



Dear Division I Board of Directors and Decision-Making Working Group members,

Recognizing the need to enhance the flexibility and agility of the Division I decision-making structure to proactively adapt to current and future legal challenges to the NCAA, the proposed Division I governance model as presented by the NCAA Division I Decision-Making Working Group, significantly reduces the layers of review, permitting an accelerated legislative process that will allow the Association to be proactive rather than reactive. However, the proposed governance model includes fundamental changes that are not required for increased efficiency in the decision-making process. The proposed model empowers the members primarily responsible for the current landscape of college athletics, by awarding them greater representation while reducing representation and voice from the other members of our diverse Association. Of great significance to the collegiate model, the fundamental changes to representation in the governance structure de-emphasize the essential academic priority of Association membership.

When the composition of the Division I Decision-Making Working Group was announced, a number of Faculty Athletics Representatives (FARs) formally expressed concern that while FARs are noted in the NCAA Constitution as a safeguard to ensure compliance with the Constitution, there was no FAR representation on the Decision-Making Working Group. NCAA staff were quick to respond and state that the absence of an FAR on this group was an “oversight,” but the inadvertent omission could not be corrected as the composition of the group had been announced and the group was already too large. NCAA staff and the Working Group promised that the FAR input would be solicited by the Working Group to provide perspective on matters in our area of expertise, as well as to offer feedback on any proposed governance models. Regrettably, this “oversight” yielded lip service to the value of academics while failing to demonstrate a commitment to academics through action. The lack of any FAR involvement or input in this process has led to a proposed structure that all but removes any FAR representation from the Division I decision-making governance structure, thereby removing any credible emphasis on academics.

The current composition of the DI Board of Directors has one FAR and DI Council has five FARs; one A4 FAR (representing 1A FAR), one FCS FAR (representing FARA), and then three FARs each representing one of the 32 conferences (one FBS, one FCS, and one DI). In the proposed model the single FAR voice on the DI Board of Directors is removed completely and the DI Administrative Group representation is reduced to a single FAR from five FARs. It has been suggested that the recommendation from the Working Group was just to remove the position-specific designation for positions such as the FAR (and SWA and AD), and that an FAR (or other designated individual) could serve as the conference designee on the DI Board or the DI Administrative Group. This seems especially unlikely with the proposed removal of the Nomination Committee, which will allow conferences to designate their representative with no oversight on Association needs or representation. The DI Board is encouraged to examine past representation on the DI Council for conference representatives (not FARA or 1A FAR) to observe the dearth of FAR representation in the proposal, especially for the A4 conferences. Additionally, the response to questions around the loss of the “designated position” for the FAR, SWA, and AD appears disingenuous since the “designated positions” for a commissioner were not altered as part of the proposal. The Association continues to sell the paramount importance of academic standards and student-athlete success (i.e., earning a degree) through advertisements,

public statements, and congressional testimony. Yet these words ring hollow with the nearly complete omission of FARs from the proposed decision-making structure.

Importantly, the most recent Association Constitution specifies that the FAR is to serve as a “principal point of contact” for student-athletes and to ensure compliance with the principles outlined in the Constitution surrounding student-athlete health and well-being. It is unclear how this expectation, as outlined in the Association Constitution, can be met by FARs who do not have access to the governance and decision-making model in any meaningful way. If the goal, as demonstrated by these recommendations, is to remove FAR representation and input, then the Association Constitution around expectations of FARs should be amended to reflect that reduction in value. Not only do FARs offer a perspective that is entirely centered on student-athlete well-being and success, but FARs are where the institutional knowledge resides. FARs have often dedicated their careers to their institution, and typically the FAR possesses more institutional historical knowledge than their athletic director or president/chancellor due to the significant turnover in those positions. Continuity and historical perspective can provide valuable insight, but only if there is representation in the room to provide it.

The underlying enterprise of collegiate athletics is higher education and providing student-athletes a college degree. The NCAA’s failure to remain true to this foundation in the implementation of the new governance structure undercuts the legitimacy and credibility of the NCAA as it defends future litigation. The role of the FAR is not interchangeable with any other; rather, we have added value. We are the only group with the luxury of being singularly focused on the wellbeing of student-athletes. The inclusion of student-athletes absent a coterminous inclusion of FARs will fail to produce a governance model which ensures the primacy of academics and student-athlete welfare. Before approving any of the proposed governance model changes, the DI Board of Directors should increase the FAR representation on both the DI Board of Directors and the DI Administrative Group to reflect the current representation.

As FARs, we fully support the mission of the Association that is founded on a commitment to the well-being and development of student-athletes through both education and athletics. We seek to be partners in this endeavor, and it is unfortunate that the Association continues to make decisions that devalue, diminish and undermine that partnership. If the decision-making model does not change and FAR involvement is intentionally and continually reduced, the Association should examine if it truly believes in the collegiate sports model that by definition emphasizes education and academics. We are hopeful that the Association will demonstrate its commitment to the collegiate model by restoring FAR representation to the decision-making structure thereby acting on the Association’s values of student athlete well-being and academic success.

Respectfully,

FARA DI Executive Committee

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1A FAR Board of Directors

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