“Scott, who’s incredibly supportive and reassuring, said to me, ‘This is your chance to run an entire organization. It’s a new challenge, and you’ll be great in it,’” said Meli, the Delaware 87ers’ COO.

Daily, Meli commutes from Mullica Hill, N.J., to the team’s offices in Wilmington, Del., and, on game days, the campus of the University of Delaware. His mission: Manage daily operations with an eye toward developing a fan base as creatively as possible.

“Having worked in the NBA for so long, it’s not at all what I expected, but I’ve loved every second of it,” said Meli, who attained his Master’s of Education in Sport and Recreation Administration from STHM. “It goes beyond basketball. … It’s all about the fan experience and being great community ambassadors. Every day, we strive to come up with memorable and unique experiences for our fans.”

One enter-to-win promotion this season, Meli said, offered a fan an opportunity to be an 87er for the day. The winner signed a one-day contract, participated in shootaround, warmed up with the team, dressed in full uniform and sat on the bench for the game.

“In the D-League, we have the flexibility to frame an entire night and game around a once-in-a-lifetime experience,” said Meli. “That’s the best part of my job.”

For Michael Goings, BS ’05, creativity is equally as integral to his position. The Washington, D.C., native said he “came to Temple without even seeing it,” solely on the reputation of the school’s Sport and Recreation Management program.

“And I’ve never left,” Goings said, chuckling.

Goings serves as the Sixers’ director of community relations, responsible for planning and managing many of the franchise’s SIXERS STRONG community outreach efforts. From volunteer initiatives to player appearances, Goings helps lead the team’s community relations plans and prep.

He oversaw a two-day whirlwind event during the 2013-14 season, during which the Sixers signed Kevin Grow to a ceremonial two-day contract. Grow, a Philadelphia-area high school senior with Down syndrome, was his high school basketball team’s manager when he came off the bench on senior night to knock down four 3-pointers. His incredible story, which swept the nation, prompted the Sixers to invite Grow to their practice facility, share a few meals with the team, wear a personalized jersey, and join the players in pregame introductions a day later.

“I don’t think any of us expected that to be as big as it was, and we’re glad it was. We’re still getting letters from Kevin’s family,” Goings said. “Kevin was so inspiring and, community-wise, that’s what the Sixers are all about. Organization-wide, we have such a commitment to this city. We want to engage this city.”

For the Sixers’ home opener this season, the Sixers draped blue T-shirts across every seat in the arena. The team needed the manpower to pull off the feat, and Goings knew to whom to turn.

“I called Montague,” Goings said, referring to STHM Associate Vice Dean Jeffrey Montague.

That day, the Sixers had 50 STHM student-volunteers in South Philadelphia. Goings said he makes every effort to give STHM students opportunities like the one he was afforded. The fall semester of his senior year had been winding down when Goings urged an advisor to help him land an internship with the Sixers. That call led to a career, as it turned out.

“That’s what makes STHM so great,” said Snead, the account executive. “We require industry experience as seniors, and STHM values that just as much as traditional book learning. There’s a reason why this program is the best in the country.”