

## DEPARTMENT OF ATHLETICS PROGRAM REVIEW

*Presented by*  
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## University of Nebraska – Lincoln Department of Athletics Program Review Report Summary

### Statement of Understanding

SilverStone Group was engaged by the Office of the President at the University of Nebraska to conduct a series of programmatic reviews for the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL). The University is interested in receiving recommendations designed to bring the best to the University system from a program leadership and program culture perspective in light of the upcoming transition in the Chancellor role at UNL. These initiatives would address positive aspects of the program under review as well as challenges that are being faced.

The Athletic Program was identified as the initial program to be reviewed due to the high profile and intense interest in building this program for sustainable success. The review for the Department of Athletics was conducted through a combination of survey and interview data collection on the following topics:

1. **Leadership:** Director of Athletics and senior team with additional input and insight garnered from University system stakeholders and outside stakeholders.
2. **Culture and Climate:** Including rewards and recognition, communication, decision making, innovation and risk, strategic focus, resources with additional input and insight garnered from student athletes and past employees.

### Process Description

SilverStone Group engaged in the following process to achieve the University's goal.

#### Initial Meeting and Confidentiality of Data

Several meetings were held to discuss the scope and focus of this engagement. It was decided to create a focus on the department leadership and culture. Agreement was reached regarding the approach to data collection and confidentiality of all raw data. It is clearly understood and agreed by the University that survey and interview data will not be available to the University as part of this process in order to protect the participants' identities. SilverStone Group has been asked to summarize the data collected and provide a high-level report based on a compilation of all data. It was also agreed that a written report only would be provided to the University via the Office of the President.

## Communication

SilverStone Group worked with the University to develop a communication approach that would inform participants on the goals, expectations and confidentiality of this initiative. The Office of the President sent out several communication pieces to accomplish this informational goal (see Appendix 1). The Office of the President also recommended to SilverStone Group individuals to be interviewed. During the course of this project, based on new information attained, this list was expanded in an effort to secure an accurate picture of leadership and culture for the Department of Athletics. Interview participants were contacted by Cindy Tully, Consulting Associate/Executive Assistant with SilverStone Group via e-mail or phone to set up interview dates and times. In addition, all potential survey recipients were contacted by SilverStone Group via e-mail prior to electronic delivery of the survey invitation (see Appendix 2).

## Data Collection – Electronic Survey

Basic constructs were agreed upon by the Office of the President at the University of Nebraska and SilverStone Group regarding the approach to be taken for data collection via electronic survey. SilverStone Group developed the item pool and submitted the draft survey to the Office of the President at the University of Nebraska for review and input. This customized survey was designed to provide relevant and timely quantitative and qualitative data on the Department of Athletics' culture and leadership. It was finalized and launched on January 21, 2016.

The survey was sent to 327 people; 237 individuals responded for a strong response rate of 72%. The survey results were used to inform the line of questioning used in the interview process. This approach was identified given the large number of participants in this process and the University's desire to be inclusive rather than identifying a sample population to assess.

### *Frequency Distribution for Survey*

Demographic	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	94	39.7%	39.7%
Female	143	60.3%	100.0%
<b>Level</b>			
Assistant Coach	33	13.9%	13.9%
Athletic Support Staff	160	67.5%	81.4%
Head Coach	18	7.6%	89.0%
Outside of the Department of Athletics Stakeholders	15	6.3%	95.4%
Senior Administrative Executives	8	3.4%	98.7%
Student Athletes	3	1.3%	100.0%
<b>Tenure Range</b>			
1 – 3 Years	63	29.0%	29.0%
4 – 6 Years	41	18.9%	47.9%
7 – 10 Years	35	16.1%	64.1%
11 – 15 Years	20	9.2%	73.3%
16 – 19 Years	15	6.9%	80.2%
20+ Years	43	19.8%	100.0%

### **Data Collection – Interview**

Over a six-week period, telephone and in-person interviews were conducted with various constituents in relationship with the Department of Athletics. The interview group included a sampling of college deans, University executives, Department of Athletics executives and senior staff, all coaches, all Regents, a sampling of student athletes, a sampling of former employees, and some constituents outside of the University with close ties and interests.

### **Additional Research**

SilverStone Group also researched best practices for culture and leadership and gathered additional information regarding institutional ties with National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the Big Ten Conference and relevant litigation issues (i.e. Title IX Law, Labor Law and Antitrust Law). In addition, recent events in centers of higher learning were reviewed to increase our understanding of the risk factors that exist for university athletic programs (i.e., Pennsylvania State University and University of North Carolina) in order to place the program focus and evolution within a larger environmental context.

### **Brief History**

The Department of Athletics at UNL has seen changes in its leadership over the past few decades with relative stability under Athletic Directors Bob Devaney (1967 – 1993), Bill Byrne (1992 – 2002), Steve Peterson (2002 – 2007), Tom Osborne, PhD (2007 – 2012) and under the current leadership of Shawn Eichorst since 2012 (hired in October 2012, assumed position in January 2013).

Each leader transition presents the opportunity for a change in culture based on leadership style, strengths, skills, values and core competencies. Over this four- to five-decade time span, the nature of the role has changed significantly. During the second half of the 20th century, it was not unusual for the head coach of a major school sport – typically football or basketball – to also be the director of athletics. Increasingly, athletic directors of major college programs are less likely to be retired/active coaches and are more likely to hold business administration or related degrees. The budget demands of the larger programs require professional management. Professionals with legal and business degrees are now in greater demand to manage these programs.

## **Leadership and Leadership Style Integrated Results**

The position of Director of Athletics at UNL is complex and critical. This position requires strategic leadership of a highly visible program. This program has the potential to attract students and donors if sports teams do well, which has the potential for financial and brand impact. In addition, successful sports teams catch the emotion and hearts of the people of Nebraska, garnering further emotional and financial support. This is also a program that has the potential to put the University and student athlete education at significant risk if poorly or unethically run. The potential for political, brand and financial risk is evident in the highly visible lawsuits currently and recently in the courts and in the news headlines. These scandals – primarily based on NCAA violations – highlight the importance of hyper-vigilance regarding implementation and compliance with rules, policies and regulations that support the best values promoted through sports.

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In addition, the leadership of an athletic department has both an internal and external focus and requires political acumen and sensitivity to a wide range of constituents. Of primary concern is the student athlete constituency. Under the current administration of the UNL Department of Athletics, this focus has been sharpened as internal resources have been strengthened. Also of primary concern is the culture and climate created for all employees who work within the Department of Athletics. This group includes a wide variety of sports specialists with premier coaching and staff support for 19 specific sports.

The current leadership style can be classified as predominantly democratic/professional with high levels of accountability for performance. The data indicate that a large majority of participants agree with that assessment of leadership. Results support the move toward a culture of accountability and high standards being set for everyone. The leadership within the Department of Athletics is perceived as leadership one can depend on. In addition, the culture is considered one in which people can depend on each other for support. The employees also know they can look to leadership to provide guidance as needed.

Synthesized results indicate participants believe they are given the latitude to manage their own responsibilities. This is very positive based on benchmark data from a recent Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) survey titled “2015 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: Optimizing Organizational Culture for Success” published on April 28, 2015. This survey listed autonomy and independence as very important to 47% of responders.

#### **Director of Athletics Leadership and Senior Leadership**

The current Director of Athletics, Shawn Eichorst, is viewed to have a favorable leadership style by most constituents based on data collected. The overall perception of the current Department of Athletics leadership from the senior team is very positive.

Data indicate a high level of satisfaction with the leadership demonstrated by the Department of Athletics in regard to the interface with academics. Participants believe there is authentic interest supported by clear actions around collaborative efforts to live up to the mission for student athletes. During the initial three months of employment before Shawn Eichorst officially began his role as Director of Athletics, participants reported he proactively reached into the academic community and forged lasting relationships that have created alignment and an integrated approach for student athletes. It appears that relationships between the senior administration of the Department of Athletics and the academic side of UNL, UNMC and the University in general are very strong. All data from this constituent group were positive and strong. The relationship strength also extends to that forged with the Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR) and the Big Ten Conference. The interview with Jim Delany, Commissioner of the Big Ten Conference, confirmed that student athletic programs operate within a highly regulated environment.

Mr. Delany typically sees athletic budgets in the range of 3% of the institutional budget, but indicated the impact of a college sports program can, on occasion, be 10 or 20 times that 3% in the public relations and political impact on the system. According to Mr. Delany, it is for this reason that athletic directors are key

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hires and it is important they have sound working relationships with the chancellor, president and coaches. He said there is a need for a director of athletics to have a comprehensive understanding of these direct non-financial impacts. In his opinion, given this environment, it is also important for a director of athletics to be politically astute and communicate in multiple directions and encourage the same from the staff they hire and empower. A good director of athletics builds the capability over time of enabling recruitment of student athletes who can compete and do well. It has been Mr. Delany's experience with UNL that both Chancellor Perlman and FAR liaison/law professor Josephine (Jo) Potuto have been engaged and very effective in their roles in their relationship with the Big Ten Conference administration.

With regard to the current Director of Athletics at UNL, Commissioner Delaney indicated the following:

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***Commissioner Jim Delany***

*Commissioner Delany's experience with Shawn Eichorst has been very positive. He indicated that Mr. Eichorst is active at the NCAA level and they have worked together on various projects. He believes that Mr. Eichorst is a very good, observant and thoughtful leader; he listens to others and when he makes his point, he tends to make it clearly. Mr. Eichorst is currently serving on the Council for NCAA Recruiting Policy. In this capacity, they did a tour together and met with a large number of commissioners, athletic directors, football operations directors and compliance directors. Mr. Eichorst was consistently engaged, thoughtful and smart. Mr. Delany indicated that Mr. Eichorst works to be supportive of what the NCAA is trying to accomplish and he always comes prepared and ready to be a very active participant. He indicated that Mr. Eichorst has interfaced with conference football coaches in his capacity as a member of the NCAA Football Oversight Committee on several occasions. Mr. Delany sees the role of the Director of Athletics as a difficult high-wire act and believes that no one does it flawlessly. He sees Mr. Eichorst as courageous, professional, mature and experienced. He also views him to be someone with a strong moral compass who acts on his good values and exercises sound judgment. He hears Mr. Eichorst advocate for Nebraska while bringing a level of collaboration to the Conference.*

*"He is an honest broker on behalf of Nebraska.  
I never find him in left field."*

*Interview Attribution Approved by Commissioner Jim Delany*

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In addition to the positive working relationship achieved with Mr. Delany, the Director of Athletics appears to have developed a strong working relationship with FAR liaison Jo Potuto. Professor Potuto, the Richard H. Larson Professor of Constitutional Law at UNL, has been the University's FAR liaison to the NCAA and the Big Ten Conference since 1997. Professor Potuto indicated in her interview that the relationship and communications between Shawn Eichorst and the other senior administrators of the Department of Athletics are strong.

When asked about the overall culture of the Department of Athletics, Professor Potuto indicated she works to have open channels of communication and feels her communication with the Department of Athletics staff is extensive; she pays attention and believes people talk openly to her. From her perspective, a culture of fear does not exist in this department. In alignment with other interviewees, Professor Potuto sees the current administration as one that has stepped up to leadership responsibility at the level needed to run an effective department; to do the right thing in light of significant challenges that surfaced early in the current administration and within a dynamic national athletic environment.

#### **Department of Athletics Structure**

The structure of the Department of Athletics has been consistent for many years and has not been changed under the current leadership. All coaches are direct reports of the second layer of leadership with some co-reporting relationships to the Director of Athletics (e.g. football program). The various programs are divided amongst this senior team with accountability to provide support and resources specific to any particular program. On the whole, the coaches indicate they are well taken care of by this level of management. In addition to the coaches' perspective, the senior leadership team is also seen in a very positive light by most of the people interviewed.

## Leadership Opportunities

The current Director of Athletics, Shawn Eichorst, is valued and highly respected by most of the participants in this review process. He provides strong leadership and clear direction while facing challenges within the NCAA and Big Ten Conference environment. In addition, his senior team is seen as effective in their leadership and seen to be contributing on a high level to making a cutting-edge athletic and educational program at UNL. While other national programs have struggled, UNL has shown strength and stability and has lived by their values with the student athlete experience being a central focus.

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### Visibility and Building Bridges Opportunity

Visibility will always be part of the Director of Athletics role at UNL. The importance of visibility is a relevant concern both internally and externally for many stakeholders. While it is difficult to gauge what it should look like to achieve the “effective” level, any person in this role should examine the value and opportunity that visibility provides in the enhancement and impact on the overall program. It would appear that Shawn Eichorst is very visible to certain stakeholders and that he has made significant effort to engage in outreach opportunities. There seems to be an understanding by the senior team regarding how Shawn Eichorst has chosen to engage in this aspect of his role – walking a fine line to stay somewhat in the background to allow greater visibility for the student athletes, coaches and coaching staff, while stepping up as needed and appropriate on behalf of the programs and UNL. With more than 526 appearances (two-thirds of which were in Nebraska) over the past three years, Mr. Eichorst has represented Nebraska locally, regionally and nationally. Additionally, with 45 radio broadcast appearances and print outreach with 42 issues of his “Connecting on Campus” column (reaching 20,000+ season ticket holders and donors), Mr. Eichorst appears to be taking this aspect of his role seriously with an increasing focus in 2016 with 83 public appearances to date.

There will always be ongoing opportunities and those opportunities should be strategically examined within the context of all of the accountabilities for the Director of Athletics. The approach to visibility should be an authentic fit for Mr. Eichorst.

The complex nature of the director of athletics role for Big Ten Conference universities calls for a politically astute and sophisticated approach to media and constituent interaction. Wisdom dictates that an advantage will be gained through the utilization of top level media expertise to support this functional role requirement. This resource should ensure timely and respectful response and engagement with the media aligned with a sound strategy for positioning UNL and UNL athletics front and center to Nebraskans as well as the country.

### Staff Development Opportunity

Mr. Eichorst’s approach to leadership pulls him in the positive direction of empowerment. Based on feedback, it appears some managers have been empowered without the requisite skills to manage others effectively. The understanding and actions engaged by Mr. Eichorst to provide his managers at all levels with the tools to be at their best will have a very positive impact on culture. Specifics of these recommendations are captured in the Culture and Climate Opportunities section on pages 13-14.



## **Culture and Climate Integrated Results**

The standard view is that culture is the belief systems, routines, habits and artifacts that represent core values; and climate is how it feels psychologically to be in that environment.

This report strives to illuminate the current perceptions and to provide guidance for strengthening what is working well and diffusing the negative perceptions that interfere with the organization being at its best.

### **Previous Employees Perspective**

Five previous employees (PE1 – PE5) were interviewed as a part of this review in order to gain the perspective from people who had been terminated or left voluntarily. It is not surprising that the people terminated have negative perceptions of the Department of Athletics culture and leadership. The surprising part of these interviews was that this constituent group also had positive comments. Those terminated tended to hark back to the culture of the previous administration in which they felt valued for their contributions. The structural shifts that have taken place under the current administration created changes in roles that resulted in some of these past employees being unable to assume larger, more integrated roles. The structural changes coupled with a need for greater compliance resulted in a challenge for some former employees with regard to how they fit into the organization. The current administration appears to be mindful of the importance of employees working to support, rather than undermine, the success of the department. It appears some former employees were working to sabotage rather than support the efforts of the leadership and staff of this department. Behavior described during the interview process by the interviewees themselves strongly suggests that, in some cases, this was happening.

### **Student Athlete Perspective**

The student athletes interviewed provided very positive perspectives. They expressed positive experiences as student athletes both with leadership in their sports and the Department of Athletics as a whole. Communication between students and staff is good and also perceived to be good among leadership. Overall, they are satisfied with resources and support offered and believe their interests as students are taken to heart by leadership.

Most other constituents both inside and outside the Department of Athletics applauded the focus on the student athlete.

With regard to focus on student athletes, student interviews revealed the following themes:

- Leadership perceived as awesome, kind, caring and consistent, which puts the welfare of student athletes first and foremost. Nebraska creates support for all student athletes across the board while other universities only offer some support for their headcount programs.
- The Director of Athletics and the Department of Athletics are all about the student athlete experience and employee development. The Director of Athletics is open to changes in performance management and taking a look at strengths-based development.
- The Director of Athletics looks for opportunities to connect all aspects of the student athlete experience. He is really good at integration of academics and sports (e.g. he introduced journalism students at spring games).
- Shawn and the team in the Department of Athletics support the welfare of the athlete.

## Reward and Recognition

There appears to be lack of clarity for a good number of the responders around the line of sight between what they do and how they are rewarded. Data suggest that compensation is viewed as relatively low compared to the amount of work that is required – especially in the lower staff levels of the organization. There is strong recognition that high wages are paid to coaches, especially the high profile sport coaches. There is a sense of inequity, even relative to the work they are doing for the department, compared to doing the same job elsewhere.

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Overall, it appears this department's leaders are good at acknowledging and celebrating the accomplishments of the Department of Athletics. The data indicate some uncertainty around whether success is based on what you know or who you know and the linkage between what you do and how you are rewarded. It is not unusual in our broader culture to believe in this aspect of our culture. We carry our beliefs with us to our work environment and view and interpret the world through that personal belief lens. These dynamics make it imperative to create transparency in reward systems to enable people to identify what needs to be done in order to gain each level of reward. There appears to be some confusion around this issue within the Department of Athletics culture with a split between those who believe that rewards are based on output (and therefore more or less under our personal control) and those who believe that it doesn't matter how hard you work – you won't be recognized. This latter belief is relatively prevalent for some athletic support staff, assistant coaches and head coaches. There also appears to be some perception of favoritism, which seems to be experienced more so by those with 7 to 19 years' experience.

## Communication

This is a culture where a majority of participants indicated that information is shared appropriately. For most organizations, communication shows up as one of the most challenging and difficult areas of culture. Data indicate an opportunity for exploring who and what information should and can be shared in order to advance common goals around individuals, teams, departments and the University. Communication around why and how information can be shared and the necessity for confidentiality with other information would be productive.

Further examination of the data indicated there is a desire for more information sharing that increases with tenure; the longer the tenure, the greater the feeling that information could be shared to a greater extent than it currently is being shared. Perception, of course, can have a time element based on changes in the environment. This perception is likely based on comparison with other administrations and how, where and why information was shared in the past.

From a communication and perhaps a collaboration standpoint, the data give the impression that there are communication challenges between the various support areas and some of the specific sport areas. There appear to be questions around how and what information should be shared, who owns data, the level of security that should be in place around student performance data, control and communication around individual plans for

student athletes, etc. It appears that coaches were previously in control of most aspects of the student athlete development and training. However, with the increased focus on specialty support in NAPL, nutrition, medicine, strength and conditioning, etc., and the high need for NCAA compliance and confidentiality with regard to the health, safety and welfare of the student athlete, the professionals in those areas are struggling to create a comfortable balance between collaboration, support and confidentiality, leaving some coaches and even other specialty areas in the dark about the total student athlete picture.

*There appear to be questions around how and what information should be shared, who owns data, the level of security that should be in place around student performance data, control and communication around individual plans for student athletes, even though a conduct and confidentiality document is signed by all staff.*

### **Decision Making**

This culture is perceived as one of shared leadership and responsibility. The data indicate a culture of shared authority and a collaborative environment where people are able to differentiate when an approach is most relevant within a situational context.

However, the data also indicate many of the assistant coaches and athletic support staff do not feel their input is sought. This indicates an opportunity to create a more systematic approach to inclusion around input. The data also indicate that some of the coaches do not feel their input is sought very much and that they have a desire for greater inclusion in decisions that have an impact on them personally and on their teams. Some coaches perceive there to be focus on the creation of rules, procedures and regulations that create some boundaries on how they recruit, conduct speaking engagements, run summer camp, etc.

The idea of valuing input is a struggle for many organizations. From an employee perspective, when input isn't sought, it can feel like their opinions are not valued or respected. Thus, the inclusion of focus groups and other input pathways may be most effective with regard to changes in management processes. If people don't feel included in the change or had a chance to be heard, they may begin to feel under-valued and unappreciated. This can lead to disengagement or, at worst, employees working to undermine or sabotage new initiatives.

The data also reflect a desire by head coaches to be more involved in the decision making process around issues where they have relevant information because they are closest to the situation. There appears to be a perception, by some, that no one understands their job/sport with the same acuity as they do and, therefore, no one is equipped to make the right decisions for them. In any/all organizational structures, there are several teams within teams. Individuals must consider who is in their first team. For most athletes, coaches and coaching staff, their first team is the athletic team and their loyalty is focused at that level. When decisions are made by administrators or other specialty professionals outside of their "first" team, it could leave them feeling out of control and to some extent that they have been impacted without input. This can leave them with a negative perception around decisions that are made in this way. That said, there is also a strong appreciation for the support through resources, clarity of processes and procedures from most coaches and teams.

The reality of any organizational decision making process is that decisions are made within context. In an environment of high risk, decisions need to be made at the level with the greatest knowledge of data. This level is frequently above the individual employee or lower level management level where experience and access to relevant broad data limits the perspective on the bigger picture or in the understanding of the impact the decision can have on the organization holistically.

Under capable management, empowerment is linked to competence and trust. This perspective aligns fairly closely with the Department of Athletics data. When asked about whether leadership in the Department of Athletics conveys trust in people’s competence to do their jobs, data indicate positive alignment. Working in a professional environment with appropriate support, autonomy and trust can help create an engaged workforce who are willing to go above and beyond what is required for their role. This is the difference between embracing a role and just going to a job every day. Within the Department of Athletics, a majority of employees appear to be strongly role focused.

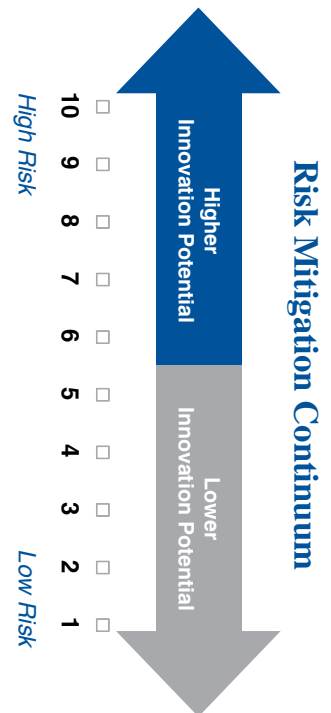
Closely related but different from the policy and procedures development inclusion issue is the perception around some staffing decisions that have been made by senior administrators. Most of the coaches expressed an understanding of why the higher profile staffing changes were made and the need for these to be handled with a higher level of confidentiality. Many of these decisions regarding the approach utilized for terminations have been handled at the University level and have been taken out of the hands of the Department of Athletics leadership. Even this information is not shared or understood, creating the perception that the senior leadership of the Department of Athletics is arbitrarily engaging in disruptive, surprising and questionable staffing decisions.

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**Innovation and Risk**

These two components of culture can move hand in hand. In a culture of low tolerance for risk, innovation isn’t supported and this lack of innovation may contribute to the demise of the organization. In an organization of high risk, innovation can thrive, mistakes can be made hundreds of times as processes are refined and the one-hundredth attempt creates success. Most organizations exist at some place in the middle of this continuum based on the environment within which they exercise their skills.

Within the Department of Athletics, there seems to be a strong recognition of the importance for compliance to policies and procedures given the litigious and visible nature of their work environment. Media is rife with examples where ignoring, bending, or failing to embrace the rules and regulations designed to minimize risk has led to public humiliation, disgrace and financial loss. However, even given this recognition of the importance of rules and procedures, there is a positive recognition in this department of the value of innovation or experimentation.



The data indicate that participants, overall, believe that while it is important for rules and procedures to be followed, there is also room for innovation and the culture supports that belief. There are also a minority of participants who do not consider their work environment to be open to innovation/experimentation or who believe they do not have opportunities within their roles for this type of approach.

This speaks to the challenge of finding the space in a compliance and risk mitigation environment for innovation. The majority seem to have found the sweet spot for this, but some are still unsure and struggle with the desire to take on greater risk and innovation.

### **Strategic versus Tactical Environment**

It is one of the primary roles of leadership to keep a bigger picture of the organization in front of employees as they concurrently support employee tactical achievement on a day-to-day basis. Data suggest that most participants feel the department maintains focus on long term, not just the issues facing them today; training for long-term success; and investment in development. In addition, data indicate strong agreement that leadership successfully links the mission of the Department of

Athletics to the broader mission of UNL. The strategic perspective of leadership appears to be contributing to the department's ability to be proactive and anticipate problems before they occur. It appears that the environment supports proactive anticipation and problem solving, suggesting empowerment. Again, the majority indicate a proactive approach is typically taken with reactivity only as necessary to stay ahead of problems.

*The strategic perspective of leadership appears to be contributing to the department's ability to be proactive and anticipate problems before they occur.*

This appears to be a culture that strives to set clear accountability and expectations for employees and attempts to do so through various approaches. One approach is by providing clear written rules based on policies and procedures. A majority of participants indicated this was appropriately done. In an area of the University where not only academic rules and regulations guide and govern activity, but also NCAA rules and regulation guide and govern activity, it would be surprising and concerning to find a culture that was not compliance oriented. It would appear there is strong recognition of this within the Department of Athletics at UNL.

It is interesting to note that some comments expressed concern that there are too many rules, with a written rule or regulation for everything and that this was done to a greater extent than in the past. Other comments commend the increased clarity that is now in place. It would appear from the data that an appropriate balance has been achieved in this culture between setting expectations through demonstrated norms and values and written rules and regulations. There also appears to be alignment between the norms and values and the behavior demonstrated by leadership in this department.

Data suggest most employees see this department as hierarchical. It is interesting that given the perceived hierarchical nature of the organization, and indeed the reality of that structure as revealed through the data collection process, data also indicate that almost half of participants indicated they perceive the culture to be family oriented. Education environments at the university level tend to be perceived as institutional/professional. It is therefore somewhat surprising this department has such a high number of employees who perceive it to be a family environment. It is likely a function of the feeling experienced within the individual team environments where the intensity of the effort both individually and collectively creates a closer relationship-based connection.

## **Culture and Climate Opportunities**

There are several opportunities for continued growth and development of the staff in the Department of Athletics.

The four major areas of opportunity with communication playing a role in each are:

1. Decision Making
2. Intra-Departmental Cross Functional Collaboration
3. Management Skills Support
  - a. Recognition
  - b. Rewards and Performance
  - c. Favoritism
4. Innovation and Risk

### **Decision Making**

1. Best practice suggests that senior management should seek to involve those closest to any given situation in an information gathering and decision process whenever possible/appropriate.
2. Best practice supports decisions being made at the appropriate level being pushed as closely to the situation as possible.
3. Now is the time to engage in a more inclusive process, where goals are set and constituents are allowed to struggle with solutions to meet the goals.
4. Supervisors should be accountable for explaining and justifying decisions to staff in an honest and truthful manner to whatever level legally permissible. This will support the continued positive direction of trust development.

### **Intra-Departmental Cross Functional Collaboration**

1. Explore the relationship dynamics between the various specialty areas and how student athletes and coaches are supported in their achievement of goals. The following outlined approach should be inclusive with key parties from various functions engaging together to enhance skills. Without further analysis, it appears key staff would benefit from:
  - a. Conflict skills training
  - b. Communication with goal alignment workshop

### **Management Skills Support**

1. Management Skills Training
  - a. Recognition – Both formal and informal recognition programs should be explored using cross functional development teams. This will work to bring various areas together creating a greater sense of empowerment and belonging to multiple levels of the organization.
2. Rewards and Performance
  - a. A market analysis should be conducted on the jobs within the Department of Athletics. This should be followed by communication around that market data and steps that will be taken to address any gaps.
  - b. The incentive programs, financial and non-financial perks that are unique to the Department of Athletics should be reviewed and addressed for effectiveness.
  - c. Clear expectations should be set in place around rewards and the linkage to performance. The development of these programs should be inclusive and collaborative.
  - d. Transparency in the recognition, reward and performance systems can also serve to reduce any perceived favoritism.

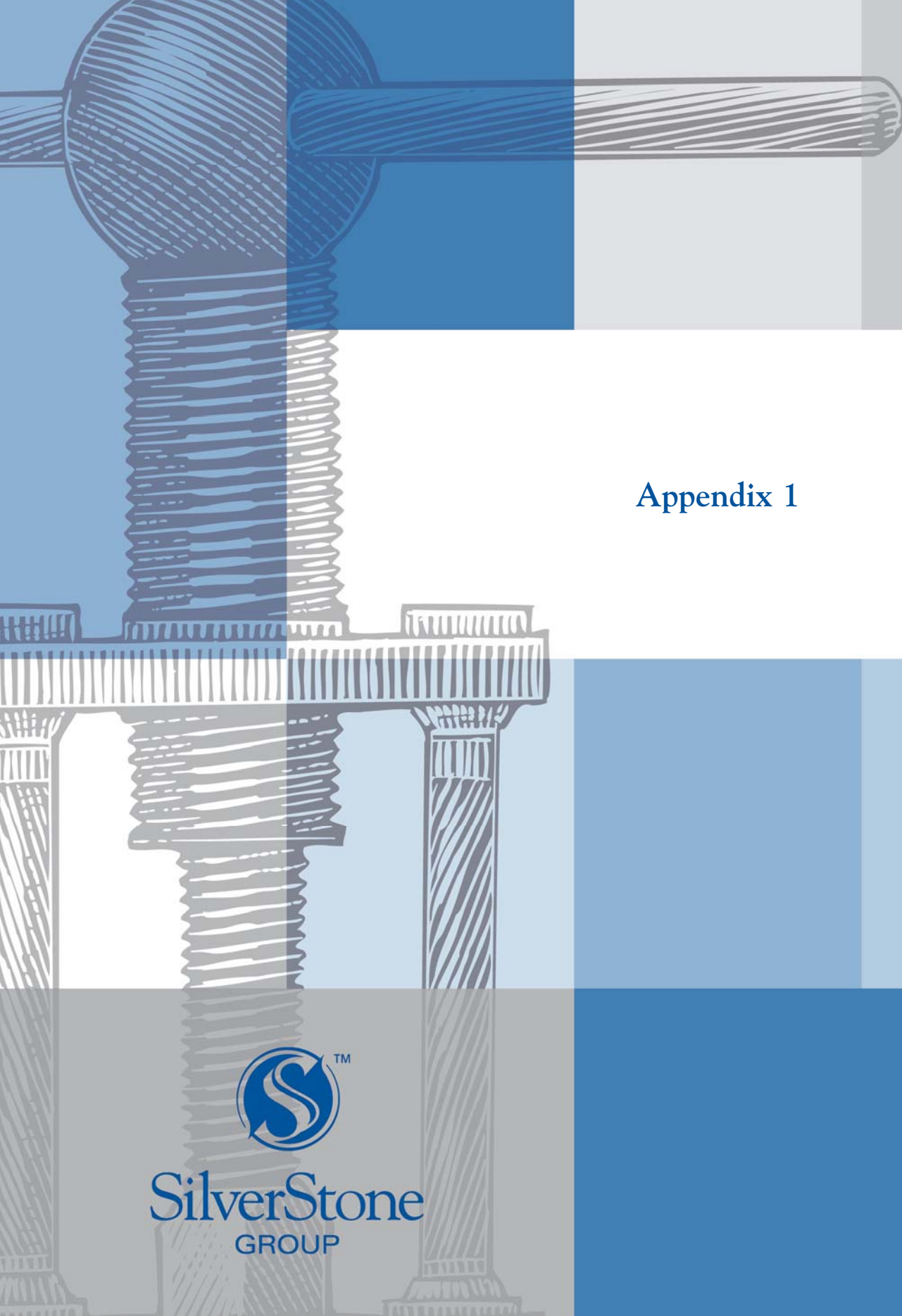
**Innovation and Risk**

1. An offsite workshop should be developed to clarify the Department of Athletics' approach to innovation and risk.
2. Philosophy that comes out of this inclusive, collaborative process should be communicated to all staff. This philosophy should be linked to the reward and performance metrics.

**Culture Feedback**

1. Annual internal culture survey with all employees
2. Annual culture survey with all University partners
3. Continuation of annual student athlete satisfaction survey (end of season exit survey)

If the leadership of the Department of Athletics gives some time and focus to the above suggested actions, this department will continue to build a reputation as one of the best programs in the country, will serve to support and develop current talent and will be a magnet to attracting the best and brightest talent as opportunities open up within the department. All of these actions should contribute to the creation of an impressive support system designed to create success for student athletes both on and off the field.



## Appendix 1



SilverStone  
GROUP

Wisdom at Work.

[SILVERSTONEGROUP.COM](http://SILVERSTONEGROUP.COM)



# Department of Athletics Program Review - Request for Interview & Survey

Office of the President <president@nebraska.edu>

Wed 1/20/2016 4:28 PM

1 attachment (34 KB)

UNL athletics program review (interview + survey) - 1-20-16.pdf;

January 20, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

As you know, Chancellor Perlman will step down on June 30 and we are conducting a national search for his successor. The upcoming leadership transition provides a timely and important opportunity for us to assess the strengths and challenges the next UNL chancellor will face. Periodic assessments are always a best practice, though it is especially important to have a full and clear understanding of the momentum and opportunities that exist in key programs across campus.

Over the next six months we will conduct a series of programmatic reviews designed to support our goals for excellence during this time of transition. Our reviews will focus on programs, culture and leadership, rather than the performance of individual employees.

We will begin with Athletics, one of the most high-profile programs on campus and an area in which long-term success is critical. SilverStone Group, an Omaha firm with decades of experience in program audits and culture and leadership assessments, will partner with us on this and future reviews. SilverStone's involvement will provide an objective and data-driven perspective which will serve us well.

As a key Athletics constituent, your input in this process is invaluable. A SilverStone representative will contact you soon to schedule a confidential interview. The interview will last between 30 and 60 minutes and will take place in person when possible. You will also receive an invitation to participate in an electronic survey. Your responses in both the interview and survey will be anonymous, so I encourage your thoughtfulness and candor.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this important process. Your feedback will help us achieve our goal of identifying ways for UNL programs to function at their best at a critical time for the university.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hank A. Bounds". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sincerely,

# Department of Athletics Program Review - Request to Participate in Survey

Office of the President <president@nebraska.edu>

Wed 1/20/2016 4:28 PM

1 attachment (34 KB)

UNL athletics program review (survey) - 1-20-16.pdf;

January 20, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

As you know, Chancellor Perlman will step down on June 30 and we are conducting a national search for his successor. The upcoming leadership transition provides a timely and important opportunity for us to assess the strengths and challenges the next UNL chancellor will face. Periodic assessments are always a best practice, though it is especially important to have a full and clear understanding of the momentum and opportunities that exist in key programs across campus.

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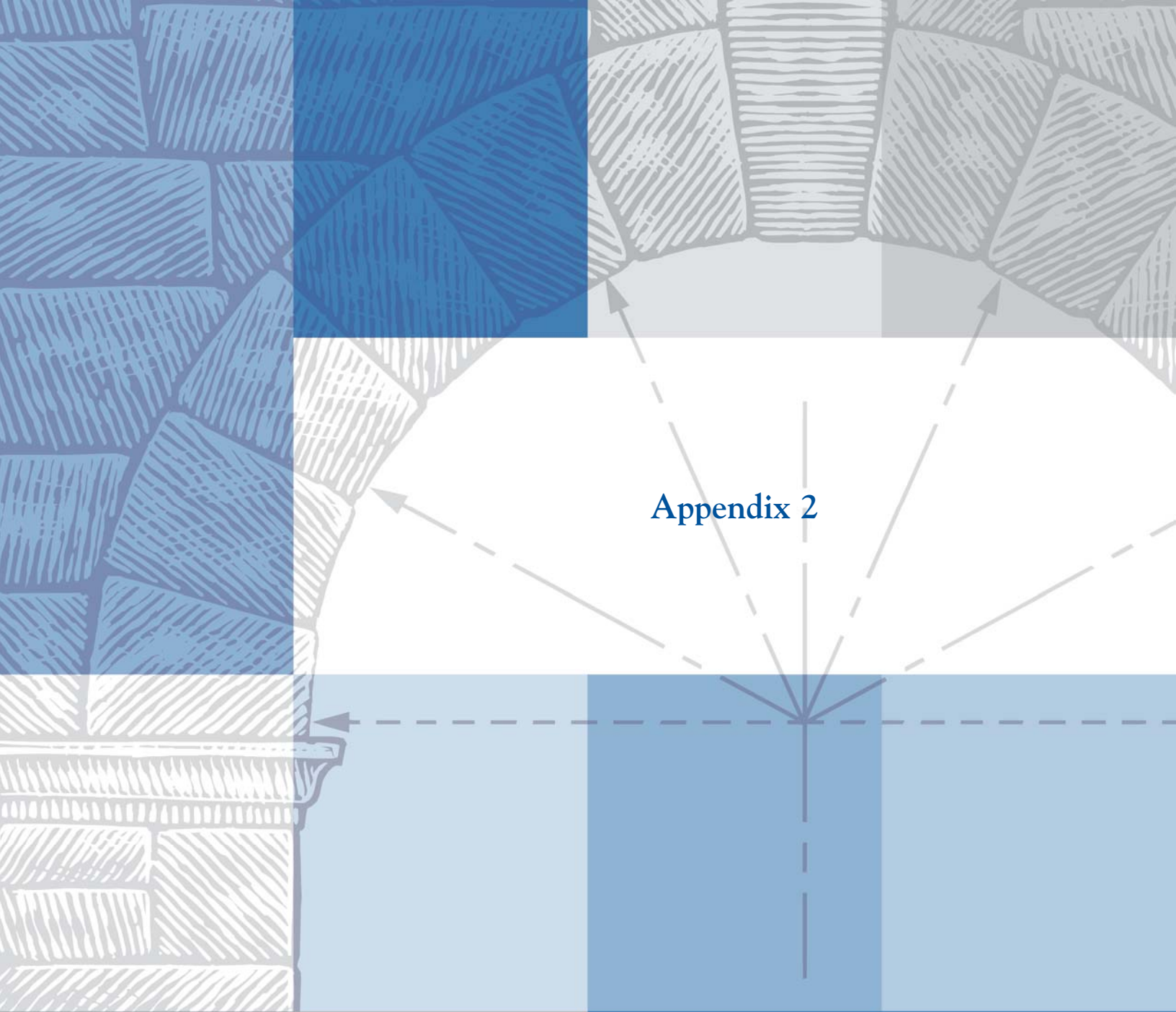
As a key Athletics constituent, your input in this process is invaluable. Soon you will receive an invitation from SilverStone to participate in a confidential electronic survey which will include both quantitative and open-ended questions. Your responses to the survey will be anonymous, so I encourage your thoughtfulness and candor.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this important process. Your feedback will help us achieve our goal to identify ways for UNL programs to function at their best at a critical time for the university.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hank M. Bounds". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hank M. Bounds  
President  
University of Nebraska



Appendix 2



SilverStone  
GROUP

Wisdom at Work.

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## SilverStone Group Survey Communication

*Emails from Cindy Tully, Consulting Associate and Executive Assistant*

### Email to Survey Participants

Good afternoon,

You recently received an email from President Bounds inviting you to participate in an electronic survey. The purpose of this survey is to assess the strengths and challenges that lie ahead for the incoming UNL Chancellor. You will soon receive an email from Survey Monkey with a link and instruction for responding. The survey will remain open for two weeks, through end of business on Thursday, February 4. If you have not received this email by noon on Friday, January 22, please check your spam folder. If still not received, contact me.

Please be assured that your responses will be anonymous! We thank you for your participation and appreciate your honest feedback. If you have any problems with the technical aspects of the survey, please call Cindy Tully at (402) 964-5549 or Stephanie Sands at (402) 964-5791.

Thank you!

PS – If you have previously opted out of Survey Monkey, please contact me or Stephanie for access to this survey.

### Email to Interviewees

Good afternoon,

You were recently sent an email from President Bounds notifying you that SilverStone Group is working with the University to assess the strengths and challenges that lie ahead for the incoming UNL Chancellor.

I'm writing today to find a time for an interview with one of our Consultants. This meeting will take place at UNL (location to be announced) and should last approximately 30 minutes. Below are available options. Because we are scheduling interviews with many people, please try to select 2 or 3 that work for you. Times will be filled on a first respond, first serve basis. I will confirm your interview time and location via email.

Please be assured that your comments will be strictly confidential. We thank you for your participation and appreciate your honest feedback.

Thank you...I'll wait to hear from you.

## Email to Student Athlete Leaders

Good afternoon,

You were recently sent an email from President Bounds notifying you that SilverStone Group is working with the University to assess the strengths and challenges that lie ahead for the incoming UNL Chancellor. As a student athlete leader, you have been invited to participate in this process.

I'm writing today to find a time for an interview with one of our Consultants. This meeting will take place at in a reserved meeting room at Varner Hall and should last approximately 30 minutes. Below are available options. Because we are scheduling interviews with many people, please try to select 2 or 3 that work for you. Times will be filled on a first respond, first serve basis. I will confirm your interview time and location via email.

Please be assured that your comments will be strictly confidential. We thank you for your participation and appreciate your honest feedback.

Thank you...I'll wait to hear from you.