



# THE DRAKE GROUP

Advancing Positive Legislative  
Change In College Athletics



## 2023-24 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Allen L. Sack**  
Director Emeritus

**ALLEN SACK, Ph.D.**, Co-founder of The Drake Group, was made a permanent voting member of the Board of Directors by unanimous vote of the Board in 2021, in acknowledgement of his 21 consecutive years of service as a leader of The Drake Group. Dr. Sack earned his Ph.D. in sociology from Pennsylvania State University and a B.A. from the University of Notre Dame where he played on the 1966 NCAA National Championship football team. Dr. Sack is a Professor Emeritus in the college of business at the University of New Haven where he taught for forty-one years. He also served as the Director of the federally funded Center for Athletes Rights and Education (CARE) in the early 1980s. CARE was co-sponsored by the National Football Players Association and the National Conference of Black Lawyers. Dr. Sack is the author of *Counterfeit Amateurs: An Athlete's Journey Through the Sixties to the Age of Academic Capitalism* and co-author of *College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth*.



**Donna Lopiano**  
Past-President  
Executive Committee

**DONNA A. LOPIANO, Ph.D.**, is the President and founder of Sports Management Resources (SMR), a consulting firm that focuses on assisting scholastic and collegiate athletics departments and sports organizations in solving growth and development challenges. Dr. Lopiano also serves as an Adjunct Professor of Sports Management at Southern Connecticut State University. She was the Chief Executive Officer of the Women's Sports Foundation (1992-2007) and served for 18 years as the University of Texas at Austin's Director of Women's Athletics. Prior to Texas, Lopiano served as an Assistant Professor and Assistant Athletic Director at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. Recognized as one of the foremost national experts on gender equity in sport, she has testified about Title IX and gender equity before three Congressional committees and has served as an expert witness in over thirty court cases. Lopiano received her bachelor's degree from Southern Connecticut State University, her master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Southern California and is the recipient of five honorary doctoral degrees.



**David Hughes**  
President-Elect  
Executive Committee

**DAVID HUGHES, Ph.D.**, is a Sports Industry Management (SIM) Faculty member and Capstone Advisor at Georgetown University and a Prairie View A&M University faculty member. In 2022 he was named as a "Leader in the Metaverse" by *US Black Engineer* and in 2019, while at Hampton University, Dr. Hughes secured a \$340,000 technology grant to start the first eSports initiative at an HBCU. He is a Morehouse College graduate and earned his Ph.D. from Prairie View A&M University. He has been nominated for Faculty Member of the Year, authored children's books that highlight HBCU accomplishments, was selected as an Emerging Scholar by the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and received certificates from Bloomberg in Business Market Concepts, the University of Pennsylvania for Race and Equity in Education, and from Hampton University for Executive Leadership training. He was named a Next Generation Leader by the NAACP and served as the Education Committee Co-Chair for the Atlanta branch of the NAACP and Secretary of the Houston Morehouse Alumni Association. In addition to his work in education and sports, David is the founder and CEO of the Give Black App, which is the world's first social impact financial technology (FinTech) app for Black philanthropic efforts for Black organizations.



**Wendy Pierpont**  
**Secretary**  
**Executive Committee**

**WENDY PIERPONT, Ed.D.**, is a Learning Specialist at University of Oregon's Services for Student Athletes. Her professional focus is on academically underprepared students across all sports, working most intensely with freshmen who take courses in composition, education, and social sciences. Development of study skills and academic engagement is a priority for all UO athletes. Pierpont also serves as the Access Specialist in the unit and supports athletes who need accommodations and testing to get connected with accessible education on campus. She has served on University-wide and athletic department committees on diversity and inclusion and is part of the Behavioral Management Health Team, an athletic department group that works to support the mental health and psycho-social development of athletes. Pierpont received an MA in Education (Intersection of Sport and Education) and teaching credential from U.C. Berkeley, has taught middle school Special Education and Language Arts, and coached cross country for three years before returning to Berkeley for her doctorate. Her areas of interests are academic engagement, students at risk of failure, experiential and alternative education, and student-athlete identity. Pierpont attended Boston University on a swimming scholarship and graduated with a BA in History. She also serves on the Board of Directors of The Drake Group Education Fund.



**Connee Zotos**  
**Treasurer**  
**Executive Committee**

**CONNIE ZOTOS, Ph.D.**, is a Senior Associate at the consulting firm Sports Management Resources. Most recently she served as the Associate Dean of Academic and Faculty Affairs and Clinical Associate Professor of Sports Management in the School of Professional Studies at New York Univ. Zotos is the former Director of Athletics at Drew University where she was responsible for the administration of 18 varsity sports programs during her 14-year tenure. Prior to serving at Drew, Dr. Zotos was the Women's Athletics Director William Smith College and Philadelphia Univ. and a faculty member at the Univ. of Texas at Austin. She was a head college coach for 12 seasons and a three-time Conference Coach of the Year. She is a prolific writer and speaker in the areas of coaches' employment and compensation systems, creating tiered athletic program models, coach evaluation, and Title IX. She is a recipient of a NACWAA regional and national Athletic Administrator of the Year award and a WLCS Nike Lifetime Achievement Award. Dr. Zotos is a member of the Drew Univ. Athletic Hall of Fame. She holds a Bachelor's degree from Glassboro State College, a Master's from the University of Colorado and a Ph.D. in Educational Administration from the Univ. of Texas at Austin.



**B. David Ridpath**  
**Member-at-Large**  
**Executive Committee**

**B. DAVID RIDPATH, Ed.D.**, is a Professor of Sports Business at Ohio University in the College of Business. Dr. Ridpath has several years of practical experience in the sports industry and teaches classes in several relevant areas with a focus on Governance, Ethics, Leadership and Intercollegiate Athletics. His primary research areas include intercollegiate athletics administration, governance, and rules compliance with an emphasis on college athlete academic achievement and graduation rates. This includes the ethics and components of the NCAA legislative, enforcement, and governance process and the intersection of educationally-based sport development and delivery in the US with other developmental programs throughout the world. Dr. Ridpath is the author of *Tainted Glory: Marshal University, the NCAA, and One Man's Fight for Justice* and *Alternative Models of Sport Development in America: Solutions to a Crisis in Education and Public Health*. An accomplished scholar, he has over 70 national and international refereed presentations and 30 peer reviewed and edited academic articles in print. Ridpath received the B.A. in Speech Communication from Colorado State University, M.S.A in Sports Administration and Facility Management from Ohio University, and Ed.D. from West Virginia University.



**Nicolette Donovan**  
**Member-at-Large**

**NICOLETTE DONOVAN, B.S.,** Senior Manager, Revenue Operations at Appriss Retail, the current Chair of The Drake Group's Governmental Relations Committee. She is a former Business Operations Manager, Strategic Planning, of Wunderkind where she was also Co-Lead of WunderWomen, an employee resource group that fostered a diverse, inclusive workplace for women. Formerly, Donovan was a Senior Consultant at CBRE, where she led and contributed to projects to optimize clients' real estate portfolio. In addition to The Drake Group, her volunteer non-profit work includes service to America Scores, The Ali Forney Center, and Suit Up Incorporated. Donovan was a full scholarship NCAA Division I golfer and earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in Finance from the University of Central Florida where she also served on the Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC).



**Aaron Miller**  
**Member-at-Large**

**AARON MILLER, Ph.D.,** is an educator, author, podcaster, leadership coach, and cultural consultant. He is also a Lecturer in the Department of Kinesiology at California State University, East Bay, an Associate Adjunct Faculty, Department of Kinesiology, St. Mary's College of California, and creator/host of the podcast, *The Power of Sports*. Miller has authored *Discourses of Discipline: An Anthropology of Corporal Punishment in Japan's Schools and Sports* and *Buying In: Big-time Women's College Basketball and the Future of College Sports*. He is the author of numerous op-eds, essays, and journal articles and book chapters about education, sports, culture, power, violence, and social justice. He has been a Visiting Scholar at Stanford University and a Visiting Professor at Waseda University. Miller received his B.A. from the University of California Los Angeles and M.Sc. and Ph.D. from Oxford University.



**Dianne Murphy**  
**Member-at-Large**

**M. DIANNE MURPHY, Ph.D.,** presided over one of the most successful periods in Columbia University athletics history during her 11-year tenure as Director of Athletics. Murphy is an expert in strategic planning, fundraising and leadership development who is a highly sought-out Executive Coach, mentoring numerous athletics administrators and coaches. She served on the NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Committee and chaired the NCAA Women's Basketball Issues Committee. She was honored by Women Leaders in College Sports with its Lifetime Achievement Award, inducted to the NACDA Hall of Fame, and is a recipient of the WBCA's Jostens-Berenson Lifetime Achievement Award. Murphy serves on the *Kay Yow Cancer Fund* Board of Directors and is the Chair of the Tennessee Tech Foundation Board of Directors. She is the former Athletics Director at the University of Denver, a former head women's basketball coach and is currently an adjunct faculty member at Tennessee Tech. She received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Tennessee Tech and the Ph.D. from Florida State University.





**Kassandra Ramsey**  
**Member-at-Large**

**KASSANDRA RAMSEY, Esq.**, is the founder of The Law Office of Kassandra Ramsey, P.L.L.C., assisting entrepreneurs, athletes, entertainers, and social media influencers with creating, operating, and protecting their businesses. Ramsey is the Sports Law Chair for the District of Columbia Bar's Arts, Media, Entertainment, and Sports Law Community and an advocate for college athletes' rights. She has written extensively on the name, image, and likeness (NIL) issue in college sports and has authored two e-books to assist current and prospective college athletes to advance their emerging NIL opportunities. She is passionate about educating athletes and their families on the ways college athletes may use these new opportunities to advance themselves for life after sports. Formerly, Ramsey served as the Compliance Assistant for the University of Maryland, College Park Athletics Department. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Virginia State University and her J.D. from Howard University School of Law.



**John Rosen**  
**Member-at-Large**

**JOHN ROSEN, MBA**, is a member of the New Haven Economic Performance Laboratory Advisory Board at the University of New Haven, a co-founder of MCAworks, LLC, and a co-founder of NewTechHaven, LLC where he is responsible for client engagements involving new business creation, branding, new product development, and channel management. Rosen has over twenty-five years of sales and marketing management, as well as strategic consulting experience. He has helped firms deliver real unit growth both domestically and globally across a wide range of industries such as consumer packaged goods, financial services, telecom, small business software solutions, apparel, retailing, electronics, beverages, consumer durables, and automotive and industrial products. Rosen is the co-author of *Stopwatch Marketing: Take Charge of the Time When Your Customer Decides to Buy*, and an Adjunct Professor of Economics at the University of New Haven. He received his MBA from Northwestern University and BS from Washington & Lee University. He also serves as the Treasurer and Board member for The Drake Group Education Fund.



**Bruce Smith**  
**Member-at-Large**

**BRUCE SMITH, Ph.D.**, is Director of Empowerment Strategies and CEO of the ACES Group. He has worked in K-12, higher education and intercollegiate athletics for more than two decades as a teacher, professor, administrator, and coach. As a higher education administrator, his work focused on student life, athletics, and equity and justice at both small private liberal arts colleges and flagship state institutions in California, Arizona, Colorado, and Oregon. Smith specializes in managing comprehensive student support, mentoring and supervising staff, creating connections between curriculum and co-curriculum, and developing equity and justice institutional strategies. As a professor, his work focuses on African American life and culture; the sociology of education, sport studies, and American studies with an emphasis on developing engaging, student-centered, identity-conscious pedagogy. He earned his BA in American Civilization from Brown University, M.S. in Education from the University of Southern, and Ph.D. in Education from the University of California, Berkeley. Smith also serves as Secretary and Board member for The Drake Group Education fund.



**Brandon Sykes**  
**Member-at-Large**

**BRANDON SYKES, J.D.**, is the Associate Director of Admissions at the University of Florida Levin College of Law, where he has helped enroll three of the most diverse classes in the history of the law school and served on the school's Diversity Committee. Sykes is a former Compliance Coordinator - Athletics Risk Management and Compliance Services, at the University of Texas at Austin where he was the lead administrator for football, men's and women's basketball, baseball, and women's volleyball, delivering rules education programs and monitoring compliance with NCAA recruiting and athlete benefits requirements. His volunteer non-profit work includes board service on behalf of Community Spring, a grassroots organization dedicated to economic justice, and the mentoring of college athletes as part of the University of Oregon student-athlete mentor program. He was a four-year football letterman at Davidson College where he earned a B.A. in Sociology. His J.D. is from the University of Georgia School of Law.



**Sandy Thatcher**  
**Member-at-Large**

**SANDY THATCHER, B.A.**, a 1965 graduate of Princeton University summa cum laude in philosophy, is a past director of Penn State University Press (1989 to 2009). Earlier he was employed for twenty-two years by Princeton University Press where he started as a copyeditor and ended as editor-in-chief. In retirement, he acquires books in political science for Lynne Rienner Publishers and in political theory for the University of Rochester Press. He has been an Associate of the Tower Center for Political Studies at Southern Methodist University since 2010 and a Friend of the Library there. A self-taught expert in copyright law, he served on the copyright committee of the Association of American University Presses (AAUP) from 1972 to 2015, chairing it for twenty-four of those years. He served twice for three-year terms each time on the AAUP board of directors and was president in 2007-08. He received the AAUP's highest award in 1999. A swimmer in college for four years, Thatcher has been an active participant in US Masters Swimming since 1972, both as a competitor and member of its History and Archives Committee.