

In The SAAC

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

Leading The Leaders

- Ian Gray,
Big 12 Conference

Got Leadership? It goes great with taking a team to the championship or motivating others to act, but not so great with an Oreo. Well if you don't Got Leadership, you should get some, and I know just the person to speak with. If you have a CHAMPS/Life Skills program on your campus then more than likely a student-athlete from your school traveled to Orlando this past May for the NCAA Leadership Conference, an intense five-day conference that serves participants a healthy dose of Get Leadership.

The conference provides student-athletes with the means to affect change on campus, instill action and motivation in their teammates, and create a project to benefit their student-athlete peers. But the trip to Orlando is also a chance to Get Informed about NCAA issues, giving student-athletes the tools to Get Involved and affect change globally – throughout the NCAA – as well as locally – on campus. In order to instill the latter traits,

the national SAAC provides informational sessions throughout the conference to describe how, as a campus and conference SAAC, involvement in the NCAA process is critical and getting involved is easier than imagined. At the same sessions, national SAAC members take the opportunity to listen to issues brought to our attention by student-athletes, issues that hit hard at home, on campus. Surrounded by

so many leaders, our insight into how to lead the leaders deepens, and our abilities to truly represent all Division I student-athletes are honed.

With the coming of autumn, over two hundred freshly educated student-athlete leaders will be turned loose on campuses across the country, motivated and ready to affect change.

See Leadership page 5 →



All of the over 350 student-athletes, coordinators, coaches, and administrators in Orlando, Florida at the 2004 NCAA Leadership Conference. Over 200 Division I student-athletes attended the conference to become agents of change on their campus. photo by Mike Cerniglia

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Improving Travel Safety
Long trips to competition? Tired athletes and coaches? Who's behind the wheel of your 15 passenger van? You might be surprised at how important safety really is when traveling to competitions. **Page 2**

Athletics Gone International
The Chair of the Division I SAAC heads to Portugal to explore how other countries view college sports at a World Sports Forum. What she finds, however, is vastly different than what we know as the NCAA. **Page 4**

California Can Rest At Ease
Eight months ago, intercollegiate athletics in California higher education was on death's doorstep. Today, thanks to all three divisional SAACs, the student-athletes at California institutions can breathe a sigh of relief; the games will go on. **Page 3**

And... SAAC Spotlight on Murray State University **Page 3**
Q&A In The SAAC **Page 5**

Traveling Safely

- Maya Valerie,

Southwestern Athletic Conference

Collegiate student-athletes travel throughout their respective seasons. Because it is such a common occurrence, many student-athletes and athletics staffs probably do not think twice about how safe they are on their trips. But, travel safety is not something to be taken lightly.

Travel safety is a part of everyone's life. Unfortunately, it is an issue that has come to the forefront of intercollegiate athletics several times in the past decade due to tragedies involving student-athletes. The most serious string of accidents occurred in late 1999 and 2000 while student-athletes were traveling in 15-passenger vans. In these 5 different incidents, a total of 6 people were killed and 42 were injured. There was also a fatal plane crash in early 2001 that claimed the lives of two student-athletes and four athletics administrators, and two broadcasters.

The issue of travel safety has been an important topic discussed by all three divisional National SAACs. We have increasingly realized what an issue travel safety is from not only past tragedies, but also personal and others' experiences. So, what is the Division I National SAAC doing about it? We will be proposing a travel policy for all Division I institutions.

In the past, there has been the sentiment that the NCAA should not have a Division I specific or association-wide travel policy because things need to be left in the hands of the institutions. Many agreed with this because of varying budget sizes, distances teams travel, and sizes of teams. This is understandable, but that does not mean the NCAA cannot have at least a "minimum standards" travel policy. We as the Division I National SAAC feel that a policy can be created to require basic safety precautions and specific requirements for all modes of transportation.

There are various means of travel that athletics teams utilize. That is why the proposed travel policy will include specific requirements for travel in automobiles/minivans, 12- and 15-passenger vans, buses, mini-buses, and airplanes. Although there will be obvious variances in the requirements for each of these modes of transportation, there is one that they all have in common. The most basic thing that any driver or passenger can do is wear his or her seatbelt at all

times. This is always important, but especially imperative when traveling via ground transportation. National Highway and Transportation Safety Administration studies show that people who wear seat belts are 75% less likely to be killed in a rollover crash than people who do not.

There are other basic requirements that can apply to all ground transportation. Some of the accidents that occurred in the past are attributable to untrained personnel, student-athletes, or fatigued drivers being behind the wheel. Trained and properly licensed people should be the only ones permitted to operate these vehicles. Student-athletes should not be permitted to operate vehicles involving team travel. Although student-athletes may be trained, they are not the ideal people to drive, especially after an exhausting competition. And by all means, the drivers should be required to be well rested so they can focus and concentrate on the task at hand.

Vehicle maintenance can also be key in preventing accidents. All vehicles should be up-to-date on manufacturer suggested maintenance. For example, periodic checks of tire wear and pressure is important. Seatbelts should also be inspected frequently for missing buckles and broken and / or worn belts.

Travel via airplanes should also have some basic requirements. Without a doubt, all flight operations should always be conducted in accordance with all applicable FAA regulations. No aircraft should depart into potentially hazardous weather conditions, such as severe icing, thunderstorms or severe turbulence. And finally, two pilots should be required for all travel involving student-athletes.

These are just a few of the basic requirements that can be applied to promote travel safety. Regardless of the mode of transportation that a school chooses, basic safety precautions should be taken. To ensure that these precautions are enacted, a complete Division I travel policy must be implemented. The other solution is an association travel policy, one that would encompass all NCAA student-athletes. We must be proactive about travel safety now to minimize incidents in the future, and as your National SAAC we are.

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 Ian Gray: igray2950@yahoo.com

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A Thankful End In California

- Matt Cassel,
Pacific-10 Conference

California Senate Bill 193 (SB 193), introduced by California State Senators Kevin Murray and John Burton, has officially been removed from the legislative review and deemed dead. The termination of this Bill is the result of its failure to appear in front of the Higher Education Committee prior to the June 28 legislative deadline. This news is considered a triumphant victory for the many people who were in opposition to the Bill and more importantly for Division I, II, and III student-athletes both inside and outside of California.

SB 193 was first introduced by Senators Murray and Burton on February 12, 2003. It quickly gained national attention passing convincingly through the California State Senate and receiving a hearing from the Assembly's Higher Education Committee. However, soon after this early success an onslaught of debate and controversy grew over a number of individual proposals in SB 193.

The Bill recommended several main topics of change throughout the process including: one-time transfer rules, a student-athlete's ability to earn wages,



Kelly Given of the Mid-American Conference addresses the national SAAC in Baltimore at the recent July committee meeting. Kelly was one of eight former student-athletes whose term of service on the SAAC ended at the conclusion of the meeting. She and the others will be missed. We thank them all for their years of serving student-athletes.

athletics scholarships equaling the cost of attendance, year-round health insurance, representation of agents while in school, the term of a scholarship, and gifts encompassing necessities. If NCAA schools in California were to comply with

any of these rules, the consequences would have been dire. The most significant of which would have been the removal of all Division I, II, and III schools in California from the NCAA.

See **California** page 4 →

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: csaerse4@hotmail.com

- Cassandra Ersel, Ohio Valley Conference

Student-athletes provide hope and inspiration, inspiration that encourages and empowers others in the pursuit of their dreams. On the field our ability to motivate others through the spirit of competition and sportsmanship is quite evident. In addition, during our down time from the athletics realm we have the opportunity to inspire and affect the lives of others in our community. Deep in the Ohio Valley Conference, the student-athletes of the Murray State University (MSU) Racers have taken advantage of such opportunity to help "build" the hopes of others outside of their scholastic and athletic community.

For two nights in April, MSU student-athletes came together in what is known as "Shack City" to raise money for Habitat for Humanity International, the non-profit organization that builds decent affordable housing for those lacking shelter. These student-athletes joined forces with others throughout the Murray, Kentucky community to raise money for Habitat for Humanity by experiencing "life on the streets." These brave student-athletes tackled the wind and rain under homes made only of cardboard, duct tape, and tarp. The homes, built by different athletics teams, were scattered around the lawns of campus for three days and two nights serving as a prophetic symbol of the tough life faced by those without shelter. Each team raised a minimum of \$40 for the non-profit organization.

In all, the Racers of Murray State, along with several businesses from around Murray helped raise over \$1,200. The success of this event serves as a first step for the SAAC at MSU to participate in similar fundraisers in the future.

This effort by the Murray State student-athletes is a prime example of how student-athletes can give back to their community. The Division I SAAC encourages all student-athletes to take on the same responsibility because as student-athletes we have the unique ability to inspire and affect change, on and off the courts. **SAAC**

Pitching-in, each of the three divisional national SAACs pitched in to clean-up several community parks in the Baltimore area at the recent July committee meetings. Several members of the Division I national SAAC take a break from the east coast summer heat. At each of the three meetings a year, members of the national SAACs take on a service project to let the community know that we are thankful for being there.



California

Continued from page 3

Student-athletes, SAAC committees and NCAA representatives recognized the adverse affects this type of Bill would have on student-athlete well-being and the overall intercollegiate experience. In response, a tidal wave of resistance against SB 193 was created. Some of the largest adversaries came from University, Conference, and National SAACs who rapidly joined forces and took action. For example, the PAC-10 SAAC members collected petitions on behalf of the student-athletes in that conference which helped to voice the communal discontent with the pending Bill. These SAAC representatives then traveled to Senator Murray's office to deliver the petitions personally. The efforts did not stop there, as individuals from many athletics niches on multiple levels came forward against the Bill. Such a mass effort, one in which the National SAACs in all three Divisions were an integral component of, accelerated the termination of SB 193.

See **SB 193** page 6 →

The Chair, "In The SAAC"

- **Katie Groke,**

Mountain West Conference

- **John Dano (Division II National SAAC)**

Missouri Western State College

We recently had the incredible opportunity to attend the seventh annual Federation of International Sports Universities (FISU) forum in Lisbon, Portugal. The forum, held every other year, attracts more than 140 student-athletes representing more than 40 nations who gather to discuss issues that affect university sports. The United States Collegiate Sports Council sends representatives to each forum from its membership organizations, and we were lucky enough to represent the NCAA.

Student-athletes throughout the world have one thing in common: They want an education and the chance to play in the sport of their choice. It seems so simple to most, but such a notion is far-fetched in some parts of the world. After participating in the forum, we realized that we are privileged student-athletes who participate in sports sanctioned by quite possibly the most student-friendly sports association in the world, the NCAA. In other parts of the world, university students fight a seemingly constant battle with professors and administrators over balancing education and sports.

It was sad to hear about the lack of regard for student-athlete well-being and the lack of a student-athlete voice within some countries' sports organizations. Even the FISU, the international governing body

of university sports, doesn't allow students to have an official voice in its governance structure.

One story in particular amazed us. A president of a sports federation in Portugal had to take a year off from his college education to fulfill his duties. The balance between academics and sport was non-existent in this case. In fact, it was a personal sacrifice for this individual to improve university sports in Portugal.

We cannot fathom playing in a university sports federation that does not have the advantages the NCAA provides. It made us realize how important the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee structure is to the NCAA and how fortunate student-athletes are to have such a meaningful outlet to voice their concerns. This luxury is absent in most countries, and in the few that do have a student-athlete support system, they struggle constantly with the educational system to prove that sports participation can be a meaningful part of the educational experience.

By the end of the week we had forged amazing friendships with student-athletes around the world, and we in turn learned so much about ourselves from their experiences. It was good for us to understand how important student-athletes are to the NCAA, and how important the NCAA is to us. **SAAC**

Q&A In The SAAC

**- Hannah England,
Ivy League Conference**

Q: With the reform that recruiting has undergone, will our upcoming teammates miss out on wonderful opportunities to visit schools like those of us current student-athletes were fortunate to have?

A: Absolutely not, your teammates will by and large have the same opportunity as you. The official visit, something every high school student-athlete looks forward to, is still alive and well. The reforms which you are referring to are only intended to make all visits more comparable to what an average student-athlete would experience once they are actually a student on that campus. For student-athletes in most sports, nothing about their visit will be any different than what their older teammates experienced. More than likely, the changes will be felt by the high profile prospects, whose visits will no longer include some of the extravagancies that had sadly become commonplace. Many of us heard about chartered jets, seven lobster dinners, and decked out H2s serving as a campus tour bus; these will no longer be. The recruiting scene will now be something of a campus reality, rather than one to promote a fictitious portrait of entitlement. There has been much written about the new recruiting policies, both positive and negative. As a national SAAC, we were able to contribute our input as to what should and not be included on an official visit. And the new recruiting rules pleasantly reflect this input. I have included links to a few NCAA articles related to the changes, if you would like to explore this further.

<http://www.ncaa.org/releases/divi/2004/2004080501d1.htm>
<http://www.ncaa.org/news/2004/20040802/active/4116n01.html>

Q: There has been a lot of media attention placed on NCAA education reform. At practice, my teammate said that if we don't raise our team GPA, we could lose scholarships. Is this true, because if it is, it seems unfair?

A: Academic reform is something that the NCAA membership has been reviewing for some time. We all know that the majority of student-athletes have and continue to graduate at higher rates than the general student population. However, we also realize that there are a few sports that have failed to accomplish this and continue to function at academic levels that are not in line with our peers. Hence, it has been a great challenge to create reform that will work well, effectively increasing academic performance without reaching adverse effects.

One component to the academic reform is the incentives/disincentives package. In short, if a school or team regularly performs (as measured by annual eligibility and graduation rates) below a set level (there are three filters a program will pass through before penalties are assessed), then the NCAA could assess various penalties, which might include the loss of team scholarships or loss of post season championship eligibility. However, the decision to not renew a scholarship from one year to another is one for an individual institution to make. These new disincentives would not "take away" a scholarship from a player with an otherwise eligible GPA per se. However, a team as a whole might lose the ability to field new scholarship players if they lose one or more of the total scholarships allotted. SAAC

Leadership

Continued from page 1

As a national SAAC we realize how difficult it can be for this one individual, the one who Got Leadership, to get all of the information packed into five intense days to all student-athletes on campus. Because knowledge is power, and power is knowledge, we as a national SAAC feel that all student-athletes need to be informed about key issues that your peers brought to our attention in Orlando. Included here is the largest issue facing student-athletes on campus: understanding when your athletic department is making a rule or decision or the NCAA membership has passed legislation. Here the issue is outlined, along with some helpful information about who can help you resolve some of these issues on your campus.

Institutional Discretion vs. NCAA Legislation

The press constantly pounds the NCAA for being this governing body that does nothing but pass rules and administer punishments. Conversations on campus amongst student-athletes echo this sentiment. In Orlando, there were many student-athletes that felt this portrayal of the NCAA was accurate, echoing similar sentiments from their campus SAACs. In reality nothing could be further from the truth.

To dispel the dark rumor, the national SAAC laid a foundation of understanding that hinges on all student-athletes being afforded the opportunity to take action over many issues that plague them. And this foundation stood upon understanding who administers the rules everyone says hurt student-athlete well-being, either your campus athletics department or the NCAA membership through legislation.

First, one must understand that many of the so-called NCAA rules are actually derived by your campus. Issues such as: which student-athletes get to eat at a training table, how much money a coach gives players on road trips, and which teams fly and others drive to competitions. Although the NCAA has rules regarding how many meals can be provided for all student-athletes; rules that cap a maximum amount on road trips;

See **Conference** page 6 →

Conference

Continued from page 5

and rules that have a minimum travel safety at heart, they do not decide who eats, how little money, mode of transportation: this is an institutional issue.

Now, how can you get involved in shaping the rules on campus and within the NCAA? That's the simple part. On campus there are key administrators that are more than willing to take time with those they work for: you as student-athletes! Here are some people you should get to know well:

Athletics Compliance Officer, works in your athletic department to ensure our athletics eligibility is maintained throughout college and to make certain NCAA rules are being followed. If you wonder if a specific rule falls under your own school's rules or falls under NCAA legislation, this person is an excellent resource for your questions. They always know what's going on at your institution!

Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR), is a faculty member on campus who serves as a bridge between the athletics department and faculty on campus. As a representative outside of the central athletic department structure, the FAR is an ideal source for discussing concerns of student-athlete well-being, whether the issues are campus or NCAA related.

Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) is amongst the senior staff within an athletics department. There are many unique services this individual may do and this person is an excellent source of information for why things are the way they are in the athletics department. This person is also excellent to seek out when

student-athlete welfare issues arise on campus; they can help make changes at the highest level.

Athletics Director is generally the most recognized individual within the administrative realm in the athletic department. This individual is an excellent source for expressing concerns regarding student-athletes as they have the greatest ability to affect change. Working with your AD in a positive manner can really place change on the right track, toward student-athlete well-being.

Understanding the difference between institutional and NCAA issues can be the foundation for realizing how to affect change. Knowing who to talk to in your athletics department just might be the catalyst you need to move in the right direction.

A few of the other issues that arose in Orlando included: understanding how the **Student-Athlete Opportunity Fund (SAOF)** works, **Nutritional Supplements, Medical Expenses, and Financial Aid De-regulation**. Now that you had a sample serving of Got Leadership, we as a national SAAC challenge you to seek out your peer that attended the conference and ask them about these issues. If you can't find that person, talk to one of the members in your athletic department that can help you answer questions you might have about some of these other issues. You can only affect change if you take an active role in the process, now that you Got Leadership, that active role should be a little easier to play. **SAAC**

SB 193

Continued from page 4

As a student-athlete at USC and a campus, conference, and national SAAC member, I realized the possible detriments created if the bill passed, those that far outweighed the benefits. Nonetheless, SB 193 brought to the forefront many important issues that had yet to be put into practice prior to its existence. The NCAA was already discussing the majority of the issues, SB 193 gave the discussion a jumpstart. Since the introduction of SB 193, the NCAA has adopted three of the proposed facets of the Bill, while two other points addressed within are currently being reviewed. Ultimately change for the betterment of student-athlete well-being occurred and because of that we should commend and acknowledge the authors of SB 193.

However, were the methods for change really that effective? Ultimately, if this Bill had passed the face of intercollegiate athletics would have changed dramatically and not for any form of betterment to student-athletes. Although the push for supporting this Bill was strong, within a small constituency, the encompassing influence and power of the student-athlete voice was stronger. Student-athletes from around the country came together to fight against something we did not trust or believe in, voicing our thoughts and feelings, and taking the necessary steps to stand up for what is right. This is the power student-athletes have through the efforts of their campus, conference and national SAACs.