UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS' COMMUNICATION
Faculty Governance Update

SUBJECT: 2011 Meeting of the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA)

The meeting of COIA, a group consisting of representatives from the faculty senates of Universities in the Football Bowl Division, was held from January 21 to 23 at the Big Ten Conference Headquarters in Chicago. The formal presentations began on the morning on the 22nd and ran through the morning of the 23rd. It was a wide-ranging meeting with important contributions from a distinguished group of speakers including Graham Spanier, the President of Penn State; Jim Delany, the commissioner of the Big Ten; Mark Emmert, the President of the NCA; and Amy Perko, the Executive Director of the Knight Commission (a private, non-profit organization devoted to reforming College Athletics), and members of the Big Ten and NCAA administrative staff.

The major themes that were explored were the problems of control of athletics (at the local, conference and national levels), regulation, welfare of student athletes, the role of faculty members in decision making, and the very high cost of collegiate athletics.

University presidents are primarily responsible for the integrity of their own athletic departments. The effectiveness of presidential control is largely determined by factors extrinsic to the campus such as conference television revenues, scheduling demands, the interests of specific (often very wealthy) alumni groups, and NCAA regulation. A President only has one vote at a meeting of a conference and is bound by policies set by the majority of schools in that conference even if those policies might have a negative effect on the President's own campus (e.g. increase costs because of conference expansion, or television contracts that require night time football games on weeknights). Presidents within a conference can often have very little impact on the regulation at the NCAA level because of intense distrust and jealousy between conferences. Effective change in collegiate sports is only possible through the legislative process of the NCAA, governed by the NCAA's own officials (the NCAA cabinet) who are regarded as neutral parties. These same officials are, however, often compelled to act in a purely reactive mode in response to scandals, which means that the NCAA rule book, filled with ad hoc solutions, has swollen to an unmanageable size without obvious impact on the key issues of cost containment, the exploitation of student athletes (including illicit payments to those athletes, a practice that is allegedly rampant in at least one non-Midwestern conference), and the relationship of athletic departments with broader campus communities.

A number of issues of specific faculty concern were discussed and highlighted. These include the need for a campus committee with appropriate expertise (e.g., faculty learning-disabilities experts) before which all special admissions requests (whether for athletics or others) could be reviewed prior to decisions on admission and financial aid. In the case of student athletes, the NCAA believes that their academic achievement must be consistent with policies of the general student-body, using graduation rate as a primary measure of academic success (in NCAA terms this is represented by a score of 925 in the Academic Performance Rate [APR], the metric which it established to indicate the success of collegiate athletic teams in moving student athletes towards graduation).

Beyond this the NCAA seeks to minimize missed class time for travel (an activity often at odds with the demands of TV contracts entered into by conferences and the NCAA), increase the options for academic majors, and institutional responsibility for facilitating the academic success of student-athletes. One unique plan would involve creating a tiered eligibility structure for athletic 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. One NCAA cabinet member strongly endorsed the involvement of a faculty committee in reviewing special admissions before financial aid is offered, institutional decisions to limit the percentage of high-risk athletes within individual teams, and a faculty committee to work with administrators in an annual review of athletes' academic progress (at Michigan, the Academic Performance Committee and the Planning Committee, both subcommittees of the Advisory Board on Intercollegiate Athletics, review student progress but play no role in admissions).

The high rate of increase in the cost of athletic programs elicited a great deal of concern. Only 14 athletic programs turned an operating profit in 2009 (one of these was Michigan, whose athletic program makes regular contributions to the University General Fund above and beyond the tuition paid for athletic scholarships), down from 25 the prior two years, while median expenses grew nearly 11 percent, as revenue growth slowed to about 6 percent. In order to combat this trend, the Knight Commission recommends making NCAA financial reports public. That the reports include information on long term facilities debt and a comparison of annual rates of change in athletic and academic spending. It further recommends that the NCAA require a 925 APR for participation in championships and bowls, that it create an "Academic-Athletics Balance Fund" to which distribution will be made to schools which have a 925 APR, and that this fund receive an annual allocation of 20% of Basketball TV revenue and 20% of BCS TV.

Many of the issue confronting Collegiate Athletics remain outside the control of individual university administrators and faculties as they stem from the external relations/entertainment aspect of Collegiate Sport that is here to stay. In light of this, it is important for faculty and administrators to work together on those issues that can be handled at the campus level, chiefly the welfare of student athletes and the transparency of the athletic budget within the overall University budget.

SUBMITTED: March 2011

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.

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Tom Schneider, Director Faculty and Operational Support Activities Date