Morale and Motivation: Nurturing Team Cohesion During COVID-19
Kittie Grace & Austin McDonald

Abstract
Virtual connection takes more energy and commitment than face-to-face connections. Degges-White (2020) found, "you are likely to feel a kind of exhaustion from that screen time that's unlike the exhaustion you'd feel from an hour at the gym. Even extroverts can feel worn down by the 'high-intensity virtual connection'" (para. 4). Forensics teams are not immune to this exhaustion and therefore coaches and teammates have to be intentional with providing opportunities for connection to strengthen team survival. Through a survey of our team, with 100% participation, we were able to assess the needs of the individual student and provide opportunities for connection to meet these needs. We argue that many forensics students around the nation may have similar concerns and therefore we offer these strategies to help a team thrive. These strategies come in three areas 1. Reducing isolation and uncertainty 2. Providing clear and fluid expectations 3. Focusing on process oriented goals all while in a virtual environment. Our presentation will focus on tips and exercises for building morale and motivating a team through these three areas.

1.Reducing isolation and uncertainty
-Give campus updates as they happen to keep the team notified. If updates are not happening let the team know that too so there is less mystery.
>   +Use team communication structure (email, facebook, etc.) and plan for a weekly update.

-Have monthly meetings for check-in that coaches and students can opt to join in. No pressure to participate. Just shows they are valued.
>   +Suggestion for a "Lunch and Learn" style of meeting where students or coaches can explain their most recent research, activity, or hobby and the team can learn from each other.

-Have a virtual game night with different classes if the team is large or with the entire team.
>   +Using online game apps (such as Jackbox party pack, Heads-Up, Quiplash, etc.)
>   + Resources for games: Six Fun Party Games Over Zoom
>   10 Fun Games to Play on Zoom   Playing Cards

-Have students take personality tests and share with each other so they get a sense of each other's sensibilities. This is not to essentialize people but to consider commonalities.
>   + Astrology Charts
>   + Four Tendencies Quiz
>   + Enneagram Test
>   + True Colors Test

-Connect returning members with first years students to develop a one to one ratio

+"Accountability Broncos" are returning members who help first year students
+Each new student has one person they can ask all of their questions without feeling they have to share their questions with the entire team
+Helps reduce uncertainty and generate connection

2.Providing clear and fluid expectations
-Set up summer goals for the team with team input
+Seniors ran a meeting in early June to decide what the team needs (ie. onboarding first years in June and topic hunting, drafts in July, two events by the end of work week in August)

-Have the team make handbook suggestions with a virtual environment in mind.
+If you do not have a handbook, have the team create one together. Many teams are willing to share their handbooks. Just ask!

-Connect first year students with returners right away to get them connected, and to learn the team culture.
+One on one accountability (Accountability Broncos/ Bigs & Littles)
+Request a weekly 15min check-in meeting
+Seniors provide a "How to" power point to help students understand the culture and events in college

-Give different scenarios based on ever-changing college procedures.
+For example, we have been told no pre-boarding will occur. Therefore, the HC seniors have developed a virtual campus workshop for the team.

3.Focusing on process oriented goals all while in a virtual environment
-Monitor habits
+Gretchen Rubin (2015) argues that habit formation depends on *monitoring habits*. We don't know if habits are occurring/developing if we don't keep track of them. A spreadsheet allows for coaches and students to view the same representation of their process and use it as a terrain for goal-setting.

-Goals should be checkpoints illuminating the scaffolding process.
+ Criteria should be tangible and concrete. Rather than say " I'll work on my ADS," coach and students should explain the baby steps implied by this vague level. If the focus is on gathering 10 usable sources over the course of a week, perhaps the goal can be "2 usable sources each day M-F this week" or "10 usable sources by 5pm Friday". The more concrete the criteria, the easier it is for both coach and student to discuss progress.
+ With the focus on these micro-steps, students don't get lost in the grand picture of "What if I don't break?" "What if this doesn't qualify for nationals?" <<<These

are examples of outcome goals--which tend to distract students (and coaches) from the multi-checkpoint process in event formation.

-Process-oriented goals promote coaches and students working together
+Process focuses on developing quality work that inherently meets desired outcomes of the program--regardless of competition.
+ Tournament results become a natural byproduct of strong work--rather than the goal or motivator for engaging in the work.

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