



**THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS
67TH ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RECEPTION
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**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT
By Glenn Lungarini**

It's hard to believe that nearly a year has passed since my appointment as executive director of CAS-CIAC. I vividly recall, just about this time last year, sitting upstairs, hands sweaty, heart racing with excitement, my mind trying to organize all the thoughts I felt were important to share as I interviewed in front of my esteemed colleagues and members of the CAS board. As the saying goes, what a difference a year makes. Today, 365 days later, so much has changed... I am now, downstairs... That's it. That's all that has changed. I'm still in front my esteemed colleagues and members of the CAS board, with the same excitement and thinking the same thing... don't embarrass yourself.

The success of our organization is dependent on adherence to the CAS-CIAC mission of providing exceptional education-based experiences, in both academics and athletics. It is our goal to not just meet the needs of our membership but help each other grow in professional and personal capacity. As I stated upstairs a year ago, if we're not pushing the limits of our success, we're not growing. Today, I am proud of our growth. I am proud of the capacity we have built through professional development offerings and the willingness of our membership to respectfully engage in deep, difficult conversations, while always maintaining the best interest of students as our primary focus.

Personally, my experiences this year have deepened my belief that relationships are the foundation of success in any organization. The meaningful relationships and network that we build serve as the metric by which our success can be measured. As the profession of education continues to change, rattled by financial struggles, legislative mandates, social-emotional needs, school security concerns, and the impact of an ever-evolving digital society, we must never lose sight of the fact that we are in a service industry; and, the relationships we develop through our interactions with people, of all ages, will ultimately determine our success.

Attend any conference or lecture on organizational leadership and inevitably you will hear a speaker refer to the importance of knowing where you've come from,

understanding where you are, and having a goal for where you want to be. Whether they are talking about personal growth, or organizational growth, those elements remain the same. So, let's take a few minutes to reflect on those areas.

Where we've come from... Our two previous executive directors, Mike Savage and Dr. Karissa Niehoff, identified state legislators, courts, budget, revenue sources, and relationships and opportunities as their areas of greatest concern. Throughout Karissa's remarkable tenure, CAS-CIAC was established as a respected partner in education- and athletic-related legislation. Through the efforts of both, CAS-CIAC has avoided the courts for over 20 years. Mike and Karissa guided CAS-CIAC through some difficult economic times while empowering our marketing team of Stephanie Ford and Mary Lee Weber to grow our sponsorships. Both were dedicated to maintaining the importance of our relationships with the State Department of Education, CAPSS, CABE, CAAD, CHSCA, CEA, ATF, CFA, and CCER, among other influential organizations.

Where we are now... In 2018-2019, we continue to build upon the legislative work that Mike and Karissa led. This year, more than 300 proposed bills were connected to either education or interscholastic athletics. CAS-CIAC provided testimony, either through written submission or in-person, on those bills which our lobbyists, Marshall Collins and Michael Rell, advised could advance out of committee. In addition, CAS-CIAC served as an appointed member on nine (9) legislative task forces. The most critical of these task forces were concerned with classroom safety, school climate and bullying, digital citizenship, and student data privacy. Our purpose on these commissions is always to provide an administrative perspective on the implementation of proposed legislation and its impact for students, staff, and the communities in which we work. I am proud of the outcomes thus far in the 2019 legislative session. The voice of CAS-CIAC is being heard and respected in Hartford.

We continue to work collaboratively with other education-based organizations within Connecticut and around the country. CAS-CIAC is particularly proud of our partnership with CALAS as we continue to support its efforts in building an organization and providing a voice for Latino administrators. Our collaborative work with CAPSS, CABE, and CCER has provided exceptional professional development opportunities for our membership on topics such as social-emotional learning, STEM instruction, and rigor. On the athletic side, we continue to enjoy a strong relationship with CAAD and CHSCA, as well as the many officials'

associations within Connecticut. Through our collective work, CIAC continues to provide student-athletes with a safe, competitive, education-based experience. Notable athletic advancements include the extension of the girls' basketball tournament to five divisions for the 2019-2020 season and a 50% reduction in full contact exposure during the regular football season.

In 2018-2019, we have further explored the topic of transgender participation in high school athletics. There is no finer example of respectful collaboration on a deep and difficult conversation than this topic. What I am most proud of, from our work on the CIAC transgender policy, is the commitment of our organization to speak from the voice of our membership and not the perspective of any one individual. In reviewing our policies, all high school principals were surveyed. In addition, a subcommittee comprised of principals, athletic directors, coaches, and CIAC staff worked together to ensure the CAS-CIAC mission of providing exceptional education-based experiences for all students was being upheld. Our conversations on transgender participation are not over. As we continue to learn more about this and other important topics, I am committed to ensure, as executive director, that I speak with the voice of our membership, your voice, and not my own individual perspective.

Where do we want to go... If we're not pushing the limits and moving forward, then we're not growing. As we look forward to the future at CAS-CIAC we keep our focus on providing students a better tomorrow through administrative leadership. To accomplish this, we will continue to provide cutting edge professional development through our Center for Leadership and Innovation. CLI will provide opportunities for administrators to build professional capacity in critical areas such as social-emotional learning, school climate and culture, and technology. Budgets remain tight but creativity is free. CAS-CIAC will move forward with an aggressive fiscal plan that projects a deficit at the end of the 2019-2020 year. We do this with confidence in our team at CAS-CIAC to increase elementary membership, attract new sponsorship opportunities, and expand our E-Sports and NFHS revenue share potential. CAS-CIAC will be exploring new avenues in which we can support membership through administrative coaching, curriculum development, and regional professional development offerings.

CAS-CIAC is also heading into an exciting time in our organizational history. CIAC was established in 1921, and CAS in 1935, which means we are quickly coming upon the centennial anniversary of CIAC. In 98 years, CIAC has made a

significant contribution to high school athletics in Connecticut. In 84 years, CAS has positively impacted schools and administrators throughout the state. However, with the understanding that our greatest successes come from the development of meaningful relationships, it is without question that the establishment of CAS-CIAC as one entity in 1953 that has had the greatest impact on student experiences in our state.

Merging two successful organizations alone, however, does not guarantee continued success. It still comes back to the foundation that we are a service industry based in people. Sometimes, so much comes our way as administrators that we wonder about the value of our work. I believe Van France, founder of Disney Universities, when speaking about organizational growth, captured the current state of education well when he asked... “Are we growing with the show or just getting older? The trouble with people is that we get hardening of the mental arteries, cirrhosis of the enthusiasm, and arthritis of the imagination, along with chronic and sometimes acute allergies to supervision, subordinates, the whole darned system. Is it possible, that what we have gained through experience, we have lost through habit, and that what we have gained through organization, we have lost in enthusiasm?”

An organizational leader, who continually fosters our passion to learn and positively impacts student experiences is essential. And, that is why, I have mixed emotions about Ev Lyons’ retirement from retirement.

Ev, you have meant so much to so many. From your contributions throughout your career, to your exemplary leadership at CAS, to your work with the Lions, you are the person who has been the measure of successful leadership for over 40 years. As executive director, I speak with the voice of our membership in saying CAS-CIAC would not be where we are today without your vision and leadership. In breaking with my role as executive director, and speaking from my own personal perspective, Ev, I would not be where I am today without your leadership, and more importantly, friendship. There was much I had to learn in year 1, and still much more I must learn in the years to come. I am grateful to have had this year with you. I commit to you, Ev, that I will continue to lead CAS-CIAC with the passion and commitment that you have modeled. I thank you for making me a better leader and person through our conversation and fine example. With that, I would like to end my annual report by inviting Karen to play a video segment honoring Ev Lyons’ service to our organization.