

INTRODUCTION: KEY ISSUES RELATED TO THE GROWTH OF DIVISION III

During the last three years, the growth of Division III has been a focal point for the NCAA's governance structure and membership. These discussions have now entered an important new phase that will emphasize the Division III philosophy statement and presidential leadership to address the growth and diversity of the division within the structural framework of Division III.

Background—The Growth and Diversity of Division III

The growth of Division III has been well documented. The division has added approximately 120 members since 1990, despite three temporary membership moratoriums during that period. Current active membership of 422, the highest in the Association, is expected to grow to 464 by 2016, with the potential of 480 members by 2020.

As Division III has grown, its membership has become much more diverse. The average Division III member has an undergraduate enrollment of about 2,100, and sponsors 16.5 sports, in which 19% of the student body participate. Significant differences exist in each area, however. Differences related to sports sponsorship and participation are especially significant. While the "broad-based program" is a central tenet of the Division III philosophy, approximately 40 percent of the membership sponsors 15 or fewer sports, with approximately 60 percent sponsoring 16 or more.

The athletics profile of new members is distinct. The average new member school has markedly smaller enrollment and sports sponsorship than existing members. Approximately two-thirds of the new members have come from the NAIA with the rest either unaffiliated institutions, two-year schools transitioning to four-year institutions, or schools that had not previously offered varsity athletics.

Practical challenges come with membership growth. For example, each new member costs the Association approximately \$40,000 annually in programs and services. This figure represents the current services provided to each active member (about \$35,000 to fund championships, strategic initiatives and other programs), as well as approximately \$5,000 in administrative overhead to provide education, program evaluation and logistical support to each institution joining the division. Access to national office programs and services like championships, strategic initiative grants programs and staff support also is affected.

Growth has underscored the diversity of institutional missions and profiles that exist within the division. It is a mistake to continue to view the membership of Division III as consisting primarily of private, four-year, liberal arts institutions. Twenty percent of the division's members are public institutions, and the membership includes a wide variety of institutional missions and academic programs.

This diversity also is reflected in the division's athletics programs. The average member sponsors 16.5 sports, in which approximately 20% of the student body participates. Sports sponsorship rates and participation rates vary significantly, however. In particular, new members, on average, have markedly smaller enrollment and sports sponsorship than existing members.

It appears the philosophical and legislative perspectives within the division also are becoming more diverse. Voting analyses from the 2003 through 2008 NCAA Conventions suggest the identification of institutions into distinct legislative perspectives. One perspective favors a "less intensive" student athletics experience (e.g., shorter playing and practice seasons, and limiting student-athletes to four seasons of practice). Another perspective favors a "more intensive" student-athlete experience. Further, a significant relationship appears to exist between sports sponsorship and the expression of these legislative perspectives. Institutions that sponsor more sports tend to vote for legislation that supports the less intensive student-athlete experience, while institutions that sponsor fewer sports tend to vote for legislation that would permit a more intensive experience. These findings are significant in part because of several close votes on key legislative proposals. For example, while Division III members have voted in recent years to shorten playing and practice seasons and increase sports sponsorship requirements, those actions were accomplished in relatively close votes (the traditional playing and practice seasons were shortened by a 58-vote margin in 2004 and the increased sports-sponsorship requirement was adopted by a 63-vote margin in 2006). Given the distinct levels of sports sponsorship that exist within the division and the anticipated addition of 60 new members that are expected to offer fewer sports, on average, than current members, the tendency of institutions sponsoring fewer sports to favor a more intensive approach might have implications for future decisions by the membership.

The Rejection of Structural Reform

In early 2007, the NCAA Executive Committee charged an Association-wide working group and a related division-specific working group with developing a proposal to revise the Division III governance structure to address the growing size and diversity of the division. Ultimately, the

Division III working group endorsed a model to create a new membership division. The new division would emphasize broader sports sponsorship, a more comprehensive educational experience and “less intensive” athletics experience for student-athletes, greater institutional accountability, stronger presidential leadership and related legislative components. The working groups also identified the creation of subdivisions within Division III, along similar philosophical and legislative lines, as an alternative model.

A February 2008 survey of the Division III membership clearly indicated a lack of support for structural change to accommodate the division’s future growth and diversity. Approximately 96% of the division’s membership returned the survey. Of the responses, 82% strongly supported or supported maintaining the current structure of Division III. Only 15% of respondents supported or strongly supported the creation of a new division or subdivision of Division III.

New Focus of Discussions

Any organization, and particularly one as dynamic as Division III, must actively plan for the future and develop an approach to address future challenges. Thus a new round of discussions is underway to clearly articulate the characteristics that make Division III distinctive while simultaneously deciding how best to accommodate the future growth and diversity within the existing structural framework of the division. The membership survey results were a critical basis for these discussions. In addition, through the work of the Presidents and Management Councils, and in consultation with other key governance committees, a list of the key issues was developed. These issues were addressed during three “Town Hall Forums” and related presentations that occurred during May and June of this year. Over 400 individuals attended these meetings, which featured candid feedback regarding the current and future status of the division.

Presidential Leadership and the Division III Philosophy

The Presidents Council, in consultation with the Chancellors and Presidents Advisory Group (PAG), is leading these discussions, consistent with its leadership role of chancellors and presidents within the Division III governance structure. The Council will continue to work closely with the Management Council and the rest of the division’s governance structure in this regard. It is the goal of the Presidents Council that through these discussions, Division III will achieve a new level of excellence as it evolves during the next decade.

These efforts will emphasize two key concepts to accomplish that goal. The first concept is the need for further presidential leadership within the division. Presidents played a major role in providing guidance regarding the issue of possible structural change within Division III. Over 90% of the survey responses included presidential participation. The Presidents Council is especially grateful for this remarkable level of involvement. It is critical that presidents and chancellors remain actively involved in this discussion to ensure that its results reflect our shared educational values. Ultimately, the future of Division III rests with its chancellors and presidents. Direct involvement is necessary to ensure that, as it grows, the division reflects the educational values that are the essence of intercollegiate athletics.

The second concept is the importance of the Division III philosophy. The Presidents Council believes that Division III represents more than simply a group of schools organized around the prohibition of athletics aid, but rather a distinct philosophy that emphasizes the educational value of a holistic student experience which is unique in American higher education. At Division III institutions, student-athletes should be fully assimilated into the fabric of campus life with no special treatment afforded due to their participation in athletics. Therefore, there is a need to re-examine the philosophy, to develop a shared understanding of what it means, to recommit to it, and to ensure that the division's current and future legislative standards and operational practices are consistent with that philosophy. A copy of the philosophy statement is included with this mailing for your reference.

White Papers

The following White Papers describe nine significant issues that Division III must address as it plans for its future growth. The first two papers elaborate on the central concepts identified above: 1) presidential leadership and 2) the division's philosophy and identity. The other seven papers address: 3) financial aid standards; 4) Division II as a possible membership destination; 5) sports sponsorship and membership requirements, 6) playing seasons; 7) academic considerations; 8) championships, and 9) budget priorities and dues structure. Each paper identifies the issue, provides background information, notes the related philosophical principles, summarizes membership feedback, identifies options and makes recommendations for further consideration. The papers were the focus of the August 6 meeting of the Division III Presidents and Chancellors Advisory Group, as well as the August 7 meeting of the Presidents Council, and reflect their input.

Next Steps

The Council's goal for the white papers is to better inform the membership regarding these issues, and to provide a basis for further discussion during fall campus and conference meetings. During its October 30 meeting, the Council will review any membership feedback regarding the white papers. In that regard, attached is a roster of the members of the PAG. You are encouraged to forward your thoughts regarding these documents to the PAG members, if possible, by October 22.

In addition, these topics will be the focus of additional discussion at the 2009 NCAA Convention. Please note, however, that no legislative proposals regarding these topics are sponsored by the Division III governance structure at the 2009 Convention.

DIVISION III PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Colleges and universities in Division III place highest priority on the overall quality of the educational experience and on the successful completion of all students' academic programs. They seek to establish and maintain an environment in which a student-athlete's athletics activities are conducted as an integral part of the student-athlete's educational experience, and in which coaches play a significant role as educators. They also seek to establish and maintain an environment that values cultural diversity and gender equity among their student-athletes and athletics staff. To achieve this end, Division III institutions:

- (a) Place special importance on the impact of athletics on the participants rather than on the spectators and place greater emphasis on the internal constituency (e.g., students, alumni, institutional personnel) than on the general public and its entertainment needs;
- (b) Shall not award financial aid to any student on the basis of athletics leadership, ability, participation or performance;
- (c) Encourage the development of sportsmanship and positive societal attitudes in all constituents, including student-athletes, coaches, administrative personnel and spectators;
- (d) Encourage participation by maximizing the number and variety of athletics opportunities for their students;

(e) Assure that the actions of coaches and administrators exhibit fairness, openness and honesty in their relationships with student-athletes;

(f) Assure that athletics participants are not treated differently from other members of the student body;

(g) Assure that athletics programs support the institution's educational mission by financing, staffing and controlling the programs through the same general procedures as other departments of the institution. Further, the administration of an institution's athletics program (e.g., hiring, compensation, professional development, certification of coaches) should be integrated into the campus culture and educational mission;

(h) Assure that athletics recruitment complies with established institutional policies and procedures applicable to the admission process;

(i) Assure that academic performance of student-athletes is, at a minimum, consistent with that of the general student body;

(j) Assure that admission policies for student-athletes comply with policies and procedures applicable to the general student body;

(k) Provide equitable athletics opportunities for males and females and give equal emphasis to men's and women's sports;

(l) Support ethnic and gender diversity for all constituents;

(m) Give primary emphasis to regional in-season competition and conference championships; and

(n) Support student-athletes in their efforts to reach high levels of athletics performance, which may include opportunities for participation in national championships, by providing all teams with adequate facilities, competent coaching and appropriate competitive opportunities.

The purpose of the NCAA is to assist its members in developing the basis for consistent, equitable competition while minimizing infringement on the freedom of individual institutions to determine their own special objectives and programs. The above statement articulates principles that represent a commitment to Division III membership and shall serve as a guide for the preparation and implementation of the division and for planning and implementation of programs by institutions and conferences.





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