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9-26-2011

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Recommended Citation

University Relations, "Kelli Hamilton '12, Delano, named regional representative for Student Athletic Advisory Committee" (2011). *Campus News Archive*. 574.
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Kelli Hamilton '12, Delano, named regional representative for Student Athletic Advisory Committee

Summary: Representing both the UMAC and MIAC conferences, she attended the national SAAC Student-Athlete Leadership Conference.

(September 26, 2011)-Minnesota Morris softball player Kelli Hamilton '12, Delano, was named the regional representative for the Student Athletic Advisory Committee (SAAC) last season, representing both the Upper Midwest Athletic Conference (UMAC) and Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC). She became the first UMAC athlete to ever represent the region, taking over a spot that had previously been held by MIAC student-athletes.

Hamilton's first duty was to represent the two leagues at the four-day national Student-Athlete Leadership Conference in Indianapolis. She will return to Indianapolis in January 2012 for the main NCAA convention.

"It was awesome," Hamilton said with a big smile. "It was a really great experience, and it's very cool to see the impact you can have representing the UMAC and MIAC."

Hamilton served with representatives from across the nation in all three divisions of the NCAA.

"I was very impressed with the older committee members, they really know their stuff. It just showed me that I have a lot to learn...I took a lot of notes."

Hamilton is one of just 24 reps from Division III, some just in their sophomore year and some already having graduated. All representatives serve two-year terms. While in Indianapolis, much of the talk centered on legislation and committees with the reps putting some long days.

"We had meetings all four days, almost the entire day," she said. "We would start at 8 a.m. and meet until about 7 p.m., but it was great to see where you can take things and to have your opinion valued."

Before she sat down in her first meeting, Hamilton had to prep, going through numerous supplements given to the members.

"It was a lot of reading. We had 45 supplements to read through, but I read them all, every page."

Hamilton and the other new members arrived first, with the veterans arriving later the first day.

"We all got there first and got to know each other. There were maybe 11 or 12 of us that were new. The senior members came later, and you could see how excited they were to be there, and it made us more excited to get started."

While serving together with athletes from Division I and II, as well as Division III, Hamilton described how she quickly came to decipher each.

“I felt so small. You could see all these tall people, and they were the DI athletes, and then there were some a little shorter and they were the DII kids, then all of us in DIII were the small ones,” she said with a laugh.

Game program measurements aside, they were all there for the same reason.

“The main goal was to see a change for the better. We need to get involved because you can have an impact, otherwise nothing will change.”

“I was surprised to learn – and don’t think many people know – how much the opinion of the student-athletes matter when the NCAA makes their decisions on legislation.”

With her first NCAA experience under her belt, Hamilton is ready to lead the charge for Morris and the UMAC. As the president of the Morris SAAC committee she will hold regular meetings with other student-athletes on campus, while also attending MIAC meetings as part of her regional duties, putting what she has learned to action, while also taking their concerns to the national level.

“It is an honor to represent the UMAC and MIAC and to be around so many people who enjoy being student-athletes and working with other student athletes. It’s a great feeling to know that you have a say and can really make a difference in the decisions that affect college athletics.”

A Cougar softball player, Hamilton will suit up for her final season on the diamond this spring. Hamilton was a 14-game starter in the circle for the Cougars as a junior, helping the team to their best season in school history with 18 wins and a runner-up finish in the UMAC regular season. In addition to her work on the field, Hamilton has been as active member of the Morris SAAC throughout her career.

Photo above: Hamilton center with fellow SAAC regional representatives

Photo below: Hamilton with all the regional representatives to the national conference, bottom row, third from right

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