

INTRODUCTION: KEY ISSUES RELATED TO THE GROWTH OF DIVISION III

During the last three years, the growth of Division III has been a focal point for the NCAA's governance structure and membership. These discussions have now entered an important new phase that will emphasize the Division III philosophy statement and presidential leadership to address the growth and diversity of the division within the structural framework of Division III.

Background—The Growth and Diversity of Division III

The growth of Division III has been well documented. The division has added approximately 120 members since 1990, despite three temporary membership moratoriums during that period. Current active membership of 422, the highest in the Association, is expected to grow to 464 by 2016, with the potential of 480 members by 2020.

As Division III has grown, its membership has become much more diverse. The average Division III member has an undergraduate enrollment of about 2,100, and sponsors 16.5 sports, in which 19% of the student body participate. Significant differences exist in each area, however. Differences related to sports sponsorship and participation are especially significant. While the "broad-based program" is a central tenet of the Division III philosophy, approximately 40 percent of the membership sponsors 15 or fewer sports, with approximately 60 percent sponsoring 16 or more.

The athletics profile of new members is distinct. The average new member school has markedly smaller enrollment and sports sponsorship than existing members. Approximately two-thirds of the new members have come from the NAIA with the rest either unaffiliated institutions, two-year schools transitioning to four-year institutions, or schools that had not previously offered varsity athletics.

Practical challenges come with membership growth. For example, each new member costs the Association approximately \$40,000 annually in programs and services. This figure represents the current services provided to each active member (about \$35,000 to fund championships, strategic initiatives and other programs), as well as approximately \$5,000 in administrative overhead to provide education, program evaluation and logistical support to each institution joining the division. Access to national office programs and services like championships, strategic initiative grants programs and staff support also is affected.

Growth has underscored the diversity of institutional missions and profiles that exist within the division. It is a mistake to continue to view the membership of Division III as consisting primarily of private, four-year, liberal arts institutions. Twenty percent of the division's members are public institutions, and the membership includes a wide variety of institutional missions and academic programs.

This diversity also is reflected in the division's athletics programs. The average member sponsors 16.5 sports, in which approximately 20% of the student body participates. Sports sponsorship rates and participation rates vary significantly, however. In particular, new members, on average, have markedly smaller enrollment and sports sponsorship than existing members.

It appears the philosophical and legislative perspectives within the division also are becoming more diverse. Voting analyses from the 2003 through 2008 NCAA Conventions suggest the identification of institutions into distinct legislative perspectives. One perspective favors a "less intensive" student athletics experience (e.g., shorter playing and practice seasons, and limiting student-athletes to four seasons of practice). Another perspective favors a "more intensive" student-athlete experience. Further, a significant relationship appears to exist between sports sponsorship and the expression of these legislative perspectives. Institutions that sponsor more sports tend to vote for legislation that supports the less intensive student-athlete experience, while institutions that sponsor fewer sports tend to vote for legislation that would permit a more intensive experience. These findings are significant in part because of several close votes on key legislative proposals. For example, while Division III members have voted in recent years to shorten playing and practice seasons and increase sports sponsorship requirements, those actions were accomplished in relatively close votes (the traditional playing and practice seasons were shortened by a 58-vote margin in 2004 and the increased sports-sponsorship requirement was adopted by a 63-vote margin in 2006). Given the distinct levels of sports sponsorship that exist within the division and the anticipated addition of 60 new members that are expected to offer fewer sports, on average, than current members, the tendency of institutions sponsoring fewer sports to favor a more intensive approach might have implications for future decisions by the membership.

The Rejection of Structural Reform

In early 2007, the NCAA Executive Committee charged an Association-wide working group and a related division-specific working group with developing a proposal to revise the Division III governance structure to address the growing size and diversity of the division. Ultimately, the