

# Principles and Proposals Concerning NCAA Division 1 Restructuring

## Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics

October 2013

The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) welcomes the opportunity to convey its views on the restructuring of NCAA Division 1. We are one of three faculty organizations whose input has been invited; our perspective reflects the orientation of faculty senates, which comprise our larger membership. To date, our 1A FAR colleagues have offered specific analyses of and recommendations for the current NCAA structural organization from the perspective of their NCAA experience. Our statement will focus on the strategic issues that appear most critical from the perspective of campus faculty leadership.

COIA's contribution concerns principles that we believe should govern the restructuring process, and offers a concise set of specific recommendations. Its unifying theme is that given the challenges facing college sports today, restructuring must convey in substance and appearance that while it is the function of the NCAA to regulate athletics, its larger purpose is to ensure that athletics enhances and does not jeopardize the educational mission of its member schools.

The essential features of our principles and recommendations are as follows:

- Restructuring should be designed to anticipate the challenges of the coming decade if the system is left unchanged.
- Major challenges are likely to include protecting the collegiate model from professionalization, dramatic salary increases, loss of fee flexibility, and loss of tax exemptions.
- *Rearticulating the NCAA mission as regulation of athletics to enhance the success of US higher education in a global context* can set a solid foundation for restructuring.
- Increased engagement of faculty within the NCAA structure and in athletics governance on campuses and in conferences can strengthen the NCAA mission.
- Leverage to answer current challenges and restore public confidence can be gained by restructuring a presidentially-controlled D1 Board to include a non-presidential component made up of athletics directors, faculty, and representatives of the public.

## Principles

Basis for planning. We believe that planning for reorganization should be based on an assessment of the trajectory of college sports over a ten-year time frame, identifying the projected state of athletics in 2023 on the basis of current conditions and trends, and contrasting it with the ideal state of athletics as framed by the NCAA mission. The gap between the current

trajectory and the appropriate mission cannot be bridged solely by structural reorganization, but structural reorganization should be strategically designed to help minimize that gap.

Current trajectory. On the current trajectory, we believe the present NCAA Division 1 will include the following features by 2023 or sooner: a significant subset of programs will have become professionalized and perhaps unionized, abandoning the collegiate model; leading head coach salaries will have grown to the \$10m level, with athletics costs rising proportionately; institutional fiscal sustainability will be increasingly leveraged on the continued and perhaps unsustainable growth of athletics revenues; reaction to the visibly escalating student-athlete spending curve will have limited elasticity in general tuition and fee rates, capping the main source of general fund growth; and tax exempt status for athletics gifts and revenues may have been limited or lost. We believe these that features are inconsistent with the mission of the NCAA and of its member schools, and that a principal objective of reform should be to create structures that can best help to shape a future far more consistent with the principles of the NCAA mission.

Mission definition. The basic principle that legitimates the NCAA is that intercollegiate athletics is conducted in the interest of the common academic mission of member schools. We believe this principle needs to be rearticulated and refocused. The current NCAA structure expresses its mission in terms of the sum of the interests of its member universities and student-athletes, rather than in terms of the interest of US higher education as a whole, of which its membership is the elite tier. The NCAA can protect the collegiate model, its contributions to campus and alumni culture, and the tax exempt status of athletics only by accepting the *enhancement of higher education as a critical national enterprise in a competitive global educational environment* as the object of its regulatory mission. Because the pursuit of aspirational goals by NCAA member schools individually takes place in a zero-sum win-lose context, free market principles will not promote the mission of the whole without a regulatory perspective that transcends the sum of the interests of individual schools. The NCAA structure should enable and empower such a guiding perspective. In this sense, the nature of NCAA D1 as a membership organization may need to be reconceived to align regulatory design with the mission goals of its collective membership.

We believe that these principles point towards solutions that will both facilitate more effective regulation consistent with the mission, and demonstrate to a skeptical public the membership's commitment to preserving the basis of intercollegiate sports as an enhancement of the academic experience for a critical public purpose.

## **Recommendations**

1. Enhancing the faculty role. As an alliance of FBS faculty senates concerned about the effects of athletics on the academic mission, COIA holds that the faculty can provide unique and

essential contributions to athletics administration and regulation. Faculty are normally listed as one among many interest groups in a complex athletics environment that privileges the perspectives of on-field competition and fiscal management. But the unique nature of the faculty “interest” is, as professional stewards of campus academic missions, entirely concerned with the potential of athletics to enhance the academic culture of our campuses. This deep alignment to the ideals of the NCAA’s mission is strengthened by the faculty’s ability, through the protections of tenure, to express this perspective with exceptional independence.

For this reason we recommend the enhancement of faculty engagement in athletics on two levels: within the FAR administrative structure, and as a dispersed engaged academic group at the campus and conference levels.

- Within the NCAA administrative structure. We strongly support the recommendations of our FAR colleagues for an increased faculty presence on NCAA councils and committees.
- On campus and conference levels. We recommend that the NCAA take the necessary steps to promote the strengthened capability and role of faculty governance in athletics policy making and oversight, in concert with FARs, and to foster organs for intercampus communication among faculty governance groups undertaking these responsibilities. We have submitted one detailed vision of these ideals to the NCAA in *INCREASING FACULTY ENGAGEMENT IN A DEREGULATED ATHLETICS CONTEXT* (February 2013), and look forward to further discussion and revision of those ideas.

2. Constitution of the D1 NCAA board. The governing Board of D1 must play a fiduciary role ensuring the alignment of policy and practice with the NCAA mission, and develop and monitor strategic plans to retain that alignment under changing conditions. While the problems facing athletics have only grown over the past two decades, we believe that the principle of presidential leadership remains valid. However, as an organization that has a critical impact on US higher education, the structure of the Board should reflect to the public, in substance and appearance, the NCAA’s commitment to athletics under the collegiate model, and build and maintain public confidence in the authenticity of the NCAA mission and integrity of its pursuit.

We believe that to fulfill these criteria, the D1 Board should include, in addition to a strong majority of presidents and chancellors, three other types of members: Athletics Directors, faculty members, and public members external to higher education.

- We recommend the appointment of at least two Athletics Directors and at least two faculty appointees to Board positions. Board participation by these internal groups, which reflect the most broadly informed perspectives of athletics and academics, will not only

provide a representational function, but will better align responsibilities and authority within the NCAA structure, and facilitate the more holistic engagement of these groups through the incentive of shared ownership.

- We recommend that a limited number of Board seats be allocated to public representatives with appropriate stature, credibility, and understanding of American education, who can bring valuable expertise to the Board, represent the public interest that the NCAA's mission reflects, and enhance public trust in the NCAA.

We believe that this judicious sharing of control by the presidents and chancellors will produce a far greater return in internal and external leverage over the challenges that face D1 athletics than is lost by relinquishing a monopoly on Board decision making.

\*

We are a faculty group: naturally, we have much more to say. We are well aware of important questions concerning the continuing integrity of the present Division 1, the role of conferences, the design of key committees, the voting basis of legislative action, and so forth. But given the complexity of the current task, the multiplicity of groups asked to comment, and the expertise of our FAR colleagues, we think it would be best at this time to restrict our Coalition's contributions to this limited list of strategic points, briefly outlined from a faculty perspective. We look forward to ongoing participation in these discussions.