



John S. and James L.
Knight Foundation

July 15, 2008

Myles Brand
President
NCAA
P.O. Box 6222
Indianapolis, IN 46206

Dear Myles,

At the Knight Commission's June 17 meeting, the Commission discussed the emerging practice of coaches offering scholarships to 8th and 9th graders. We have taken a public stand against this practice and are writing to request that the NCAA consider an acceptable standard for verbal scholarship offers.

We understand that this practice impacts a number of sports. While it is currently limited in scope within each sport, the practice will most likely escalate unless action is taken.

While the NCAA has made great strides in raising the academic standards and expectations, it is disconcerting that coaches can offer athletics scholarships to prospects who have not yet established a high school academic record.

Ideally, every institution would require prospects to engage with admissions and academic officials prior to receiving written or verbal scholarship offers. The NCAA's requirement that a prospect register for the NCAA Eligibility Center prior to receiving a written scholarship offer is a good step in this direction. However, the absence of a standard for verbal scholarship offers short-circuits the full intent of this provision.

We commend the action taken by the National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) to establish a standard in men's basketball. However, we believe that NCAA rules should establish an appropriate standard for verbal scholarship offers for all sports instead of leaving this issue up to various coaches' associations. We recommend incorporating verbal scholarship offers into the existing legislation that specifies the time period during which written scholarship offers can be made. At a minimum, verbal scholarship offers should be prohibited prior to the time coaches can begin writing to prospects in each sport.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Respectfully,

William E. Kirwan
Co-Chairman
Chancellor
University System of Maryland

R. Gerald Turner
Co-Chairman
President
Southern Methodist University

c: James Barker, chair, NCAA Board of Directors
David Berst, vice president for Division I, NCAA
Members of the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics

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