

Ohio State Senior Deputy Athletic Director Diana Sabau Hired By Big Ten



The Big Ten announced on March 15 that it has hired Diana Sabau as its new deputy commissioner and chief sports officer, effective May 1, 2021. She's the first person to fill the role, which was created specifically for her. She'll work directly with conference commissioner Kevin Warren and is set to lead "administration of all 28 Big Ten Conference sponsored sports, which includes managing affiliate memberships, competition, scheduling, championships, sportsmanship, officiating, and awards" according to a conference statement.

"I am thrilled to hire a deputy commissioner and chief sports officer who has over 27 years of collegiate athletics experience, knowledge and relationships," said Warren in a statement. "Diana is a proven leader with integrity and creativity. Her reputation as a hard-worker, collaborator, and trusted counsel are critical elements to serving our members and growing the conference."

Sabau has been a crucial part of the Ohio State athletic department since April of 2017, when she took over as the senior deputy athletic director. She served as Gene Smith's top assistant and was responsible for budgeting, scheduling, negotiating contracts and compliance for the football team and coordination of the overall athletics brand messaging. She was also the deputy director for women's hockey, pistol and rifle and took the lead on the hiring of women's hockey coach Nadine Muzerall, who has taken a formerly moribund program to three NCAA tournaments in five seasons, including a semifinals berth in her second season.

"During Diana's tenure at The Ohio State University she evolved into an excellent administrator with unique talents and skills that cannot be replaced. She enjoyed a diversity of experiences that afforded her the ability to be exceptional in so many areas," said Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith. "Her service at OSU was more than as a steward; her passion and commitment to excellence were stellar."

Chief among her accomplishments in Columbus was a long-term deal signed with Nike, along with the upcoming 2027-28 home-and-home series with Alabama.

"Ohio State has been my lifeblood," Sabau told The Columbus Dispatch. "Ohio State makes my heart sing. Ohio State student-athletes is all I've done for a long time. So I didn't have to leave Ohio State. I chose to leave, not only to grow myself professionally, but to be involved with something I'm very passionate about, and that's the Big Ten conference. This is an opportunity that helps me build and

protect and transform the future of the Big Ten conference.”

Ohio State traditionally promotes from within in the athletic department, including with Sabau, who replaced Martin Jarmond when he departed for Boston College’s athletic director position in 2017. Pittsburgh athletic director Heather Lyke and Washington State athletic director Pat Chun filled similar roles with Ohio State before departing for AD jobs, making Sabau a bit of an anomaly, as she was expected to make a similar move – though she also appeared to be a potential heir apparent to Smith. Instead, she’s headed to the conference level.

If Smith looks to promote from within once again, executive director of administration and chief of staff Kim Heaton; deputy director of athletics Janine Oman and executive associate athletic director for development Dan Cloran look to be next in line.