b>

# 50 Key Insights & Solutions



# Key Insights & Solutions

## Athletic Administrators

### Identify Leaks in the Pipeline – Pay Attention to Turnover

The current data from the Pipeline Project are clear, women are either leaving or not advancing within athletic departments. Data from other research suggests that people with minoritized identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, LGBTQ) are similarly affected (10).

#### Action Steps

- **Regularly review turnover rates** and common demographics of those leaving. (How to calculate employee turnover)
- **Conduct exit interviews or surveys** to understand reasons for leaving. Recent research suggests people leave when they do not feel supported in their job or by their supervisor; high workload, work-family demands, and low compensation also contribute to turnover (11).
- **Look for high turnover (>20%) in departments**, which may indicate issues such as poor supervision or toxic culture. Losing top talent, especially women and minorities, could point to deeper problems. (Why >20%?)

### Build (and Repair) the Leadership Pipeline

Building and repairing the Pipeline vary in cost and complexity. Still, the simplicity of some actions steps (e.g., setting expectations and goals; succession planning) is often overlooked by new and seasoned professionals.

#### Action Steps

- **Set clear expectations and goals** for your team and ensure all supervisors do the same to enhance engagement and inclusion. (EXAMPLE: How to set goals and expectations)
- **Evaluate succession planning.** Leaders should assess whether current career development processes, leadership training, and advancement pathways are inclusive and supportive of women.
- **Create a Learning and Development role or office.** Studies show that investment in career development (e.g., skills, mentorship, leadership) significantly boosts employee retention, yet most athletic departments overlook this area. (EXAMPLE: Director of Talent Development)
- **Leverage existing resources.**
  - Universities have former practitioners and researchers with valuable skills and access to data. Athletic and academic departments can collaborate to create workshops, leadership pipelines, and research initiatives focused on training employees, supporting gender equity research, and offering leadership-focused internships.
  - Encourage employees to utilize university-wide professional development programs.
- **Create clear growth paths, mentorship, and leadership training** to reduce turnover, especially in entry- and mid-level roles.

For more recommendations and actions steps, please visit:

<https://the-pipeline-project.org/athletic-administrators-industry-leaders/>

# Key Insights & Solutions

## Industry Leaders

### Promote Industry-Wide Change

#### Action Steps

- **Conference-Wide Initiatives:** Power 4 and Group of 5 conferences should collaborate to develop conference-wide initiatives to address gender inequality. This could include joint professional development programs, diversity hiring campaigns, and collective accountability measures.
- **Public Accountability:** Publish gender and diversity metrics publicly across conferences and institutions. This transparency can create healthy competition among schools to improve their diversity standing while also setting industry-wide standards for inclusion.

### Encourage and Embrace Research and Education

#### Action Steps

- **Further Research:** Support ongoing academic research into gender, race, and other diversity issues in sports management. This research should investigate the systemic barriers women face and develop actionable solutions.
- **Educational Programs:** Universities should offer more coursework, seminars, and workshops focused on diversity and inclusion within sports administration, ensuring that future leaders are educated on these issues from the start.

By implementing these recommendations, athletic departments, conferences, and institutions can address the gender disparities highlighted in *The Pipeline Project 2024* and work toward building a more inclusive, equitable, and diverse environment in intercollegiate athletics. These strategies will not only improve opportunities for women and underrepresented groups but also enhance the overall functioning and culture of athletic organizations.

For more recommendations and actions steps, please visit:

<https://the-pipeline-project.org/athletic-administrators-industry-leaders/>

# Key Insights & Solutions

## Entry- and Middle Level Professionals

This data highlights the importance of being proactive in career development, seeking mentorship, and understanding organizational dynamics for advancement. Though challenges exist, especially for women, actively focusing on professional growth and participating in diversity and inclusion efforts can help overcome barriers to leadership.

### Proactive Career Development

For both entry- and mid-level employees, the path to career advancement may require proactive efforts in developing leadership skills, building professional networks, and seeking mentorship from those in higher positions.

#### Action Steps

- **Pursue leadership development, continuing education, and networking opportunities** inside and outside college athletics.
- **Engage with mentors**, particularly senior professionals, to navigate career challenges and prepare for leadership roles (12).
- **Seek sponsorship from senior leaders (13)** to help overcome career obstacles. Mentorship is especially critical for women aspiring to leadership. ([The Difference Between Sponsorship and Mentorship](#))

### Balancing Aspirations with Workplace Realities

While executive titles (associate AD and above) make up only 16% of positions, don't be discouraged. Recognize that reaching these roles is challenging, but with the right strategy, they are achievable.

#### Action Steps

- **Do your job and do it well.** Become an expert in your skill set. Develop yourself and focus on what you can control – developing your professional brand.
- **Take a long-term approach to career planning** and develop competencies that will help you advance into senior roles.

### Leverage Industry Resources

Engage with professional organizations in sports administration that offer resources, training, and networking opportunities.

#### Action Steps

- **Use industry associations** (e.g., [NACDA](#), [Women Leaders in Sports](#)) for career development and advocacy for gender equity.
- **Encourage your department to invest in internal professional development programs** (EXAMPLE: [University of Louisville Athletics Leadership Development Institute](#))

For more recommendations and actions steps, please visit:

<https://the-pipeline-project.org/entry-and-middle-level-professionals/>

# Key Insights & Solutions

## Prospective Employees and Current Students

This data provides a mixed picture of the opportunities and challenges in intercollegiate athletics for prospective employees. With more than 13,000 entry- and early mid-level positions in college athletic departments coupled with high-turnover rates, the opportunity for employment is strong. Still, prospective employees, including current students, are advised to understand: (1) employment trends, (2) position and role type, and (3) skillsets needed for job and career success.

### Importance of Career Development Resources

The data indicate that career advancement in intercollegiate athletics may require strategic career development, particularly for women who are underrepresented at mid-tier and executive levels.

#### Action Steps

- **Seek professional development opportunities** such as mentorship programs, leadership training, and networking. Understanding the importance of ongoing skill-building and career development is crucial for long-term success in this field.
- **Find internships or volunteer** in various areas of an athletic department. This will help you determine how and where to best use and develop your skills.
- **Build your people management skills.** Fundraising, compliance, and marketing officers work with athletes, coaches, athletic administrators, and external constituents on topics ranging from recruiting to resource allocation to legal issues. Spending time in these areas will help you build networks, navigate complex issues across departments, and develop important external relationships.

### Plan for Long Term Success

Think strategically about your career trajectories and actively seek opportunities for skill-building, leadership roles, and professional certifications.

#### Action Steps

- **Develop a 5-year career plan** focused on growth, not titles. ([How to Develop a 5-Year career plan](#))
- **Regularly assess** your job and career goals.
- **Be realistic.** Growth and advancement take time. Don't expect a raise (besides cost of living, and that's not guaranteed!) or promotion in your first year.

For more recommendations and actions steps, please visit:

<https://the-pipeline-project.org/prospective-employees-and-current-students/>

# Key Insights & Solutions

## Educators & Research Teams

This data highlights the ongoing gender imbalance in intercollegiate athletics, providing valuable insights for curriculum development, research, and educational initiatives.

### **Research on Gender Equity in Sports Management**

The imbalance in mid-tier and executive roles points to a need for more research on gender equity, leadership barriers, and workplace culture in sports. There's a strong opportunity for further research on leadership development, mentorship, and the impact of organizational culture on women's career progression.

### **Curriculum Development for Diversity and Inclusion**

With gender disparities in leadership, it's crucial to integrate DEI topics into sport management curricula. Courses should include case studies, research, and discussions around gender dynamics and strategies to foster more inclusive environments.

### **Mentoring Women Students**

Women are well-represented in entry-level roles but face challenges in advancing. Educators should mentor female students, connect them with professional organizations (e.g., Women Leaders in Sports), and provide guidance on leadership and career development.

### **Develop Leadership Programs**

There is a clear need for leadership programs to prepare women and underrepresented groups for senior roles. Collaboration between academic and athletic departments can create workshops, internships, and mentoring opportunities that build essential skills for leadership.

### **Addressing Cultural and Structural Barriers**

The drop in women's representation from entry-level to executive roles signals structural barriers like bias and lack of sponsorship. Research on these factors can inform policies that create more equitable career pathways.

### **Engage All Students and Faculty**

Both men and women must be engaged in gender equity efforts. Educators should encourage male students to become allies by addressing unconscious bias and promoting inclusive hiring practices.

### **Empowering Future Change Agents**

Integrating social justice and leadership development into curricula can inspire students to become advocates for change and help create more inclusive environments in their future careers.

### **Creating Partnerships**

Academic and athletic departments should collaborate to address gender diversity gaps by developing leadership programs, internships, and research initiatives. Partnerships with community sports organizations can also help advance women in the broader sports industry.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **What is *The Pipeline Project*?**

The purpose of *The Pipeline Project* is to capture the dynamic job positions and management structures of NCAA Division I athletic departments and conferences. More specifically, *The Pipeline Project* illustrates how men and women are represented in various positions and athletic department management and leadership structures. This data does not include coaches or coaching staffs.

## **Why is *The Pipeline Project* important?**

For more than 5 decades, sport management scholars and practitioners have expressed concern that women and racial and sexual minorities may have less access and opportunity to progress through athletic department structures to decision-making positions; therefore, *The Pipeline Project* serves as a resource to identify "leaks" in talent pipelines both in job areas (e.g., compliance, marketing) and managerial tiers (i.e., entry, middle, and executive). The inaugural report focuses only on gender (see also Acknowledgements, page 57)

## **Who is the audience for *The Pipeline Project*?**

*The Pipeline Project* is designed to serve as a resource for intercollegiate athletic administrators, professional organizations that serve intercollegiate athletic personnel, and current and future sports managers to help them understand job positions, employment trends, and the overall state of gender diversity within job positions and leadership structures. Academicians across disciplines are also encouraged to use this data to build research projects and long-term research agendas.

## **How was data for *The Pipeline Project* collected?**

The research team pulled data from athletic department directories for each university in the Power Four [Big Ten, Big 12, Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Southeastern Conference (SEC)] and Group of Five [American Athletic Conference (AAC), Conference

USA (CUSA), Mid-American Conference (MAC), Mountain West Conference (MWC), Sun Belt Conference (SBC)] between May and June 2024. Data included names, titles, and departments. In anticipation of the upcoming conference realignment, the research team updated the conferences the universities are expected to represent for the academic year 2024-2025.

## **What does this report include?**

The inaugural version of *The Pipeline Project* looks at staff and administrative positions and trends within individual athletic departments, conferences, and aggregated data for the Power 4 and Group of 5 conferences which also constitute the NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision. It does not include data on coaches or coaching staffs. Moreover, this report includes data on gender, but does not yet include data on race and ethnicity. The research team hopes to include this information in future reports.

## **How were career stages defined?**

Ott and Beaumont (2020) originally categorized titles of athletic staff as entry-level, mid-level tier II, mid-level tier I, and executive. The research team slightly modified the executive tier to acknowledge additional administrative decision-makers beyond the athletic director. See page 7 for more detailed information.

## **How did the research team account for gender?**

The research team collected data from athletic department directories for each university in the Power 4 and Group of 5. For additional information on gender, please refer to the "Acknowledgements" section on page 57.

## **How do I cite *The Pipeline Project*?**

Hancock, M.G., Kopka, N., & Green, E.R. (2024). *The Pipeline Project: 2024 Employment Overview: NCAA Football Bowl Subdivisions* [white paper]. University of Louisville.

For inquiries, please contact Meg Hancock (meg.hancock@louisville.edu).



# Dedication

*The Pipeline Project* is dedicated to the pioneering individuals and relentless advocates who have fought for gender equality in intercollegiate athletics. While there is still work to be done, their courage, perseverance, and unwavering commitment have paved the way for a more inclusive and equitable landscape in sports. Their efforts have not only transformed opportunities for women/femme athletes but have also inspired a generation to continue the work toward equality and justice. We honor their legacy and are grateful for their invaluable contributions to intercollegiate athletics.

A special thanks to scholars past and present who have examined the experiences of intercollegiate employees, especially those in minoritized populations.

Dr. Hancock would like to especially thank the following scholars and practitioners -- you lead, I follow: Laura Burton, Sally Shaw, Josie Harper, Marlene Dixon, Ehren Green, Brenda Pitts, Nefertiti Walker, Elizabeth Taylor, Amy Calabrese, Heidi Grappendorf, Janelle Wells, AJ Grube, Gale Rhodes, George Cunningham, Warren Whisenant, Alyssa Murphy, Nicole Melton, Jaqueline McDowell, Jenny McGarry, Ajhanai Keaton, Joy DeSensi, R. Vivian Acosta, Linda Jean Carpenter, Mary Hums, Glenna Bower, Vicky Chun, Drew Galbraith, Ann Marie Guglieri, Bonnie Tiell, Barbara Osbourne, Lisa Kihl, Janet Fink, Akilah Carter-Francique, Matt Huml, Windy Dees, Jennifer Hoffman, Karen Danychuk, Donna Pastore, Mary Jo Kane, Erin Buzuvus, Lindsey Darwin, Alicia Cintron, Sarah Williams, Erienne Weight, Christine Grant, Ellen Staurowsky, the leaders, coaches, and athletes of the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW), and my current and former students.

# Acknowledgements

**Data Collection.** Data for *The Pipeline Project* was collected in May and June 2024. The research team recognizes that people may change departments or stop-out of working in college athletics.

**Gender.** The research team acknowledges that data presented in *The Pipeline Project* predominantly reflects the binary understanding of gender (man/woman). This is a result of the data sources available. However, the research team of *The Pipeline Project* recognize that gender is a complex and fluid construct that extends beyond binary categories. Gender fluidity, non-binary identities, and other gender experiences are valid and significant aspects of the broader gender spectrum.

While this inaugural report may not fully encompass all aspects of gender diversity, we are committed to acknowledging and valuing the range of gender identities and experiences of staff members and administrators in intercollegiate athletics. You matter and you count. If you would like to share your gender identity for inclusion in this report and in conjunction with your respective institution, conference, and/or aggregated Power 4/Group of 5 data, please contact Meg Hancock (meg.hancock@louisville.edu).

**Race and ethnicity.** The research team acknowledges *The Pipeline Project* does not include data on race or ethnicity. We recognize this is a short-coming of this inaugural report. Future data collection and analyses will aim to incorporate a more inclusive perspective on race and ethnicity, as there is data to suggest people with multiple minoritized identities may encounter more barriers to accessing and moving through the pipeline.

# Footnotes

(1) NCAA. (2024). NCAA Demographics Database.

(2) NCAA. (2024). NCAA Demographics Database.

(3) See reference list: Grappendorf & Lough, 2006; Grappendorf et al., 2004.

(4) See reference list: Dickman et al., 2021; Grappendorf & Lough, 2006; Grappendorf et al., 2004; wood et al., 2019)

(5) See reference list: Acosta & Carpernter, 2011; Burton, 2015; Hoffman, 2011; Lapchick, 2023

(6) See reference list: Burton, 2015; Burton et al., 2009; Burton et al., 2011; Darwin et al., 2021; Dixon et al., 2007; Hancock & Hums, 215, 2016; Hardin et al., 2022; Keaton, 2022; Taylor & Hardin, 2016; Taylor et al, 2024; Taylor et al., 2017; Taylor & Wells 2017

(7) See reference list: Burton, 2015; Burton et al., 2009; Burton et al., 2011 Darwin et al., 2021; Dixon et al., 2007; Hancock & Hums, 215, 2016; Hardin et al., 2022; Keaton, 2022; Taylor & Hardin, 2016; Taylor et al, 2024; Taylor et al., 2017; Taylor & Wells 2017

(8) See reference list: Hancock & Hums, 2015, 2016; Hancock et al., 2024; Taylor et al., 2024; Taylor & Wells, 2017

(9) Adopted from Ott & Beaumont, 2020

(10) See reference list: Cunningham (2015); Howe and Rockhill (2020); Keaton & Cooper (2022); McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017; Melton & Cunningham (2014); Shim et al. (2020).

(11) Hancock et al., 2024

(12) Bower, 2009; Hancock et al., 2017; Wells & Hancock, 2017

(13) Wells & Hancock, 2017

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