Gene Smith

Position: Vice President/Director of Athletics
Experience: 11th year
Alma Mater: Notre Dame

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Gene Smith is in his 11th year as director of athletics at The Ohio State University. He is widely recognized among the leaders of his profession and has been named "one of the most powerful people in collegiate sport." Smith was named the Buckeyes' director of athletics March 5, 2005, and was elevated to vice president and director of athletics in January of 2014.

Smith is the eighth person to hold the athletics director position at Ohio State. He previously served as director of athletics at Arizona State, Iowa State and Eastern Michigan universities and is entering his 31st year in the role.

At Ohio State, the 59-year old Smith oversees the nation's most comprehensive and one of its most successful collegiate athletics programs. The department sponsors 36 fully-funded varsity sports with more than 1,000 student-athletes regularly competing for Big Ten Conference and NCAA championships.

Smith has additional oversight responsibility for a recently created Business Advancement Division of Ohio State which includes: Schottenstein Center, Nationwide Arena, Blackwell Hotel, Drake Union, Fawcett Center, and Trademark & Licensing.

As a highly-recruited student-athlete and member of national championship teams as a college athlete and coach, Smith is passionate about the well-being of student-athletes and the championship experience. "We want to create an environment for our student-athletes to be successful academically, athletically and socially," he said. "Intercollegiate athletics offers an unparalleled opportunity for young women and men to prepare for success in life."

Under Smith's leadership, the Ohio State athletics department has thrived, winning myriad conference and national, individual and team, athletic championships and awards. Concurrent to athletic excellence has been the remarkable academic achievement by student-athletes during Smith's tenure. Smith's focus on academics - higher individual and team goals, additional academic support services, and recognition of excellence - has shifted the department's culture to reflect his philosophical focus on the total student-athlete.

The athletics department is completely self-supporting; it receives no university funds, tax dollars or student fees. In fiscal year 2014-15, the department transferred nearly $37.5 million in assessments to the university, including more than $17.4 million in grant-in-aid reimbursement. Smith is known for outstanding fiscal controls. Concurrent to athletics excellence has been the remarkable academic achievement by student-athletes during Smith's tenure. When Smith arrived, the overall student-athlete FED graduation rate was 65 percent. It is now 75 percent, with over 50 percent of student-athletes maintaining a 3.0 grade point average or better.

Ohio State football student-athletes graduated at a 49 percent rate the year Smith began his career in Columbus (2005-06). Last year (2014-15), the football student-athlete FED graduation rate improved to 64 percent. Smith's focus on academics - higher individual and team goals, additional academic support services, and recognition of excellence - has shifted the department's culture to reflect his philosophical focus on the total student-athlete. In terms of the NCAA Graduation Success Rate improvement, all Ohio State student-athletes had a GSR of 80 percent in 2005-2006. That has increased to 89 percent for 2014-15. Over that same time frame, the GSR for football improved from 55 to 81 percent.

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Smith has earned a reputation as an outstanding fund raiser, and along with his development team, he has raised millions of dollars for new and improved practice and competitive facilities. Smith has overseen major renovations to facilities for baseball, football, field hockey, golf, softball, outdoor tennis, and indoor track; upgrading of women's and men's basketball; creation of new indoor golf and rowing facilities, and field replacement and track resurfacing at Jessie Owens Stadium.

Looking to the future, Smith developed the vision for the Athletics District, as a part of the University Framework Plan. The District includes: a 4,000 seat arena for men's and women's volleyball, wrestling, men's and women's gymnastics, camps and intimate concerts; Student-Athlete Development Complex which includes strength and conditioning, nutrition and dining, and athletic training centers; wrestling practice facility; 5,000 seat hockey venue; indoor track facility, and multiple practice fields. Smith's ambitious vision for the Athletic District will ensure first class facilities for Ohio State student-athletes for years to come.

Smith's national honors place him among the leaders of his profession. Recent highlights include the National Association for Athletics Compliance (NAAC) Award, the Carl Maddox Sports Management Award, and the Sport Business Journal Athletic Director of the Year Award. In June 2008 Smith won The National Football Foundation & College Hall of Fame's John L. Toner Award. In recognition for his service, Smith was named by Black Enterprise Magazine as one of the "50 Most Powerful African Americans in College Sports." In 2007 he was named to NACDA's inaugural "Legends Class," and also was named Athletic Administrator of the Year by the Black Coaches Association (BCA).

Smith has an exemplary record of national leadership and service and is a sought after speaker on national athletic issues. Currently, Smith serves on the newly constituted NCAA Men's Basketball Oversight Committee (2015-18). From May 2011 - July 1, 2014, Smith served as a member of the NCAA Division I Administrative Cabinet, which oversees and recommends membership to NCAA committees. He completed his fifth year on the prestigious NCAA Men's Basketball Committee in 2011, for which he served as chair for the 2010-11 academic year.

In 2007, he served as president of the Division 1-A Athletic Directors Association. He also served on the Basketball Academic Enhancement Group, a 27-member panel charged with developing strategies to enhance academic performance and graduation rates in Division I men's basketball.

Smith is past president of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA). He also has served on the NCAA Management Council, the NCAA Committee on Infractions, the NCAA Executive Committee, the NCAA Football Rules Committee, the President's Commission Liaison Committee, the NCAA Baseball Academic Enhancement Task Force and the National Football Foundation Honors Court, among others.

In June of 2015 Smith was added to the Concussion Assessment, Research and Education (CARE) Consortium as a member of the CARE Consortium Scientific Advisory Board (SAB). The board will help provide input into the understanding of concussion-related issues.

Smith grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, and attended the University of Notre Dame on a football scholarship. He played four years of football as a defensive end for the Irish and was a member of the 1973 Associated Press national championship team.

Smith received his bachelor's degree in business administration from Notre Dame in 1977. Following graduation, he joined the Notre Dame coaching staff under Dan Devine and remained in that capacity until 1981. The 1977 Notre Dame team captured the undisputed national championship. Smith has the unique distinction of winning national championships in football as a student-athlete, coach, and athletics director.

Smith is active in the Columbus community. He is a member of the Columbus Sports Commission, the boards of the YMCA of Central Ohio and the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Columbus, and the governing board of trustees of the Lincoln Theater Association. He serves on the Kids Unlimited National Advisory Board, an organization committed to positively transforming the lives of inner-city children growing up in Toledo, Ohio. In addition, Smith and his wife, Sheila, support numerous community charities. On campus, Smith is active with the Bell Center for African-American males, where he sponsors a mentoring program called Team Smith.

Gene and Sheila have four children: Matt, Nicole, Lindsey and Summer, and five grandchildren: Marshall, Steele, Addison, Grayson and Tyson.