

In The SAAC

Volume II Issue II Winter/Spring 2005

The Voice of the D-I National Student-Athlete Advisory Committee

Lobbying for Financial Aid Equity

- Ryan Morgan,
Western Athletic Conf.

Finding a way to pay for higher education is a challenge for students at colleges and universities across the nation. As student-athletes, many of us are privileged to receive financial aid based on our athletic ability. Last year, the Division I Board of Directors and Management Council passed Proposal No. 2002-83-A, which increased the limit on financial aid from a full grant-in-aid to the cost-of-attendance at an institution. The cost of attendance not only covers tuition, room and board, books, and fees, but also the travel costs and other small expenses associated with attending a university. As mandated in the rule, the extra financial aid cannot be associated in any way with an individual's athletic ability – meaning that the aid must be based on academic merit, financial need, or other outside activities or community work. This is great news for all student-athletes because it means that we

are now treated in the same manner as all other students at our schools. But does this rule really mean that all student-athletes can realistically accept that much aid?

Currently, there are two classifications for Division I collegiate sports in regard to financial aid: head-count and equivalency. The head-count sports are limited to a certain number of scholarships and every student-athlete receiving aid

counts as one full-ride scholarship. Most sports in Division I collegiate athletics are referred to as equivalency sports. This means each team has a certain number of scholarships to award, and each scholarship can be split up among several student-athletes. For instance, all Division I baseball teams are allowed to award 11.7 full scholarships per year.

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Ryan Morgan, Western Athletic Conference, speaks on pressing Financial Aid Issues at the Division I Legislative Forum as SAAC members look on.

Photo Courtesy of The NCAA News

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Chair "In The SAAC"

The Chair of Division I SAAC shares how National SAAC is working for you. Learn how to become an effective communicator for your student-athletes so we can all work towards positive change.

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However, the coach could decide to give partial scholarships to 30 players.

For student-athletes in equivalency sports, accepting financial aid other than athletics aid can carry consequences for their team. For instance, imagine that John is a Division I baseball player. He is awarded a half scholarship based on athletic ability, and another half scholarship from the university based on his academic success. Seems like the perfect situation, right? Wrong. In equivalency sports, all financial aid earned by student-athletes on the team must be counted against the team total. So, in John's case, even though he only received half a scholarship from his team, the half scholarship he earned by working hard in the classroom would also count against the team limit. This means that the rest of the team would have to split up 10.7 scholarships as opposed to 11.2 scholarships. If the coach has already awarded the remaining 11.2 scholarships to other players, which happens most of the time, John would have to forfeit the academic scholarship. This rule also applies to need-based aid and other community scholarships awarded by non-athletic organizations. Why should student-athletes have to choose between accepting athletics financial aid and the separate aid he or she earned in other ways? Hopefully, student-athletes won't have to make that choice much longer.

Proposal No. 2003-23 would change the current rule to state that only financial aid that is related to the athletic ability of the individual would count against the equivalency limit. Student-athletes in equivalency sports would now be able to accept academic or need-based financial aid without hurting their team and teammates. It would be another step toward ensuring that student-athletes are treated in the same manner as all other students at the institution. If Proposal No. 2003-23 does not pass, last year's victory in raising the limit to the cost of attendance will not do student-athletes in equivalency sports much good at all. It is not uncommon to hear in the media, and even from university administrators, a plea for student-athletes to perform better in the classroom and to graduate in larger numbers. Doesn't it make sense to allow those

student-athletes who earn financial aid based on their hard-work and success in the classroom to accept that aid with no strings attached? The D-I SAAC continues to lobby for this proposal, and we encourage all of you to speak with the athletic administrators at your institution and in your conference about the need to pass this proposal. We are all students at our universities – hopefully this proposal will pass in 2005 so that in the realm of financial aid, we can all be treated as such. SAAC

Editor's Note

As the editors, we wanted to take this time to express our apologies for the tardiness of this newsletter. Much of this issue encourages increased dialogue and communication between and amongst all student-athletes, as well as our coaches, athletics administrators, and the entire NCAA membership. The *In the SAAC* editorial staff understands that this is one of our most important missions and we cannot expect our peers to be well-informed if we are not providing them with information on a timely and consistent basis.

For the first time since this Newsletter's inception, we have changed our editorial staff, so a few bumps and glitches can be expected along the way. But what our readers can expect in the future is our best efforts to keep improving this newsletter. We know *In the SAAC* is an important voice to the student-athletes we represent, a responsibility we take with great sincerity. Thus, the authors and editors sincerely appreciate you taking the time to read this issue and sharing it with your fellow student-athletes. We look forward to keeping everyone updated with the DI National SAAC, our efforts to represent your well-being, and issues that affect your daily lives as student-athletes.

Sincerely: Chas Davis & Lani Gholston

Corrections

There were no corrections from previous issue of "In The SAAC." If additions or subtractions need to be made, please contact the editor via e-mail. For any errors the editor sincerely apologizes. Please forward your concerns to Chas Davis: CharlesDavis@Creighton.edu

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Bridging the Communication Gap

- Ian Gray, Big 12 Conference

What are you studying right now? Ok, maybe not right now, but earlier today or even last night? Chances are, regardless of the subject, there was some element of communication transpiring. The author of the textbook or novel you were reading was communicating with you, transcending time and space, as his or her information was reaching you. It's clear that from the classroom to the playing field, all of us are giving and receiving messages, passing signals, or throwing our thoughts to page or person; we are communicating.

The importance of effective communication cannot be understated. If the lacrosse team didn't understand the coaches' strategy, they might not strike the net when the opportunity presents itself; if the quarterback doesn't relay the proper receiver route, the pass is never completed. Sometimes the line between a message well received and completely fumbled can be measured in nanometers. As a national SAAC, we represent the well-being of our peers, you the student-athlete. Doing such requires communication: our 31 members listening to your conference SAACs, your conference SAACs understanding our voice, and our national committee disseminating your messages throughout the NCAA governance structure.



National SAAC Representatives Liz McCaslin, Southeastern Conference (sitting); Chair Ian Gray, Big 12 Conference (left) and Lani Gholston, Northeast Conference, right, speak to NCAA Director of Membership Services and D-I SAAC Liaison Lynn Holzman after the D-I Forum where representatives voiced their concerns on student-athlete well being.

In January, the national SAAC met in Dallas at the 99th NCAA Convention, and at the conclusion of our meetings we discerned an important goal: bridging the communication gap with all of you; fumbling less and making each nanometer count.

Lesson one in communication studies always seems to be: know your audience. Our audience is well defined: first the student-athlete and then the NCAA governance structure.

Designing and implementing communication strategies such as this newsletter, SAAC 'best practices' brochures, campus, conference and national SAAC handbooks, as well as our national web site are our mediums to communicate with you. Abruptly, this brings us to lesson two in communication 101: practicing active listening. Active listening implies the end user of the communication is

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SAAC Spotlight

Each issue we will feature a campus SAAC that is making waves in their athletic department, on campus, and / or in the community. These are real students, real lives that are making a positive difference for others. If you have a great SAAC that you would like featured in the next issue or would like further information regarding the programs in this piece, please send an email to: always8283@yahoo.com

- **Telianne Ho, West Coast Conference**

Winter always brings a season full of giving at the University of Nevada – Reno (UNR). Yet, giving for the UNR Wolf Pack does not only come during the month of December. A part of the Western Athletic Conference, UNR's ongoing commitment is a prime example of how student-athletes can show their gratitude to the community.

As a tradition, the Wolf Pack has faithfully given back to a local grade school, St. Mary's, for the last five years. The Student-Athlete Advisory Committee sets up a "House Fair" every first Wednesday of every month involving 6th and 3rd graders. The student-athletes from UNR spend time with the children promoting issues such as good sportsmanship, hygiene, and living a healthy, nutritional life. Afterwards, the children are invited to take a tour of the athletic facilities at UNR, such as Wolf Pack's basketball stadium and swimming pool. The day closes as the children say their good-byes by taking pictures and getting autographs signed by the student-athletes.

Even for only two hours every month, the Wolf Pack's pride has continually inspired future generations of college athletes. The Student-Athlete Advisory Committee at the University of Nevada – Reno has shown its gratitude and given back to its community, even during the off - (holiday) season. **SAAC**

J.R. McNair, Southern Conference, speaks to Members of Management Council about pressing Student-Athlete well-being over lunch at this years 99th Annual NCAA Convention.

Photo Courtesy of The NCAA News



Communication

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engaged in the communication process, that he, she, or the committee is not letting the information pass by like an agenda item in a meeting. Being engaged means reading the newsletter, going online to the national SAAC website, developing your campus SAAC, and e-mailing your conference SAAC or national SAAC representatives. We encourage the same practices from athletics administrators on your campuses. The better we understand a particular issue, piece of legislation, or even a successful campus SAAC endeavor, the better we can represent your conference, your campus, and you.

We have begun a new calendar year and as a committee we will hone our sights on several objectives throughout the year. It will be our top priority to grow with our conferences, campuses, and each of you through communication. As the year unfolds, you should find more helpful information on your campuses about each of the SAACs – campus, conference and national. This information will afford us the opportunity to reach our audience more effectively and afford our audience the opportunity to be active and become engaged. As each of you is one e-mail away from reaching us on the national SAAC, we are one response away from managing a more effective message for your well-being. This next year, the national SAAC will make strides in bridging the communication gap, at every level of the SAAC, with each of you. We can't fumble if you work with us; staying engaged will make the nanometers count. **SAAC**

Take Me Back, Please! **-Kenan Smith,** **Big Sky Conference**

It all starts with a violation and then escalates into the next big collegiate headline that reads, *Student-Athlete Not Reinstated*. Throughout the past, there have been countless cases in which a student-athlete has been ruled ineligible by their institution and the NCAA, and then granted reinstatement. However, due to the media's focus on a few negative instances, it is a common belief that an NCAA violation means you can forget about being a collegiate student-athlete again. This is a false assumption and as student-athletes we need to know that there are steps that can be taken to gain reinstatement onto the playing field. It's never over!

Due to the popularity of football, media attention has focused over the past couple of years on a few cases in which a football player has been involved in violations and has chosen to pursue professional opportunities. As we all know, once that decision is made, there is no turning back for that student-athlete. But what happens to the rifle or tennis student-athlete who doesn't get the national exposure that the football athlete does? What happens when that student-athlete did not even know that what they were doing was a violation and they could lose eligibility because of it?

The NCAA has formed a committee that hears and reviews appeals for reinstatement. Staffed by five members, the committee meets twice yearly and has approximately 20 conference calls per year to hear appeals by institutions attempting to get a student-athlete reinstated. This is just an approximate number however, if more calls are needed to discuss cases with a higher level of notoriety, they will do so. But how does the process actually work?

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Q&A In The SAAC

- Corey Steven, Horizon League

Q: On my campus, many student-athletes will not participate in community service projects our SAAC has put together. We ask them how they want to help in the community and then we base our outreach on their suggestions and no one shows up. How do other schools motivate their student-athletes to participate in community service projects and what types of projects might we undertake to get better participation?

A: As student-athletes, we are busy enough as it is. We have to learn how to balance our priorities between school and practice. Even though we do have busy schedules, we cannot ignore the support our community has given our campuses. Community service is something all student-athletes should participate in.

In response to the question, there are many ways of incorporating ideas and enthusiasm for your university. First off, get the athletic administration, coaches, and most importantly the SAAC involved. The student-athletes look up to these leaders and if they are participating in the community service project, other student-athletes will be more likely to help. It may be helpful if the coaches say that the event is mandatory for all athletes. This way the student-athletes know they must go.

We don't want the athletes to feel as if they are forced to go, yet look at it as more of an opportunity to reach out to others in their community and converse with their fellow athletes.

So on that note, try to make the project as interesting and fun as you can. There are many different types of community service projects that you can do. Here are some great ideas that you can bring to your institution:

- Tutoring at a grade school -- Reading to them or even playing sports during their PE session (you could even assign each team to one classroom).
- Visiting children in the hospital over the holidays, gathering up money and purchasing Halloween candy for underprivileged children, or even having a canned food drive before Thanksgiving (take advantage of doing community service for holidays like Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Valentine's Day).
- Kids Night Out -- Have children come to your university and play games with the students (this event is great right before Christmas because it gives parents a night off or a chance to go holiday shopping).
- Neighborhood Cleanup -- Cleaning up your neighborhood is a great way to develop a better relationship with your neighbors and maybe even increase their support for your games.
- Shoes and Sock from Jocks -- Hold a drive to collect old pairs of shoes and socks for the homeless.

For additional ideas go to www.makeachildsmile.org

Q: Our coach is telling us that the new academic reform that the NCAA has instituted will make many of us ineligible. She says that she is going to limit what our incoming freshmen can study because we need them on our team and some of them are going to struggle with classes. Some of us don't think this is right. Is what she said true, and if so, what can we do so that the college experience isn't limited for future teammates?

A: As a fellow student-athlete, I am sorry to hear what your coach has told you and she has no right to tell your teammates what they can and cannot study. Yes, it is true that new criteria in the Academic Performance Program (as well as the Academic Progress Rates 'APR' to be discussed in another issue) will go into effect fall of 2005. The purpose of this change is to stress the importance of academics and to increase graduation rates for student-athletes. The new elements of the program will require you to have a certain percentage of your degree requirements, credits earned, a percentage of GPA for graduation, and six credits completed each term. All of these requirements increase as you come closer to graduating.

The reason why coaches are more worried about what their student-athletes take is because there was never a GPA requirement until an athlete's third year. Now it is changing to the start of your second year. Every institution has a different GPA graduation requirement. One downfall in the Academic Performance Program is that it may be difficult to switch majors. For example, if a student athlete is in Arts and Sciences for two years and wants to switch to business, the chances of he/she having 48 hours (40%) of business degree credit are slim. So basically if he/she changes majors it affects eligibility. It may be difficult for some student-athletes to keep up with the new changes but the new rules do not seem too difficult to achieve. We must mention that failure to comply with these rules does not automatically mean a teammate is ineligible as there is a waiver policy in place.

Your coach does not have the power to force an incoming freshman to major in something other than what they want. It is ultimately up to the student-athlete, but the coach should notify the prospective student-athletes about the new academic reform ahead of time.

If your coach still persists that you or your teammates must change their major, then go talk to one of your Faculty Athletic Reps (FAR), your compliance officer, or even your Athletic Director. **SAAC**

Take Me Back

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Digressing for a moment, before the reinstatement committee is given an appeal, the NCAA staff makes a decision on a particular case. Despite unpopular press, the staff is very student-athlete 'centric'. With NCAA president Myles Brands charge to focus more attention on student-athlete well-being, the NCAA staff work to the integrity of intercollegiate athletics, with the student-athlete first in their minds.

Once the institution has declared a student-athlete ineligible an appeal may be filed. At this point the member institution investigates the particular situation and gathers facts for the reinstatement committee. The committee does not do the research because is not investigative by nature. After the research has been done, a request for reinstatement is submitted to the staff for review. When the staff looks at the information presented to them they look at the level of responsibility held by the student-athlete. The higher the level, the stiffer the punishment. Pending review, the staff will attempt to put the individual student-athlete back into the position they had originally been in had the violation not occurred. There are three things that the staff or the reinstatement committee can do after reviewing a case: they can elect to reinstate the student-athlete's eligibility without conditions; the student-athlete can be reinstated with conditions such as repayment, return of benefits, loss of contests or loss of one or more years of eligibility; or lastly, the student-athlete will not gain reinstatement.

What we as a society tend to focus on is the third option. We don't really notice the good things that happen with the first two options. Why is that? Because negativity intrigues us! It provides a better story to catch headlines in the morning newspaper. Society likes to hear about the blunders and problems young student-athletes encounter as they continue in the maturity process. But to me the better story comes from those who do gain reinstatement. Stories like those of an ice hockey player who gets to play his senior year after missing the latter half of his junior year due to a violation he was unaware of.

To me, life is a journey and it doesn't matter how you get there as long as you make it to the finish. We all make mistakes and it is those mistakes we learn from as we continue on in life. If one football player makes a mistake and chooses to turn pro before he is allowed, those who follow will learn from the choices made before them. Life is all about choices, and thanks to the Reinstatement Committee, we can feel a little more comfortable about making those choices. ^{SAAC}