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WeCOACH Celebrates 20 Years of NCAA Women Coaches Academy

May 8, 2023 – When coaches arrive in Denver later this month for the 52nd NCAA Women Coaches Academy (WCA), it will mark the 20th year WeCOACH has hosted this transformational program. To commemorate the 20th Anniversary celebration, WeCOACH has more than doubled the 2023 class size (103 participants) and this year’s Academy will feature new traditions and special touches, including welcoming back several WCA graduates along with our organization’s founders to serve as faculty and ambassadors for this year’s class.

“We are very excited to commemorate 20 years and 51 WCA classes that includes over 2,100 graduates. This will give us an opportunity to celebrate the progress women have made in coaching, and an opportunity to strategize on the work that still needs to be done to empower women to pursue, stay in, and succeed in the coaching profession,” said Vanessa Fuchs, CEO of WeCOACH. “We are incredibly proud that data demonstrates our Academies help retain women coaches at a rate higher than the national average.”

In 2003, Celia Slater, Judy Sweet, and Ann Salerno worked with the NCAA to pilot a program for women coaches across all sports and all NCAA divisions. These programs became what is known as the [NCAA Women Coaches Academy](#). The first-ever Women Coaches Academy (WCA) was held June 8, 2003 at Bryn Mawr College (PA) and there were 26 coaches who graduated.

“I feel very grateful to have been a part of something so special that has helped many women coaches along the way. It’s humbling to see that 20 years later it is still developing, inspiring and connecting women coaches of all sports. We all need a supportive community now more than ever where we feel like we belong. Being a part of this one can change your life just like it did mine,” said Celia Slater, Academy co-creator and CEO of True North Sports.

Year after year, session after session, there was continued feedback that women coaches needed an organization whose vision was cultivated with them in mind: a supportive network, educational opportunities, and developmental resources specific to their needs – because women coaches face unique challenges that their male counterparts do not. In response to this feedback, Celia Slater and Judy Sweet co-founded a non-profit organization, the Alliance of Women Coaches in 2011, which became the umbrella organization for the NCAA Women Coaches Academy.

“The women coaches academies have brought together women coaches from a variety of sports, not just to add to their tool kit, but also show them they are not alone in the challenges they face. The support systems that have developed have helped coaches to stay in the profession and be successful,” said Judy

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Sweet, Academy co-creator and former NCAA Senior Vice President & NCAA Membership President (1991-92).

Academy co-creator and CEO of The Change Cycle Series, Ann Salerno shared, “It was an honor to be a part of the development team for the NCAA Women Coaches Academy! We built a curriculum that was focused on teaching coaches’ pragmatic management skills and strategies beyond their sport-specific fundamentals – and it worked! Coaches learned new ways to advocate for their student athletes and themselves as sport professionals. Here’s to women coaches at all levels, having the opportunity via WeCOACH to further their coaching career goals and aspirations!”

Since the inaugural Academy in 2003, there have been 51 NCAA WCA classes. In those 20 years of Academy classes, over 2,100 coaches have completed the program and graduated. The Academies have been so impactful and inspiring that many of the graduates have returned over the years to serve as faculty.

In addition, research shows that the Academies have been instrumental in keeping coaches in the profession. According to Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport, over 82 percent of Academy graduates are still coaching, and this retention rate is higher than the national average. There are countless testimonials from past WCA grads that highlight the impact of the multi-day experience. You can access just a few of the powerful remarks [here](#).

NCAA Director of Leadership Development, DeeDee Merritt expressed, “The NCAA Women Coaches Academy has provided education, enrichment and development to scores of coaches over its 20-year span. Learners form bonds that carry them forward in their careers and lives. The NCAA is a proud sponsor of this impactful opportunity. Congratulations on a job well done!”

Based on the profound amount of time spent with other coaches and the substantial content that the WCA had shown to provide, graduates called for a next-level Academy. Thus, NCAA Academy 2.0 was launched in 2018. Designed as a smaller class setting, 2.0 is a next-level, master training that builds upon and advances the leadership skills, strategies, and knowledge gained from attending WCA. Due to the success of WCA and 2.0, there are future goals of offering more opportunities, such as additional Academy classes each year in different locations and adding an Aspiring Women Coaches Academy and an Academy 3.0.

WeCOACH will announce the participants for 2023 NCAA Women Coaches Academy Class #52 and NCAA Academy 2.0 Class #6 on Monday, May 15. For more information about our Academies, please click [here](#).

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About WeCOACH

Founded in 2011, WeCOACH is a one-of-a-kind nonprofit dedicated to recruiting, advancing, and retaining women coaches in all sports and levels through year-round professional growth & leadership development programs. Prior to Title IX, over 90% of women’s collegiate sports teams were coached by women. Today, 50 years later, data indicates that number has decreased to a stagnant 41% in all three NCAA Divisions, with only 7.3% women coaches of color. Five percent of women coach men’s teams, and at the youth level, the data is hard to estimate, approximately less than 20% of teams are coached by women. As part of its year-long Title IX 50th Anniversary campaign, WeCOACH launched MOVE the NUMBERS to help change the landscape for women coaches and to impact history for the next 50 years. For more information, visit wecoachsports.org/50th.

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