THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION

ITEM FOR INFORMATION

Re: Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) 2010 Annual Meeting

The 2010 annual meeting of the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA), an alliance of faculty governance bodies from 56 Division IA schools including the University of Michigan, was held January 22-23 at San Diego State University. Since the time of its inception in 2002, COIA has been a faculty voice promoting the integration of athletics into the academic values and goals of higher education. This often has involved working closely with the NCAA and other groups advocating for academic integrity in athletics.

COIA Steering Committee members reported that voting membership would continue to be Division I-A schools based on the size of athletic programs, with non-voting affiliate member status for other institutions. They also noted growing concerns related to changes in academic values and institutional mission changes.

A representative from the NCAA Faculty Athletics Representatives (Division I-A FARs) discussed the need to strengthen positional diversity on NCAA committees (e.g., increasing the number of faculty), athletic scheduling issues interfering with academics, academic concerns related to junior-college transfers, and the importance of close contact with faculty. He also highlighted the importance of having a committee on campus with appropriate expertise (e.g., faculty learning-disabilities experts) before which all special admissions requests (whether for athletics or other s) could be brought for review prior to decisions on admissions and financial aid.

A member of the NCAA IA Academic Cabinet, discussing their work, noted that admission and academic standing of student-athletes must be consistent with policies of the general student-body, the importance of graduation rate as a primary measure of academic success, emphasis on research and data-driven decision making, working towards minimizing missed class time for travel and games, increasing the options available to students for academic majors, and increasing institutional responsibility for facilitating the academic success of student-athletes. A presentation of various plans to monitor and manage decisions related to player eligibility, especially for the freshman year, was presented. One unique plan would involve creating a tiered eligibility structure for sports participation that would include a minimum standard for financial aid and another, higher standard for eligibility to compete. This would allow institutions to identify at-risk student-athletes and bring them to campus with financial aid, but allow those students to focus more directly on academics, without loss of eligibility in later years. The Cabinet also has been very concerned about non-traditional coursework (e.g., internet classes, correspondence courses) towards both admissions and continued eligibility.

The president-elect of the National Association of Athletic Academic Advisors (N4A) discussed concerns related to gaps between the profile of specially-admitted student-athletes and the regular student body. The situation has changed dramatically since 2003, when NCAA initial-eligibility standards were changed to a sliding scale. Since that time, the number o f special admits has increased significantly across the country, while, at the same time, at many or most Division I-A schools, the admission profile (i.e.,

academic quality) of the student-body has increased significantly. He expressed the concern that special admits complain that they cannot keep up in class, while faculty may complain because they feel they must teach to distinct groups of students within the same class based on ability level. Other non-athlete students may complain because athletes often receive comprehensive academic assistance in an organized fashion that is not available to non-athletes. This process also increase academic concerns, as some schools may tacitly support non-traditional high school programs to enroll top quality athletes or face great pressure to keep students moving to graduation and eligibility to play by directing them to select majors or courses. Academic support centers now are particularly challenged, not only to ensure that all athletes have the needed support to balance time away from classes due to practice and games, but also now also must provide basic academic support for students who lack appropriate skill sets. The speaker strongly endorsed faculty committee involvement in reviewing special admissions before financial aid is offered, institutional decisions to limit the percentage of high-risk athletes within individual teams, and annual faculty committee and administrator review of academic majors to review athlete academic progress.

The Senior Advisor to the President of the NCAA provided an update on academic reform, again including the need for decisions on special admissions to be made in accordance with institutional values. If an institution allows at-risk students, it must take responsibility for providing the support for these students to be successful. He assured those in attendance that the legacy of former NCAA president, Myles Brand, an emphasis on academics, would continue and the NCAA will not back off of these issues.

(Submitted March, 2010)

Regents' Bylaw 4.04. The Senate Assembly shall serve as the legislative arm of the senate…The assembly shall have power to consider and advise regarding all matters within the jurisdiction of the University Senate which affect the functioning of the University as an institution of higher learning, which concern its obligations to the state and to the community at large, and which relate to its internal organization insofar as such matters of internal organization involve general questions of educational policy.