

Gene Smith
Senior Vice President and Wolfe Foundation Endowed Athletics Director
The Ohio State University

Gene Smith is in his 19th year at Ohio State, leading the nation's largest and one of its most successful athletic programs. Prior to Ohio State, Smith served as athletic director at Arizona State University (2000-2005), Iowa State University (1993-2000), and Eastern Michigan University (1985-1993). With over 38 years as an AD, Smith is widely recognized as a national leader in intercollegiate athletics.

Ohio State Athletics finished third in the 2022-23 Director's Cup standings. This year's finish represents the ninth time Ohio State has finished as the No. 1 athletics program in the Big Ten Conference with eight of those top finishes occurring under Smith's direction.

Smith's philosophy of developing the "total student-athlete" has resulted in academic achievements concurrent with athletic success. In 2022-23 765 OSU Scholar-Athletes, 190 Big Ten Distinguished Scholars, and six Academic All-Americans attest to Ohio State's commitment to success in the classroom and on the fields of play.

In addition, Ohio State Athletics posted a cross-sport multi-year Academic Performance Rate of 993, the highest in school history. Of the 36 Buckeye sport programs, 26 have multi-year rates of 990 or greater, and the football program's rate of 993 was an all-time high. In 2022-23, 240 student-athletes earned their degrees.

During Smith's tenure, Ohio State has dominated Big Ten Conference play, with 115 team and 369 individual conference championships. On the national stage, Ohio State teams have won 32 team and 117 individual NCAA championships during Smith's tenure. A former student-athlete, and coach, he keeps a keen focus on the over 1,000 student-athletes he serves.

To that end, the Eugene D. Smith Leadership Institute (EDSLI) was created, funded by \$15 million in private support, to provide leadership, character, and career development for all Ohio State student-athletes to best prepare them for life after graduation.

EDSLI programs include Bucks Go Pro internships, job shadows/micro-internships, Wolstein Leadership Academy, Buckeye road trip, career fairs, Sundays in the Shoe, and Lead Like a Buckeye. In 2022-23, a record 95% of the department's graduating seniors had job offers, acceptance into graduate school, or were pursuing professional sports.

Smith oversees the University's Business Advancement unit, including Columbus's Nationwide Arena and OSU's Blackwell Hotel, Schottenstein Center, Fawcett Center and Trademark and Licensing, which along with Athletics have a combined annual budget of \$347 million in FY 2024 (Athletics \$253 million and Business Advancement \$94 million).

Smith's business acumen has resulted in record setting third party agreements with NIKE (\$252 million), IMG (\$240 million), Levy Foods (\$88 million) and Coke that have allowed for innovative and trend setting programs offered to student-athletes.

Fund raising is one of Smith's gifts and along with his development team more than \$930 million has been raised since his arrival in 2005 which represents over 77 pct. of all funds raised for OSU Athletics in its history.

Smith oversees a total of 523 employees in athletics and business advancement, and a football program with a \$1.5 billion valuation, as estimated by the *Wall Street Journal*.

But what Smith is most proud of is the exemplary culture within his units, recognized by *Forbes* as "one of the best ten organizations to work for in sports" and the only college program on its list.

Smith was a member of the College Football Playoff (CFP) Committee (2017-20); past chair of the NCAA Men's Basketball Committee (2010-11); member of the negotiating advisory team for the 2010 Turner/CBS contract with the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament for \$10.8 billion; and member, negotiating advisory team for the 1991 CBS/NCAA contract for \$6.0 billion. Smith also served as President of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA) in 1994, was appointed to the prestigious Rice Commission, and was co-chair of the NCAA Federal & State Legislative Working Group to Study Name, Image & Likeness (NIL).

Smith was the first two-time recipient of the Sports Business Journal A.D. of the Year (2016 & 2010) award. Smith has been recognized by *Forbes*, *Sports Illustrated* and *Black Enterprise* as one of the most influential minorities in American Sport. Smith received the John L. Toner Award for outstanding dedication to college athletics, in 2008; he was inducted into the inaugural "Legends Class" NACDA Hall of Fame in 2008; and honored as Athletic Administrator of the Year by the Black Coaches Association in 2007.

Gene and his wife, Sheila, have four children: Matt (Chantal), Nicole (Joe), Lindsey (Anita), and Summer (Adrian), and eight grandchildren.