



Knight Commission Calls for Refocused Efforts During Unprecedented Period in College Sports



WASHINGTON, Sept. 9, 2014 /PRNewswire/ -- Amid mounting pressures on college sports, the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics vowed it would intensify its efforts to promote changes that better align athletic programs with institutions' educational missions. The Commission again emphasized its commitment to efforts that address health and safety, athletic opportunities and financial issues that are putting at risk what is known as the collegiate model.

Concerned that external forces and legal decisions threaten the future of college sports, the Commission urged that the new NCAA governance structure adopt prior Commission recommendations to act first to protect the integrity and sustainability of the collegiate model.

At [meetings here on Monday and Tuesday](#), the Commission reiterated that financial rewards associated with the NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament and the College Football Playoff, whose finances are managed outside of the NCAA, should be modified to more clearly align rewards and resources toward supporting and achieving athletes' educational goals and broad-based participation.

Commission Co-Chairman William E. "Brit" Kirwan, chancellor of the University System of Maryland, said, "We should use this moment to change the financial incentives that currently are weighted heavily toward winning to a system that would instead support the primary educational mission of college sports."

The Commission focused much of its meeting on the opportunities, experiences and treatment of college athletes.

Health and safety imperative

Reacting to a presentation from NCAA Chief Medical Officer Brian Hainline, the Commission reasserted its long-held principle that the health and safety of college athletes must be primary concerns of universities. The Commission called on Division I leaders to ensure adequate resources are devoted to this area and for universities to fully participate in the NCAA's medical data collection for athletes.

Hainline updated members on the recently announced agreement between the NCAA and the U.S. Department of Defense to launch a \$30 million initiative designed to provide the most comprehensive national data on the effects of concussion. Hainline also outlined new health and safety guidelines and future initiatives to address cardiac and mental health, athlete drug and alcohol use, and the detrimental health impacts of early specialization in a particular sport.

"Dr. Hainline's presentation was eye-opening," Kirwan said, "particularly given the breadth of health and safety concerns beyond just concussion."

The Commission noted the opportunity for the College Football Playoff in its first year of implementation to contribute significantly to concussion research and other health and safety initiatives, which are vital to

college athletes participating in football.

"All universities will see costs rise as a result of increased and essential attention to this area," Kirwan said. "The revenues generated by what we expect to be a financially successful College Football Playoff should contribute toward national initiatives to ensure the long-term health and safety of the sport's participants."

The Commission was encouraged by moves made by some universities to provide four-year athletics scholarships and guarantee financial assistance for former scholarship athletes through degree completion. While these initiatives are consistent with prior Commission recommendations, members emphasized their earlier calls to also reduce athletic time demands on college athletes.

Commission announces new study

The Knight Commission also announced a study to explore alternative sport structures that may respond to increasing financial pressures and the vast differences among sports in costs, market appeal and organizational structures.

The study, to be launched later this fall, further pursues concepts that emerged from the [Commission's 2013 research](#) on the governance and structure of college sports. It will probe interest in a system that could allow institutions to alter competitive affiliations for different sports to reduce time demands on athletes and better manage costs.

"The intent is not to micromanage how competition is organized but to pursue alternatives that might prove to be more financially responsible, better for athletes and better for universities," said R. Gerald Turner, Commission co-chairman and president of Southern Methodist University. "It's an out-of-the-box concept to some, but we've heard it raised by practitioners in the trenches as something that might be viable."

The Commission's announcement of the study supports its concern over whether the escalation in athletics spending – which the Commission believes is unsustainable, even among the higher-resourced programs – has grown out of balance with academic spending and ultimately threatens the continuation of providing broad-based athletics participation.

The Commission noted increasing public interest for reporting and oversight, as evidenced by the Standardization of Collegiate Oversight of Revenues and Expenditures (SCORE) Act filed in the U.S. House of Representatives this summer. The SCORE Act essentially aims to make financial data from public and private institutions, and other entities, more accessible.

The Commission will continue updating its own Athletic and Academic Spending Database, which has successfully provided user-friendly tools that assess trends in athletic and academic spending. The database can be found at <http://spendingdatabase.knightcommission.org>.

Additionally, the Commission highlighted its 2010 recommendation that the NCAA require each public and private Division I institution to publish its annual NCAA financial report on revenues and expenses, and suggests that such voluntary action will display an effort to strengthen accountability and self-regulate rather than risk being regulated by external entities.

Commission membership changes

Myron Rolle, a Rhodes Scholar and former football All-American at Florida State, participated in the meeting as a new member. Rolle is now a second-year medical student at the Florida State University College of Medicine.

The Commission recognized the service of four members whose terms expire at the end of this year. They are Michael F. Adams, president emeritus, University of Georgia; William W. Asbury, vice president emeritus for student affairs, Pennsylvania State University; Paula Ellis, former vice president for national and strategic initiatives, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; Andrea Fischer Newman, senior vice president for government affairs, Delta Air Lines, and member, University of Michigan Board of Regents.

About the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics

The Knight Commission was formed by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation in October 1989 in response to highly visible scandals in college sports. The Commission's goal is to promote a reform agenda that emphasizes the educational mission of college sports. Over the years, the NCAA has adopted a number of the Commission's recommendations including the rule that requires teams to be on track to graduate more than 50 percent of their players in order to be eligible for postseason competition. The Commission's [Athletic and Academic Spending Database](#) provides financial data for more than 220 public institutions to provide greater financial transparency on athletics spending. More information about the Commission including its prior reports and recommendations can be found at www.knightcommission.org.

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