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An Open Letter to the Pirates From AD Lisa Sweany

Lisa Sweany

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Pirate Nation,

As our time here at Pirate Athletics comes to a close I wanted to take this time to reflect on the past six years and how grateful I am to have served as the Athletic Director at Armstrong State University. In July 2011 I was given the opportunity to take over Pirate Athletics and I couldn't have been more thrilled to receive the call from our University President, Dr. Linda M. Bleicken. I was excited because of the winning tradition Pirate Athletics had already experienced and the potential we had to create a dynasty in both NCAA Division II and in the Peach Belt Conference. Thank you, President Bleicken, for believing in me to lead this program and more importantly for serving as a mentor over the past six years. I have appreciated this opportunity more than you know.

To the alumni and community, thank you for your support of Pirate Athletics. Our coaches, student-athletes and institution appreciated your unwavering support. We could not have been as successful as we were without your financial support but more importantly your physical support in the stands, connecting with our student-athletes and following their careers while a Pirate and beyond. Thank you for making Pirate Nation a special place.

When I arrived, I was fortunate to have coaches that were driven, dedicated and overall competitive. Coaches are the heart and soul of an athletic department and I have been blessed to work with some of the best in the business. You recruited quality student-athletes that could succeed at Armstrong State both academically and athletically; you challenged them daily to exceed your expectations and created an environment of competitiveness, acceptance and family. I want to thank the coaches that have been a part of Pirate Athletics and for always putting your student-athletes first. We have been successful, because of your hard work and desire, to better the lives of these young people. A simple thank you doesn't seem like enough. Wherever your next step is you will continue to do great things, affecting the lives of young men and women. Your new institutions will be lucky to have you lead their teams.

To the administrators that have worked diligently behind the scenes to create a positive experience for our student-athletes, I want to thank you as well. Often times you do not receive the credit you are due but that never stopped you from pushing forward, working hard and always, always putting

our student-athletes first. You made a difference in the lives of young people as well and as you move on to new opportunities I know that will always remain a focal point for your career and with that in mind, you can never go wrong.

To the student-athletes, where do I start? You have always represented Pirate Athletics in a first-class manner and I am beyond blessed to have served as your Athletic Director. Your commitment to the classroom was appreciated. Your department-wide 3.0 GPA each semester I have been here as AD is not only impressive but an expectation that each and every one of you placed on yourself to be the very best you could be. Competitively you were fierce and never gave anything less than your best. During my six years you amassed 5 NCAA DII National Championships, 35 Peach Belt Conference titles (23 regular season and 15 tournament titles), 43 NCAA DII Championships appearances, 86 All-Americans, 13 Academic All-Americans and 214 All-Peach Belt Conference honorees. This year was unlike any other you have encountered with the announcement of the consolidation with Georgia Southern in early January. After processing the news, you each set about making the best decision for yourselves individually and, although a challenging time, I was impressed with the thoughtful, mature decision-making each and every one of you went through. They were difficult decisions to make for sure, but you approached it in a manner that was consistent with how you continually represented Armstrong State University, in a first-class manner. We always talked about enjoying the journey and my hope is that because you were a part of Pirate Athletics you are better equipped to handle adversity and will continue to make a difference in your community and the lives you touch. You are the best of the best and you have made my time here at Armstrong State an exceptional experience and for that I say, thank you. I have enjoyed being on this journey with each and every one of you.

As the long, storied 50-year history of Pirate Athletics closes out this month I just wanted to reflect on the numerous people who have touched this department and had a hand in creating something very special. There are not adequate words to describe the appreciation I have for each and every one of you. Pirate Athletics is and always will be a class act and I'm fortunate to have had a small part in its rich tradition.

#RememberThePirates

Lisa Sweany
Athletic Director