



A project of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation  
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## **Research Grants Call for Proposals**

### **Shaping policy and practice in intercollegiate athletics for the benefit of students and institutions**

**May 27, 2011**

#### **Summary**

Throughout its history, the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics has pursued an agenda of ensuring that athletics departments are aligned with the educational missions of their colleges and universities. Despite having no authority over intercollegiate athletics or the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the Commission has been successful in advocating specific policies and structures:

- Presidential leadership: Reorganization of NCAA governance to give college presidents decision-making authority over national policies
- Certification: Development of the NCAA certification process to ensure best practices are followed in the management of athletics departments
- Academic integrity: Academic progress reporting and penalties for failing to meet academic benchmarks
- Financial integrity: Improvement in institutional control of athletics-related funds and increased financial transparency

The Commission's third major report, *Restoring the Balance: Dollars, Values and the Future of College Sports*, was released in June 2010 to provide a blueprint for using educational values and priorities to improve the management and finances of college sports. To date, the recommendations in the report have garnered major endorsements from U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, the Board of Directors of the Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities, editorial boards, and select leaders in higher education.

To preserve and enhance this legacy, the Commission believes much more work is essential. The Commission desires to broaden its approach to engage scholars and experts in producing research or other projects relevant to the recommendations and concerns addressed in the Knight Commission's reports. The project outcomes should help academic and athletic leaders, national organizations, athletic conferences, and other constituents make progress toward the goals outlined in these reports, to wit:

- Academic integrity and valuable educational experiences for student-athletes
  - Institutional and organizational (e.g., NCAA, conferences) accountability for academic integrity and responsible management
  - Treating athletes as students first, not as professional athletes

- Strengthening the principles of amateurism to prevent the commercial exploitation of athletes
- Rewarding practices that make academic values a priority
- Fiscal integrity of athletics programs
  - Greater transparency of finances, including better measures to compare athletics and academic spending
  - De-escalation of the "arms race" in spending on athletics
  - Promoting the financial sustainability of college athletics and an appropriate balance between athletics and academic spending
- Presidential and academic authority over the operations of intercollegiate athletics

The Commission will award grants for the 2011-12 academic year (including the summer of 2012) for researchers to conduct studies in these areas. The Commission will host a public meeting for researchers to present their work to the media as well as leaders in academe and intercollegiate athletics. This will enable the Commission to use the brand equity and media interest it has built over the past 20 years to bring significant visibility to grantees' work.

Proposals will be judged on their originality, feasibility, clarity and, most significantly, their relevance to policy and practice in the areas of concern outlined in the Commission's reports. The final work will belong to the researchers to publish in appropriate venues, but reports to the Commission and the public presentations should be targeted for broad audience of stakeholders in intercollegiate athletics.

To be effective, proposals will need to demonstrate a high level of understanding of the history, structure, politics, and economics of college athletics. The format for proposals may include original scholarship suitable for peer review, policy papers to spur discussion among leaders, or an in-depth journalistic study in print, online, or digital media. Any of these formats will be assessed on an equivalent basis for quality, sophistication, and potential to achieve the identified goals.

Principal investigators may be affiliated with educational or nonprofit institutions, but proposals from publications and other private organizations will be considered. Multi-organizational and interdisciplinary proposals are encouraged.

### **Levels of grants**

Two tiers of grants will be considered. One tier will be considered for funding up to \$25,000, based on the quality of the proposal and the justifications in the proposed budgets. The second tier will receive awards up to \$5,000 based on the same criteria.

### **Eligibility and Restrictions**

Principle investigators may be affiliated with educational or nonprofit institutions, but proposals from publications and other private organizations will be considered. Multi-organizational and interdisciplinary proposals are encouraged.

PI and project team members will be responsible for coordinating reviews of their work with Institutional Review Boards on their own campuses.

## **Proposal**

The proposal narrative should be detailed but concise (no more than 2,000 words) and should include the following elements:

### Statement of the problem

The statement of the problem should identify the central issue under investigation, hypotheses relating to policy solutions, and other conditions to be considered. This section should explain the importance and timeliness of the problem given current conditions in intercollegiate athletics.

### Relevant literature

Literature can span across disciplines. Contributions from policy literature and journalism should not be ignored.

### Conceptual framework

A discussion and potentially a diagrammatic description of the theory underlying the project.

### Data and methodology

Projects can be qualitative or quantitative in nature, and can involve instructional components, studies to be published in journalistic or policy venues, or multimedia presentations. The Commission can assist with quantitative data. For quantitative projects, this section should include a description of any dataset and criteria for selecting data, descriptive information, rationales for variables included, and analytic techniques. Qualitative proposals should include specifics on the methodology to be employed and how findings can be verified. All proposals should include specific discussions.

### Connections between findings and athletic policy

The proposal should be oriented to identifying and supporting specific policy reforms at the institutional, athletic conference, and/or national level within the Commission's overall set of principles. Proposals should explicitly identify those policies and mechanisms to effect the practical changes identified in the statement of the problem.

## Supplemental material

### Credentials

Curriculum vitae of the principal investigator(s).

### Proposed budget

Grants may be used for salary support, travel, data collection, research assistant support, equipment, and miscellaneous expenses such as software and books. Indirect costs and living expenses will not be supported. Separate funding will be provided for grant recipients to attend a summit event to present their findings in 2012.

## Funding disbursement

Funding will be linked to the grant schedule. Two-thirds of the total award will be disbursed at the beginning of the grant period, one-sixth upon the acceptance of the interim report, and one-sixth upon the acceptance of the final report.

## Submission Instructions

Please send a single document in a common format (Microsoft Word, Apple Pages, Google Doc) containing the proposal with all of the above information to [research@knightcommission.org](mailto:research@knightcommission.org). Those submitting proposals will receive an e-mail within one week confirming the receipt of their proposal.

## Deadlines

|                  |                                 |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| May 27, 2011     | Announcement of grant program   |
| August 5, 2011   | Deadline for proposals          |
| October 24, 2011 | Announcement of winners         |
| February 1, 2012 | Interim report due              |
| August 1, 2012   | Final report due                |
| October 2012     | Summit to present grant reports |

## Review process

A committee of Commission members and independent reviewers will evaluate proposals once they have been vetted for completion. Successful and unsuccessful PIs will be notified when the committee has made its decision.

## **Restrictions, Acknowledgment of Support and Disclaimer**

Grant recipients may not disseminate or publish findings from grant research prior to the summit in October 2012, but subsequent publications and presentations are encouraged. Such should include the following acknowledgment and support:

“Research for this project was conducted with the support of the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Knight Commission or the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.”

The October 2012 summit may include a recording of the research presentations. In conjunction with the summit, the Commission may publish the final report for each presentation on its website. In exchange with the final payment, grant recipients give right to the Commission to disseminate each researcher’s final report and a recording of the summit presentation.

Grant recipients retain legal rights to intellectual property developed during grant funding. The development and dissemination of future deliverables beyond the October 2012 summit are highly desired, and grant recipients are expected to make results available to the policy and research community concerned with American intercollegiate athletics.

## **Questions**

Please direct any questions to [research@knightcommission.org](mailto:research@knightcommission.org).