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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Alliance of Women Coaches Partners with Four NCAA Division I Conferences to Host Women Coaches Leadership Forum

The Alliance of Women Coaches in partnership with the America East Conference, Northeast Conference, Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference, and Patriot League hosted a Women Coaches Leadership Forum on Tuesday, May 17. The one-day educational workshop was held on the campus of Marist College.

With the assistance of funding from the NCAA Office of Inclusion, the Alliance partners with conference offices to host regional events for women coaches. Workshops were piloted in 2015 in New Jersey with the Big East Conference and in California with the Big West and West Coast Conferences. After receiving positive feedback from WCC commissioner Lynn Holzman, Northeast Conference commissioner Noreen Morris felt strongly about offering this development opportunity for her coaches and administrators in the northeast region of the country and was able to collaborate with her fellow colleagues Amy Huchthausen, America East commissioner; Jennifer Heppel, Patriot league executive director, and Jessica Hegmann, MAAC senior associate commissioner in structuring the format for the Leadership Forum.

“When the NEC SWA’s originally discussed the need to provide more professional development for our younger female coaches, I don’t think any of us envisioned this level of success! The comprehensive forum far exceeded our expectations with over 100 participants and 22 presenters from within the four host conferences,” said Morris. “It’s our hope that events like this hosted throughout the country will help increase the number of female head and assistant coaches at the collegiate level.”

With over 100 coaches and administrators in attendance, the Forum sold-out in a matter of weeks and had a wait-list of over forty coaches wanting to attend. The event featured panels consisting of coaches and athletic administrators, as well as networking and breakout sessions.

“We know from experience that women coaches are looking for three things: information beyond the X’s and O’s, inspiration to keep them fired-up, and connections with female coaches across sports, across divisions, and across the nation. Our one-day workshops provide all three

elements in an environment that is upbeat and fun,” said Alliance executive director Marlene Bjornsrud.

“The NCAA office of inclusion commends the Alliance of Women Coaches and the leadership of the America East, MAAC, NEC, and Patriot League for joining together to provide a transformational learning and networking experience for women coaches. These types of partnerships and quality programming are significant for supporting women to persist in and to be successful in coaching and mentoring student-athletes,” said Amy Wilson, the NCAA’s director of inclusion.

Since the passage of Title IX in 1972, women coaches, especially at the NCAA Division I level, have plummeted from over 90% women coaching women’s teams to 42%. Patrick Elliott, Binghamton director of athletics and panelist said, “Providing a forum to support development and growth opportunities for female coaches is extremely important in college athletics. I appreciated interacting with many talented aspiring female coaches, and thank the four sponsoring conferences for the opportunity to share in the day,”

The Alliance provides educational opportunities and resources to support and retain women in the coaching profession. “The Leadership Forum gave a group of women the opportunity to start a conversation – a conversation about the very unique experiences and circumstances for women coaches. You don’t realize how necessary these types of forums are until you are in the thick of it,” said Lenika Vazquez, Canisius head women’s volleyball coach.

“The Women's Coaches Leadership Forum served as an excellent platform for us female coaches to share, learn and connect with each other around the collegiate coaching profession,” said Casey Brown, Holy Cross head women’s soccer coach. “There was a lot of added-value in sharing the experience with similar conferences and across all sports, and I know I was especially proud to represent Holy Cross and the Patriot League with this special opportunity.”

What They’re Saying About the Forum

“It was amazing to see and hear the passion, commitment and aspirations of the attendees as they talked about their roles as coaches, mentors and role models. Forums such as this are critical to ensure we continue retaining and recruiting women into the coaching profession and the work of the Alliance is a huge piece of this effort. I’m proud that our four conferences collaborated with the Alliance on this forum and look forward to even more opportunities in the future.”

-Amy Huchthausen, commissioner, America East Conference

“This was a great opportunity for a group of accomplished women to come together and share their ideas. I was particularly interested in hearing the thoughts from the younger generations in attendance. Gatherings

like these go a long way towards allowing the next group of leaders in college athletics to reach their full potential."

-Theresa Grentz, head women's basketball coach, Lafayette

"The positive collaboration and efforts to bring together many great coaches and leaders in the four conferences was not only phenomenal, but allowed women across all sports to share dialogue and solutions on our most relevant and current issues within our leadership spaces."

-Becky Carlson, head women's rugby coach, Quinnipiac

"Thank you Alliance of Women coaches for putting together, along with the NEC, America East, MAAC, and Patriot League, a fantastic Forum. As an AD it was inspiring to share ideas, commonalities, concerns, stories, and creative ways to solve problems. More importantly it was a great way to empower and bring in amazing women coaches to network and gain new support systems."

-Irma Garcia, director of athletics, St. Francis Brooklyn

For more information on the Alliance of Women Coaches or the Women Coaches Leadership Forum, visit www.gocoaches.org.

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Stronger Together. We are The Alliance.

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