

## INITIAL COIA DISCUSSION DRAFT (3/15/03)

### 1. ACADEMICS

- **Initial Eligibility & Admissions**

**Goals:** *The ultimate goal should be to have admitted athletes in all sports share the general characteristics of the student body.*

**Problem:** The problem that now exists is that academically under-qualified students are admitted on athletics criteria, and that the non-academic demands made on them make it very unlikely that they will be able to make up ground and benefit from access to college. A cogent argument exists that this contributes to diversity, but the argument is flawed to the degree that access and scholarships do not actually lead to post-college success in respects relevant to academics.

**Possible Steps:** In spite of the mixed nature of the recent reforms, the Big Ten faculty leaders' group endorsed them as a step forward. Further steps seem straightforward: to continue to increase core-course admissions requirements, as the Group of Six has proposed; to set national, conference (if applicable), and local admissions thresholds for athletes relative to student body norms; and to seek race-neutral replacements for SAT/ACT tests to restore a check on entering athletes' GPAs that may be distorted by high school practices. Ultimately, only by developing clear, academically based admissions criteria will athletically oriented high schools be motivated to raise the academic expectations for athletes and prepare them for college. The collection of data on athlete admissions and continuing eligibility success needs to form a feedback loop with high schools, building over a series of years the conviction that high school athletes with poor academic records will not be admitted.

- **Continuing Eligibility**

**Goals:** *The goal for "four-year institutions" should be that athletes complete programs in five years with GPAs at the average for students in comparable courses who generally are expected to complete their programs in four years, unless work commitments delay their graduation.*

**Problems:** The problems that now exist include low academic progress and graduation rates in some sports (especially revenue sports), clustering in majors tailored for athletes at some schools, advantaged grading patterns, and illicit academic aids for athletes at some schools that focus on continuing eligibility, rather than on learning and long-term career goals.

**Possible Steps:** Here again, the Group of Six reforms are a good start, and in this case, unproblematic. The strategy underway to develop clear standards for aggregate academic progress seems good, contingent on the development of clear reporting standards and a strong incentive/disincentive package for academic progress performance by program.

The minimum GPA requirement for individual athletes should be the same as for other students, and the target aggregate should be calculated in relation to average GPAs in the classes actually taken by athletes. Faculty need to improve policies on grading integrity, and faculty review of program integrity of majors with concentrated athletics participation. This is under our control and we're responsible for it. Athletics Department advisors should be appointed within campus advising system, report through the academic advising structure, and be assessed by an academic-side review. Data on athletes' academic performance in college needs to be delivered back to the high schools that graduate them, so that high schools will understand that those who gain admission through inflated GPAs that misrepresent skills will not be able to remain eligible.

## 2. STUDENT LIFE

- **Scholarships**

**Goal:** *In terms of academics (as opposed to program cost issues) the goal for athletics scholarships should be a balance between academic purpose of college and athletics criterion of scholarships. The purpose of the scholarship should be to enable students to get college degrees and to ensure that the student body has the type of diversity and campus-life values that athletes and athletics can provide. Scholarships cannot be treated as paid contracts for sports performance.*

**Problems:** Athletes' dependence on scholarship renewal, based on success on the playing field, may require them to give priority to athletics performance over academics. Annual renewal gives potentially excessive and arbitrary power over athletes' lives to coaches. Examples exist of athletes losing scholarships when schools and coaches push to upgrade programs, a matter that involves institutional recruitment patterns rather than characteristics of athletes on scholarship.

**Possible Steps:** Lengthen the terms of athletics scholarships. Set clear faculty-developed institutional standards for scholarship renewal based on athletics participation, acceptable behavior, and academic performance. Strengthen grievance and appeals procedures, using normal student complaint channels (this may be the sort of area where the coalition can design best practices, and the NCAA can mandate institutional compliance).

- **Training Demands**

**Goal:** *Training and competitive goals should be set at schools in ways that are consistent with academic success for all athletes.*

**Problems:** Excessive time demands are placed on athletes, sometimes through athletics staff evasions of NCAA limits, and as frequently through athletes' own interest in prioritizing performance goals. These can both be physically unwise and undermine academic performance (though this varies widely according to individual students). Near-professional competitive standards in some team sports and escalating support for

“Olympic” standards in others encourage unlimited training focus, reinforced both within schools and by popular culture.

**Possible Steps:** In some range of cases, implementation of raised academic standards for continuing eligibility may create more effective counter-balances. Developing national, conference, and local reward structures for coaches that tie increments to academic and non-athletic student behavior benchmarks may lead to more effective compliance with NCAA limits. Create faculty monitoring mechanisms on supervised practices and NCAA sanctions for reported problems. Tighten advisor monitoring of athlete time-management and academic performance.

- **Competitive Schedules**

**Goal:** *Limit number of competitions so as not to interfere with normal class schedules; confine seasons to single academic term (basketball as an exception).*

**Problem:** Lengthening of seasons, growth of post-season, and increasing travel schedules all lead to more frequent competitions over a longer period, ultimately affecting academics.

**Possible steps:** Eliminate “non-traditional season” competitions. Gradually step back on the number of competitions, so that Monday through Thursday is competition-free. Emphasize conference and regional competition to reduce travel. Examine ways to cut back on post-season tournament play by reducing number of eligible teams & rounds of play.

- **Non-integration of Athletes in Campus Life**

**Goal:** *Athletes should be as fully immersed in student experience as any student with extra-curricular involvement.*

**Problems:** Athlete living arrangements, course/major patterns, registration and advising, often separate them from student body. This not only diminishes athlete college experiences, it undermines the rationale of athletics as a factor in diversifying the student body and enriching campus life, and creates inequities in student treatment.

**Possible steps:** Eliminate athletics residences where they exist; more fully integrate athletics advising in campus advising structure; examine appropriateness of priority registration and other special privileges. (There is a clear tension between impulses to strengthen advising and related support structures for athletes to accommodate their needs and the lack at many institutions of adequate support structures for other students.) Strengthen admissions department involvement in recruitment and orientation.

### 3. COSTS

- **Budgetary Transparency**

**Goal:** *Athletics income and expenditures should be budgeted and reported according to general university best practice standards, and open to review from appropriate university monitoring groups.*

**Problems:** Athletics department budgets are often not open to scrutiny. Irregular practices that are not tolerated for other units are employed, such as use of accounts outside normal budget reporting and auditing range. Recognizable cost/benefit decision criteria are undeveloped or unmonitored, and there is poor accountability for expenditures.

**Possible Steps:** Determine range of common standards of non-athletics accounting at NCAA member institutions and set these as minimal standards for athletics departments. Require that athletics department financial officers report to institutional CFO. Develop best-practice models of athletics budgetary mechanisms and maintain reporting of NCAA institutional practices. Conferences may be helpful in including budgetary transparency as criterion for good standing.

- **Cost Escalation**

**Goal:** *To turn back some recent cost growth and stabilize subsequent growth at sharply reduced levels.*

**Problems:** Escalating investment in infrastructure; sharply rising personnel costs, due to rise in coach and AD salaries (which cannot be directly addressed, due to anti-trust restrictions) and increasing size of specialized coaching staffs; increased costs of travel, etc., associated with lengthened seasons and tournaments.

**Possible Steps:** Reduce in stages specialized coaching staffs, associated with professional standards, setting NCAA division norms and limits. Investigate the possibility of setting conference limits on total spending, without violating anti-trust provisions. Standardize facility norms and limits within divisions or conferences. Step back the length of seasons and design schedules to limit travel costs. Increase revenue sharing mechanisms to reduce the financial rewards of winning. Examine reduction of scholarship programs by creating need-based criteria for scholarships or by limiting squad size in certain sports, particularly football. Coordinate a shift in publicity and institutional focus from national championship goals to conference goals and traditional rivalries, and reduce the number of participants and length of post-season tournaments.

#### 4. **COMMERCIALIZATION**

- **Loss of Control**

**Goal:** *To reduce cost structure of athletics to the point where reduced dependence on commercial revenue sources allows maintenance of full institutional control over marketing, scheduling, and so forth, to ensure consistency with goals and values of the academic mission.*

**Problems:** Over-dependence on commercial revenues in sports leads to loss of control over public presentation of institutions and of higher education, conflicts of taste that may undermine support for institutions, linkage of intercollegiate athletics with alcohol, implicit endorsement of corporations whose activities may conflict with institutional values, scheduling conflicts with athletes' academic needs, and so forth. Participation in national entertainment industry creates financial and prestige distortions on campuses, and gives athletics figures power that can be detrimental to academic mission in a variety of ways.

**Possible Steps:** Cost reduction can provide leeway to be more selective in commercial engagement, and relieve pressures to present "professional" entertainment value.

## 5. GOVERNANCE

- **Shared Responsibility**

**Goal:** *Clarified and overlapping realms of responsibility between faculty, administration, and trustees reinforce institutional control over athletics and optimization of its campus role.*

**Problems:** High public profile of athletics, alumni interest, volatile cost issues, and entrenched personnel networks lead to closed and personalistic institutional management patterns, subject to abuse and encouraging divisive a campus atmosphere.

**Possible Steps:** Endorsement of a best-practice model of faculty, administration, and trustee participation in development of an athletics management model that includes clear procedures for accountability to all three groups. Develop clearly structured faculty governance contributions, including faculty governance participation in the selection of the NCAA Faculty Athletics Representative and all members of the campus athletics committees. Maintain clearly defined criteria for these positions, and defined responsibilities. The FAR should report regularly to the athletics committee, and the committee to the campus faculty governance body. [Faculty at Penn State University have developed extensive best-practice models for both FAR and athletics committees, which may be adaptable as Coalition goals in this area – I have soft copies of these, which I can send out.] A campus faculty governing body, such as a faculty senate executive committee, should be mandated to be conversant with the functions of the FAR and athletics committee, and to meet annually with the full committee for a confidential report, including budget matters.