**COIA Steering Committee Statement on the University of Kentucky’s New Policies for Men’s Basketball**

The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) has long endorsed the collegiate model of amateur sports and opposed policies leading college sports toward professionalization. A recent alteration of policy at the University of Kentucky is the type of warning sign we would expect to see on the path toward a full professional model. On May 6th the Kentucky men’s basketball coach John Calipari issued an online announcement: Kentucky will apparently demand that its non-conference basketball games be played off campus to provide better pre-professional training to its players, accommodate non-student fans, and increase revenues. Consistent with COIA policy, the Coalition Steering Committee calls for strong opposition to such policy changes from the NCAA leadership, conference commissioners, and Division-I schools, and we urge NCAA member schools to refrain from signing contracts with Kentucky on such terms.

According to Coach Calipari, UK is no longer a “traditional program” because it is designed to lose most of its “one-and-done” players to the NBA each year. Kentucky will therefore only sign short term contracts with non-conference rivals, and will require that both games in ” home-home” series be played off campus. He writes,

*“[W]e are using the entire season to prepare us to compete for national titles. . . . Part of that means you’ve got to play in big arenas, you’ve got to play in football stadiums; you’ve got to do something to get them ready for a Sweet 16 or a Final Four.”*

Benefits to UK fans are listed without consideration of the negative impact on students:

*“[I]t benefits our donors as well as our fans that cannot get into Rupp Arena. For our K Fund donors, you will still have the best tickets and the best seats. . . . Instead of 20,000 at home, we bring 40,000 on the road.”*

Following Coach Calipari’s lead, Kentucky cancelled its traditional rivalry with Indiana University because Indiana would not agree to move games off campus.

Kentucky has built its current basketball program entirely on the basis of professional prospects playing their required one-and-done year in college before entering the NBA. **The program is no longer designed to provide students pursuing a college education the opportunity to compete, it is designed to train professional basketball players**.

Now Kentucky is taking its professional model to the next level. By demanding as a matter of policy that non-conference games be moved to neutral sites that emulate professional conditions it is breaking the connection between campus and school sports and insisting that contracted opponents do likewise. **Programs designed with the balanced goals of the collegiate model cannot compete with this approach, and UK’s actions will place schools under enormous pressure to follow suit.**

We call on all those who support the collegiate model of athletics to speak out against this further move to professionalize college sports, and – most importantly – to decline to participate in such a separation of competitions from campuses. Even a “non-traditional” sports program needs opponents to play.

For Coach Calipari’s full statement, see: <http://www.coachcal.com/14391/2012/05/forming-a-nontraditional-schedule-for-a-nontraditional-program>

COIA is an alliance of 59 faculty senates at NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision

 schools; for more information about COIA, see: <https://blogs.comm.psu.edu/thecoia>