THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION
ITEM FOR INFORMATION

Subject: COIA

Concerned that regulation of intercollegiate athletics by the NCAA gives insufficient priority to the academic mission of institutions of higher education, the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) has sought to redress the balance in policy-making in favor of faculty perspectives. It has issued a report, which has the backing of NCAA administrators, recommending measures that would limit the influence of outside constituencies upon intercollegiate athletics. These recommendations are in accord with the fundamental values of an institution that places academic excellence at the core of the University's mission. While endorsing the goals of these recommendations, SACUA recognizes that the issues raised by COIA are variously relevant to the University, and might reasonably be the object of further discussion with the faculty.

The COIA recommendations fall into four categories. The first concerns academic standards; the second deals with the experience of student athletes on campus; the third with the campus governance of intercollegiate athletics; and the fourth with finance.

The primary concerns in the first section are that student athletes should be admitted with a view to their potential for academic success and that no academic programs should be designed specifically for student-athletes or created for the purpose of allowing student-athletes to maintain their eligibility. To police this, COIA recommends regular scrutiny of graduation rates and that universities not allow students to compete if their grade point averages fall below levels set by the NCAA. (The Big Ten applies more stringent rules than the NCAA norm.)

In the second section, focusing on the experience of student athletes once they arrive at campus, the main recommendation is that athletic scholarships should be awarded on a year-by-year basis, with the presumption—applicable to students in good academic standing, and whose behavior conforms with community norms—that they should be renewed up to four times for a total award of five years, or until graduation, whichever comes first. Universities should also take responsibility for ensuring that student athletes are integrated into the broader life of the campus and that schedules for practice and competition are set with regard for the academic calendar; for example, students should not compete during exam periods. Finally, COIA recommends that academic advising for athletes be integrated fully into standard advising structures for undergraduates.

In the third section, under the heading of campus governance, COIA's major concern is that the athletic department be accountable to the faculty. This is largely the case at Michigan, though COIA's recommendation that the chair of the athletic board be a senior (tenured) faculty member would require a change in very long standing Michigan practice. COIA also recommends that the Athletic Director, Faculty Athletic

Representative and the Campus Athletic Board chair (in cases where the latter two are not the same person) report at least once a year to the campus faculty governance body, focusing on academic benchmarks, and that leaders of campus faculty governance report annually to the University President that the faculty has fulfilled its responsibilities in regard to athletic governance, or specifies of the obstacles that have prevented it from doing so.

Finally, COIA addresses fiscal responsibility, stating that the athletic department's budgets, revenues and expenditures should be transparent and aligned with the mission, goals and values of the institution, that the overall annual growth rate in the athletic department's operating expenditures should be no greater than the overall annual growth rate in the university's operating expenditures, that the athletic department budget should be integrated into the university general budget where feasible, and that the proposed athletic department budget should be evaluated in the same manner and using the same processes as the academic budget. COIA's final recommendations are that athletic fund raising be fused with general development efforts and that commercialization policies in athletics should be comparable to other commercialization policies conducted throughout the university and should include meaningful faculty participation in their oversight.

For the most part the University of Michigan has long adhered to the practices recommended by COIA. This is not to say that the faculty does not have some of the concerns highlighted by COIA or that there will not be disagreements (especially in regard to admissions and finance), but with suitable openness of communication those disagreements may be constructive.

(Submitted September, 2007)

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.