

ASU assistant director keeps Women's Final Four running smoothly behind the scenes

Krystina Mallon oversees ASU's role as host school

By Scott Bordow, ASU News
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Near the top of the whiteboard in Krystina Mallon's office are three words written in black marker: Women's Final Four.

Below the heading, written in green, is a list of responsibilities, including:

- Table crew

- Staff hotel

- Team/official snacks

- Game ops staff

- Band/cheer liaisons

The list goes on and on, a mountain of details that have infiltrated her life. [Mallon](#), Arizona State University's assistant director for athletic operations, oversees ASU's role as host school for the NCAA Women's Final Four, to be held April 2–5 at Mortgage Matchup Center in downtown Phoenix.

And if you're thinking that being in charge of all those things at such a big event would keep you up at night — well, Mallon can confirm. After all, she's living it.

“I’ll be lying in bed and think, ‘Oh, I need to write that down or I’ll forget it,’” Mallon said. “So, I’ll send myself an email that I’ll see in the morning. Or I’ll think, ‘I filed that thing away, but I need to bring it back up.’”

“It’s constant. There’s so much going on that I can never turn it off.”

It’s a good thing, then, that the job isn’t too big for Mallon. In fact, it’s an ideal fit.

Mallon — who earned a Master of Legal Studies in 2023 from ASU’s Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law — has been part of Sun Devil Athletics for 14 years, starting as an event coordinator. In her current role, she’s the master scheduler for the more than 400 events that are held annually at ASU’s facilities.

Get in the game

The NCAA Women’s Final Four runs April 2–5 at Mortgage Matchup Center in downtown Phoenix.

Find information about game tickets, practices, broadcast schedule and surrounding events such as the Four It All Fest on the [NCAA website](#).

“Krystina is extremely detail-oriented and very organized,” said [Mike Chismar](#), ASU’s senior associate athletics director for operations and facilities. “She has overseen women’s basketball game management for a number of years, and this year also added men’s basketball game management. ... She’s the perfect person to serve as the lead from Sun Devil athletic operations for this year’s Women’s Final Four.”

Mallon didn’t hesitate for a moment when Chismar asked her to take the lead role. No matter that she has three children at home or that she’s constantly juggling things in her normal day-to-day work at ASU.

“This is something that you build as part of your career,” she said. “It’s kind of one of those things you look forward to. We’re not driven by goals like sales and stuff. It’s opportunities in our world.

“To be a part of a championship at this level is exciting. It’s one of those unique opportunities that don’t always come around.”

Mallon also appreciated the significance of a woman playing a critical role in planning and executing the biggest event in women’s college basketball.

“It’s a huge honor,” she said. “I hope I rise to the occasion. I hope I do this department and females across the board proud. It has been a male-dominated industry at times. I have seen more and more females get (an athletic administration) role, but that’s not lost on me by any means.”

Mallon began preparing for the Final Four more than a year ago. One of her first tasks was assembling the more than 100 ASU employees from across the university who will be working the event.

Fortunately, ASU was the host school for the 2024 Men’s Final Four, so much of the team is already in place.

“I am very fortunate that a lot of the staff members that are working this worked the men’s or other championships,” Mallon said. “So, they are familiar and comfortable.”

Fans watching the Final Four likely won't have any idea of ASU's involvement. As Mallon puts it, she's in charge of the "back of the house."

That includes:

- Overseeing the teams' practice sites.

- Having ASU's training staff on hand to work with team doctors and trainers.

- Assigning a person to be a host for each team; that host will be with the team members from the second they land in the Valley until they depart.

- Locker room attendants who will make sure each team's locker room is set up with snacks/drinks at the team's request.

- A team that will help with the postgame celebration.

- Ensuring cheer mats are available for the cheer warmup.

- Having ball racks available for the championship game balls.

- A host for each team's band and cheer squads as they travel to different events around the Valley.

- A marketing team helping to promote the event.

ASU's most visible representation will be at the scorer's table. The shot clock operator, game clock operator, scoreboard operator and official scorer are all part of ASU's team.

How does Mallon keep track of all that and more?

"I have lists upon lists and four different calendars and binders and the computer," said Mallon, who estimated her Final Four responsibilities take up more than 20 hours of her regular work week. "Fortunately, I'm a very detailed person."

Mallon said that starting on Monday, March 30, her team is setting up the "back of the house" at Mortgage Matchup Center, including the locker rooms. Once Wednesday hits — the Final Four games are Friday, April 3, and Sunday, April 5 — "we will be there first thing in the morning and the last ones to leave at night," she said.

And yet, all the planning in the world doesn't guarantee a smooth-running event.

"When you do enough events over the years, especially these level of events, you tend to learn that nothing is going to be perfect," Mallon said. "Something is going to be forgotten. You're going to have misinformation. There are going to be glitches. It's really just how you handle it. Over time, you learn how to adjust, and you know you have a good team around that you can rely on."

Once the Final Four ends, Mallon will get a good night's sleep — finally — return full time to her ASU job and then, well, who knows.

"It's hard to sit here and say that I want to be an athletic director or a senior associate athletic director," Mallon said. "It's about continuing to get opportunities. As long as I'm challenging myself, I will be content. The moment I'm no longer challenging myself, then I have to reevaluate.

"For me, it's not necessarily about the title. It's just about continuing to grow."

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Krystina Mallon, assistant director for athletic operations, (shown in her office the Carson Student-Athlete Center in Tempe on March 13) has been part of Sun Devil Athletics for 14 years. In her current role, she's the master scheduler for the more than 400 events that are held annually at ASU's facilities. Photo by Charlie Leight/ASU News

Text image(s)

NCAA WOMEN'S FINAL FOUR 2026

MORTGAGE MATCHUP CENTER | PHOENIX, ARIZONA



No caption

WOMEN'S FINAL FOUR

ALTERNATE PRACTICE SITE

- EAP
- POC
- SCHEDULE
- MARK

GAME OPS STAFF

- VOLUNTEER LINK
- MASTER LISTS
- CONTACT INFO
- UNIFORM
- CREDS
- SCHEDULE
- TOUR SCHEDULE
- POWER POINT TRAINING

TABLE CREW

- VOLUNTEER LINK
- TRAINING

STAFF HOTEL/CONCUR

MASTER TIMELINE

TEAM/OFFICIAL SNACKS

SPORTS MED

- DR REIMBURSEMENT
- COLD TUBS ✓
- BIKES

LOADING DOCK SCHEDULE

CHECKLIST/BOX

- PRINTER

MARK - DELIVERY TRUCK

BAND/CHEER

- LIAISONS

Kyrstina Mallon, assistant athletics director of operations in Sun Devil Athletics, has a color-coded whiteboard with her to-do lists for the 2026 NCAA Women's Final Four at Mortgage Matchup Center. Photo by Charlie Leight/ASU News