



Knight Commission
On Intercollegiate Athletics

Exploring a Division I Conference Model Federated by Sport

PRELIMINARY STUDY REPORT

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THE CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS
COLLEGIATE SPORTS ASSOCIATES

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

To determine perceptions as to whether different approaches to athletic conference organization might better serve both institutions and college athletics, most specifically in terms of reducing costs and missed class time.

PARTICIPANTS

Presidents/chancellors, athletic directors, senior woman administrators, faculty athletics representatives, and coaches from 55 Division I institutions located in California, North Carolina, and Virginia were invited to complete the study survey. 1,030 surveys were electronically distributed with 225 completed responses (21.8 percent) received. The highest positional participation came from athletic directors (45 percent), senior woman administrators (33 percent) and presidents/chancellors (31 percent).

While the overall response rate was a seemingly modest 21.8 percent, the combined participation rate of athletic directors and presidents/chancellors was 38.2 percent, which is considered strong participation utilizing electronic survey methodology, particularly when considering the population. This response suggests interest on the part of key institutional decision makers. The relatively low response by coaches may be explained by a general hesitancy expressed by several coaches that indicated they are reticent to respond to surveys or outside queries unless specifically instructed to do so by direct supervisors. The sample is further supported by the representativeness. Aside from a low response from some coaching groups (particularly football coaches), there was an appropriate number of respondents in each sub-group that mirrored the population of interest.

LIMITATIONS

While there are participants from each of the 55 institutions affiliated with fifteen multi-sport conferences with a geographic footprint covering 40 states, the sample of Division I institutions from three states limits the generalizability of these findings. Responses from Pac-12 or ACC schools, for instance, may differ from other conferences not represented including the Pac-12, SEC, or Big-12.



KEY FINDINGS

THERE IS UNUSUAL VARIANCE THROUGHOUT THE DATA

At first glance, many of the means indicate apathy as they hover around the mid-point of the 5-point scale. An important statistic to couple with the means as we interpret these findings is the standard deviation. In most questions, the sample standard deviation was very near 1, and in some cases even greater. The standard deviation indicates the amount of variance within the sample. One standard deviation above and below the mean accounts for roughly 68% of the sample in a normal distribution. On a five-point scale, standard deviations greater than one often point to extreme responses on either end of the scale. These differences of opinion make sense when one considers the significant variances in institutional respondent budgets (between \$5 and \$95 million), geographic footprints (relatively tight to massive), and priorities. Interestingly, however, many of the comparison groups did not uncover significant differences, so the groups with extreme responses don't fit into our traditional divisions (state, budget size, Division I sub classification), etc. The study results, therefore, suggest there may not be a logical "one size fits all" model for Division I or its subdivisions. There are conferences that are working well for their institutions and there are others, as one coach mentioned, that are "ridiculous".

THERE IS INTEREST IN CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVE MODELS

Interest in exploring alternative conference models varied tremendously, leading to a centrally located mean on the 5-point scale. Forty-three percent of respondents indicated being "interested" or "very interested", and another twenty percent expressed ambivalence in considering alternative models. Those who indicated interest in different conference models cited potential cost savings and decreased missed class time for non-revenue sports. Division I (non-ACC/Pac-12) conference members were significantly more open to the possibility of new conference models ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.297$) than the ACC/Pac-12 member institutions ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 1.436$), but there was tremendous variability within these subsets.

Specifically gauging the importance of having all sports within an institution compete in the same conference, 63% indicated this to be important or very important, 32% felt it was "neither important nor unimportant", and the remaining 5% indicated it to be unimportant to have all sports compete in the same conference. Given the history and tradition of school-centric conference alignment and the theoretical ideal of having all sports united under the same conference banner, the nearly 40% of respondents who indicated ambivalence provides some indication that the current circumstances are less than ideal and they may be open to consideration of other structures.



MILD SUPPORT FOR CURRENT DIVISION I CONFERENCE MULTI-SPORT GOVERNANCE PHILOSOPHY & REGULATIONS

On a scale from (1) strongly disagree, to (5) strongly agree, there was strong support for NCAA legislation requiring conferences to sponsor a minimum number of sports in order to secure a bid to the NCAA basketball tournament ($M=4.20$, $SD= 0.863$), but many narratives expressed a desire to see more *institutions* offer a broad number of sports as opposed to *conferences*, so there may have been some misinterpretation of the question. Respondents were more apathetic ($M=3.24$ – falling in the “neither agree or disagree” category) regarding legislation that allows single-sport conferences to receive an automatic qualification spot for a national championship only if the sport is sponsored by less than 50% of the NCAA Division I membership. Regarding other basic Division I governance regulations, nearly half of the respondents felt the minimum scholarship requirements were “just right”, and roughly two-thirds felt the sport sponsorship and number of Division I contest minimums were “just right”.

THE FIVE-YEAR OUTLOOK IS BLEAK FOR MANY SCHOOLS – SUSTAINABILITY CONCERNS

Roughly 1/3 of respondents anticipate a decrease in varsity sports and athletics scholarships based on the current legal and financial climate. Those with the bleakest outlook are public schools that sponsor 19 or more sports. Respondents expressed modest concern regarding sustainability of regular season travel costs given current conference geographic footprints ($M=3.45$ - in the “neither agree nor disagree” range). D-I AAA schools expressed more confidence in sustainability than their FBS counterparts. The ability to reduce regular season travel costs and missed class time by developing a more efficient competitive geographic footprint were ranked the same, both garnering a mean of 3.24 (also in the “neither agree nor disagree” range). Respondents as a whole disagreed that regular season travel within their conference’s current geographic footprint leads to too much missed class time, though there was significant disparity between FARs ($M = 3.46$) “neither agree nor disagree”, and head coaches ($M = 2.51$), “disagree”.

INSTITUTIONS VALUE CONFERENCES FOR VARIOUS REASONS, BUT ACCESS TO BASKETBALL MONEY REIGNS SUPREME.

Respondents were asked to rank sixteen conference benefits on a scale of importance ranging from (1) very unimportant to (5) very important. Overall, each of the 16 benefits listed were highly ranked for most sports, with the most important conference benefit overall being *access to postseason revenue* in men’s basketball with a mean of 4.60. Other factors closely followed, each with a high degree of variability between and within sports. For ACC/Pac-12 conferences, the supreme importance of broadcast/digital rights was unequivocal. Every single one of the 54 ACC/Pac-12 respondents indicated generating revenue through broadcast/digital rights in football was “very important” ($M = 5.0$, $SD = 0$). ACC/Pac-12 basketball broadcast/digital rights closely followed ($M = 4.9$, $SD = .32$).



THERE IS CONCERN ABOUT FUNDING NEW “AUTONOMY” INITIATIVES

There is a clear indication that many respondents are not particularly confident about funding new initiatives for football and basketball athletes, and are indeed skeptical about paying for these enhancements for athletes in other sports. The feasibility of new initiatives leading to increased costs fell in the “moderately feasible” (3.0) mean range for football and men’s basketball but were either “not at all feasible” (1.0) or “slightly feasible” (2.0) for all other sports. ACC/Pac-12 schools that sponsored the most sports indicated far more confidence in their ability to fund new initiatives for football and basketball than their non-ACC/Pac-12 counterparts, but indicated only modest confidence in their ability to do the same for other sports.



II. PURPOSE & METHODOLOGY

In the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics 2013 study on college sports governance and structure, respondents emphasized a need to study greater differentiation of structures among sports:

An approach that recognizes the organizational, competitive, and market differences among sports may provide a framework that allows greater flexibility for institutional scheduling and affiliations while also minimizing missed class time and reducing travel costs. For example, colleges might choose different conference memberships and championship formats for their football and field hockey teams.

Responding to this identified need, the Commission suggested further study into whether different approaches to conference organization might better serve both institutions and college athletes. This current effort is to explore sport-specific priorities related to providing athletes with Division I competitive opportunities and experiences, and to assess whether alternative scheduling and championship formats and related legislative adjustments should be considered.

This study was conducted by the Center for Research in Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH). The instrument was developed in partnership with the Commission's executive director and members of its college sports governance and structure committee, research and survey methodology experts at UNC-CH, and the president of Collegiate Sports Associates. Prior to launch, the survey was reviewed by 35 individuals including NCAA Division I conference commissioners, institutional administrators and coaches.

The sample for this study consisted of university presidents or chancellors, athletics directors, senior woman administrators, faculty athletics representatives and head coaches from the 55 Division I institutions in California, North Carolina, and Virginia. This sample included institutional representatives from the ACC and Pac-12 in addition to 13 multi-sport conferences spanning a geographical footprint covering 40 states. Subdivisions are represented as follows: 17-FBS, 17-FCS, 21-DI-AAA.

Each of the institutional representatives was sent a personalized email inviting them to complete an electronic survey. Of the 1030 individuals contacted, 225 completed the electronic survey representing an overall response rate of 21.8%. A breakdown of sample demographic characteristics is available in Tables 1 & 2. Of note, 45% of ADs, 33% of SWAs, and 31% of presidents/chancellors completed the survey. Additionally, there was at least one respondent from each university.



Table 1
Sample Demographic Information (N = 225)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	Sample Response Rate	Institutional Response Rate
Title				
President/Chancellor	17	8%	31%	31%
Director of Athletics	25	11%	45%	45%
Faculty Athletics Representative	15	7%	27%	27%
Senior Woman Administrator	18	8%	33%	33%
Head Coach	150	67%	18%	96%
State				
North Carolina	99	44%	32%	100%
Virginia	53	24%	21%	100%
California	73	32%	16%	100%
Institutional Designation				
Public	151	67%	22%	100%
Private	74	33%	21%	100%
DI Football Sub-Division				
"ACC/Pac-12 Conference"	54	24%	23%	100%
DI-FBS	55	24%	32%	100%
DI-FCS	69	31%	25%	100%
DI-AAA	47	21%	13%	100%
NCAA Basketball Fund Distribution				
Under \$6 Mil	129	57%	19%	100%
Over \$6 Mil	96	43%	27%	100%
Current sport-specific conference affiliations				
Yes	76	34%	N/A	100%
No	103	46%	N/A	100%
Not Sure	32	14%	N/A	N/A

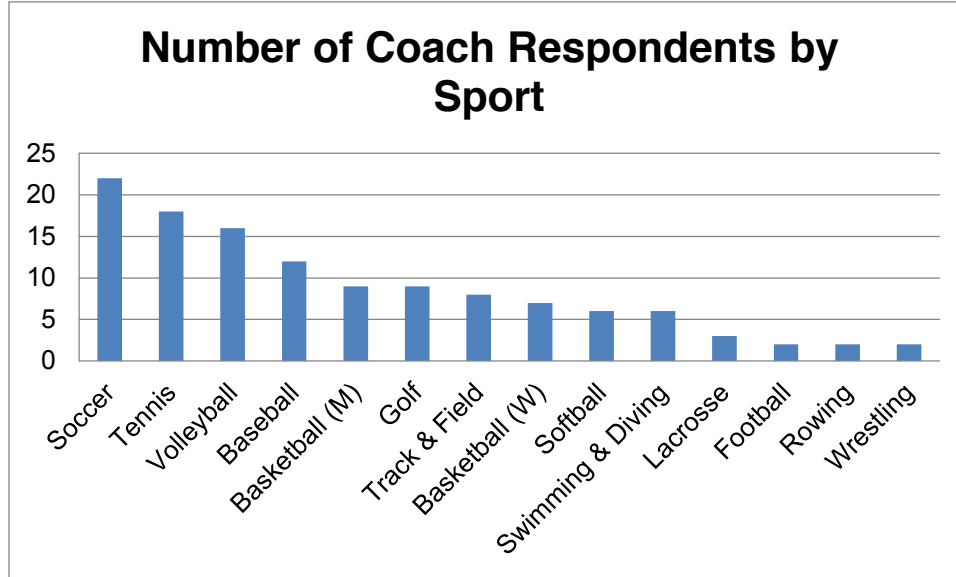
Table 2
Sample Demographic Descriptive Statistics (N = 225)

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Median</i>
Number of Sports Sponsored	20.27	4.69	14	36	18
Percent Budget Subsidy*	57%	28%	3%	89%	52%
Total Budget*	\$33,066,119	\$26,257,627	\$5,774,228	\$94,487,380	\$21,303,128

*Information only available for public institutions

Coaches from a variety of sports are represented in the sample. Those with two or more responses are listed below. Gymnastics, water polo, and field hockey coaches were also represented.

Figure 1



Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software 21.0. The variables were analyzed for statistical differences utilizing analysis of variance or chi-square analysis between the following comparison groups. Though there was the possibility of more robust statistical analysis with a few of the continuous variables, consistency between analyses was selected for the purpose of finding broad themes and to ease interpretation throughout. In the tables throughout this report, mean differences significant at the $p < .01$ level are listed.

1. Respondent variables:
 - a. Administrators v. coaches
 - b. Administrators grouped separately (presidents, ADs, FARs, SWAs)
 - c. Coaches grouped by sport
2. Institutional governance variables:
 - a. State (CA, NC, VA)
 - b. Institutions that sponsor ≥ 19 sports v. those that sponsor ≤ 18 sports
 - c. NCAA football subdivision (FBS, FCS, DI-AAA)
 - d. Conference autonomy (ACC/Pac-12 v. DI)
 - e. Current affiliate conference membership v. no affiliate conference membership
3. Institutional funding variables:
 - a. Publics v. privates
 - b. Conference NCAA basketball fund distribution $< \$6$ Mil v. $> \$6$ Mil
 - c. Publics: budget $< \$57$ million v. $> \$57$ million (median)
 - d. Publics: institutional support $< 50\%$ v. $> 50\%$



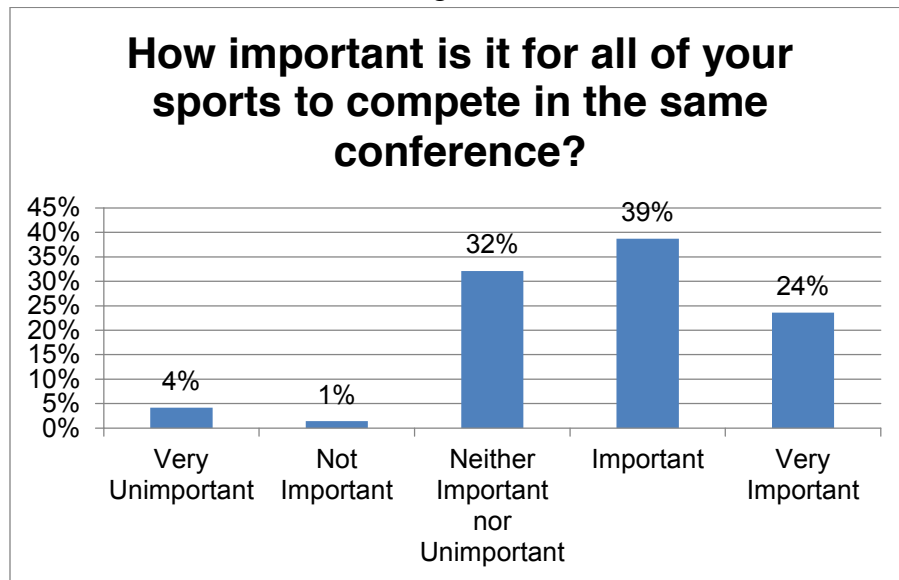
III. OPENNESS TO ALTERNATIVE CONFERENCE MODELS

A central question in this research was the openness of current NCAA Division I administrators and coaches to the exploration of alternative conference models. Thus, the first several questions measured satisfaction with current structures and regulations.

IMPORTANCE OF SPORTS COMPETING IN THE SAME CONFERENCE

On a scale from (1) very unimportant to (5) very important, respondents generally indicated it is important for their sports to compete in the same conference ($M=3.76$, $SD=0.970$).

Figure 2



SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT PRIMARY CONFERENCE AFFILIATION FOR ALL SPORTS

Most respondents felt their current primary conference affiliation fulfills the institution’s priorities for all sports ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.168$), though there was a fair amount of variability. Logically, significant differences emerged between those with at least one affiliate sport conference and those with no affiliate conference. Those with an affiliate conference were less likely to agree that their primary conference fulfills priorities for all sports ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 1.296$) than those with no affiliate conference ($M = 3.97$, $SD = .959$). The other significant difference emerged between those in “ACC/Pac-12” conferences, who were more likely to agree that their conference fulfills priorities ($M = 4.23$, $SD = .961$), than the remaining Division I institutions ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.181$).



Figure 3

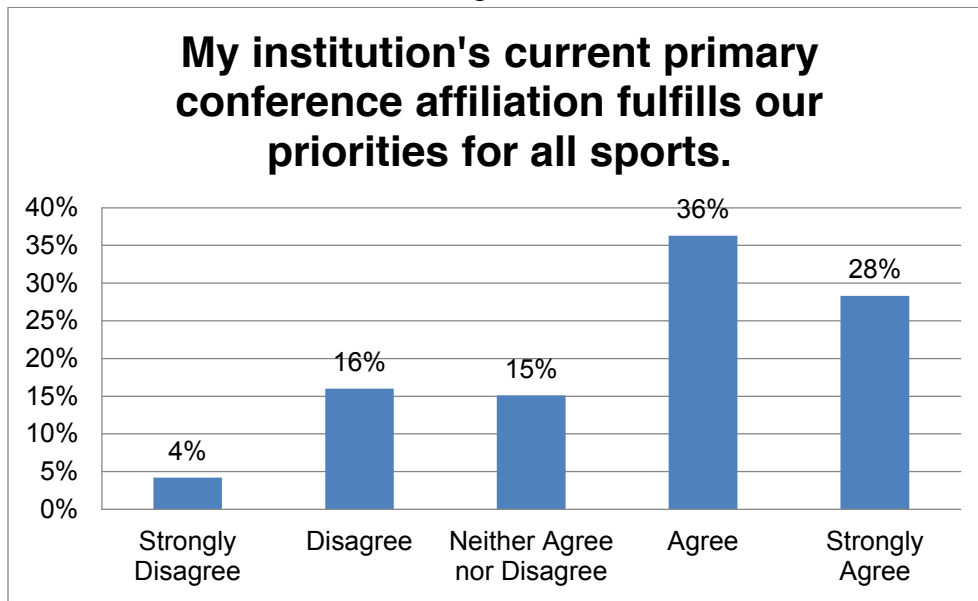
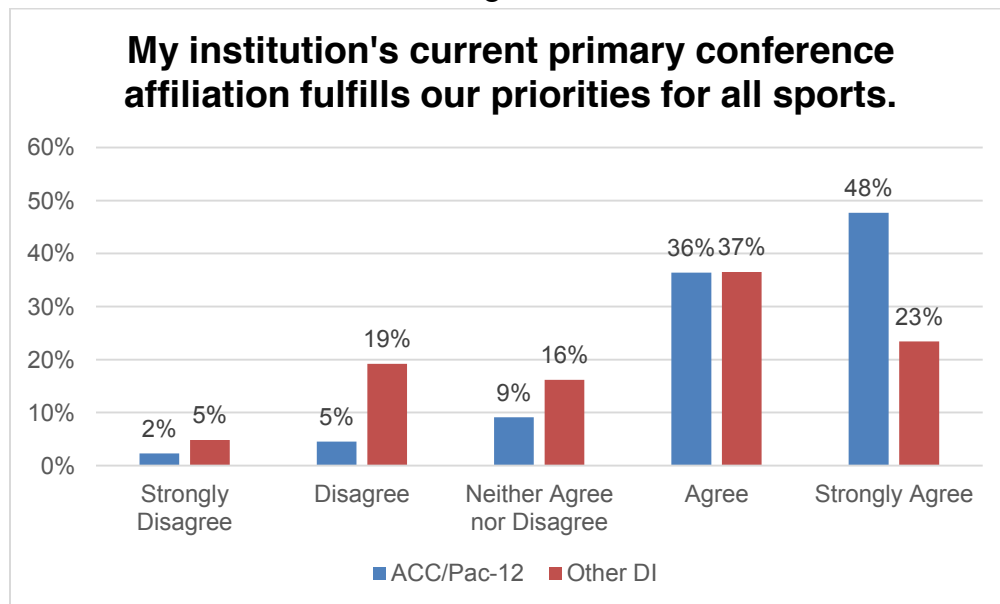


Figure 4



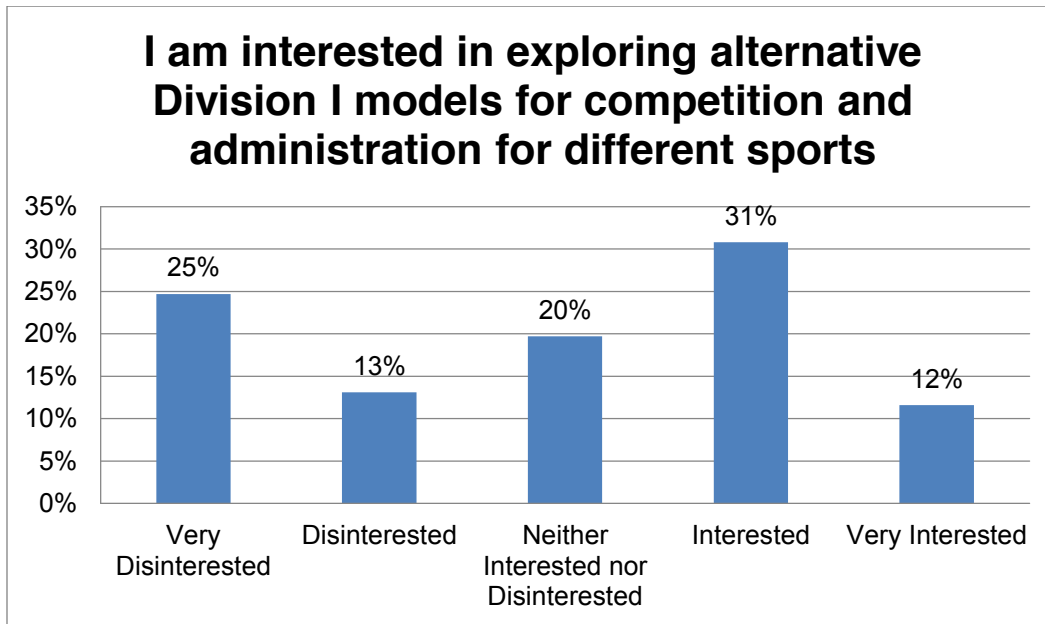
Respondents who indicated their current primary conference affiliation did not fulfill priorities were asked to indicate what specific challenges in the conference model should be addressed. Concerns expressed by the 18 respondents mainly fell into two broad categories. Many expressed frustration with the ever-increasing expense and time associated with conference travel in the expansive conference geographic footprint that has caused “limited traditional/regional competition” (FBS Head Coach 101). Some offered solutions. FBS Head Coach 55 mentioned “non-revenue sports, of which I am a coach, should be in regionally formatted conferences to create more interest and substantially reduce costs.” Several others

expressed frustration with the lack of sports (particularly men’s sports) sponsored by their conference, with one FCS coach mentioning his school’s sports are spread across four conferences. Several of these respondents emphasized the importance of providing incentives for having a broad number of sports, and in particular under-represented sports.

INTEREST IN EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE MODELS

Gauging the interest in exploring alternative Division I models for competition and administration for different sports, 38.8% of administrators and 37.4% of coaches were “interested” or “very interested”, but overall responses varied tremendously – with the highest cumulative standard deviation of any question asked. Due to this variability, the mean fell almost directly in the center of the distribution ($M = 2.90, SD = 1.372$).

Figure 5



Respondents that indicated interest in an alternative model were invited to share rationale for this preference. Forty-one respondents elaborated. Primary emergent themes included cost-savings and decreased missed class time for non-revenue sports. The ability to maximize competitive region by sport was another theme, though far less dominant. A few additional narratives suggested the general desire to explore models that might be more efficient or conducive to maximizing the student-athlete experience. A sampling of narratives is included below:

Cost saving, reduced missed class time, more flexibility in travel arrangements in some sports (FCS SWA)

Reduce travel time for student-athletes so they will not miss as much class and be tired from the travel (ACC/Pac-12 FAR)



Allow schools to afford sponsoring more sports (FBS Coach)

We need to have more affordable options (ACC/Pac-12 Coach)

Allow our sport to play in a conference that makes sense for the welfare of the student athlete...different sports require different needs (FBS Coach)

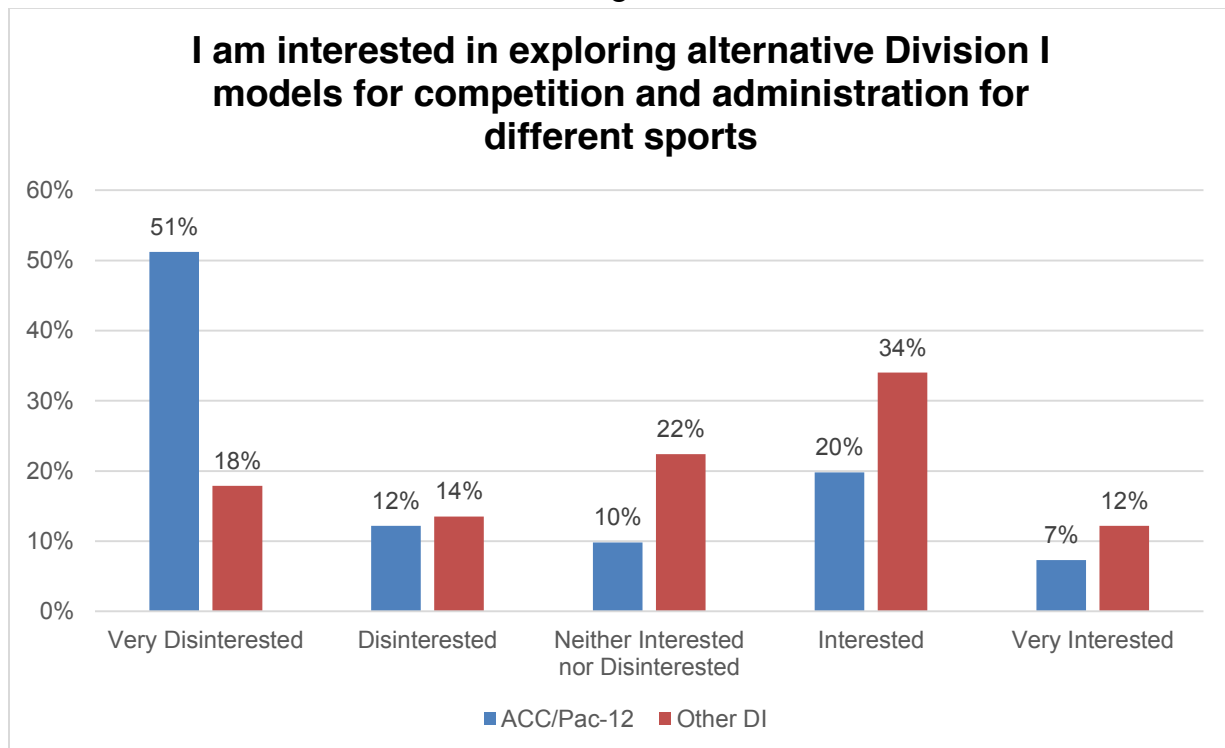
Availability of competition varies within our current conference based on sport (FCS AD)

Seems like the Olympic sports go where either football or basketball teams go (FBS Coach)

To make our sports, especially on the men's side, sustainable for the future. Less followed sports that suffer from low exposure could see enhanced interest because of regional rivalries and interest (FBS Coach)

Only one significant difference in interest exploring alternative conference models emerged between comparison groups. Division I (non-ACC/Pac-12) conference members were significantly more open to the exploration of alternative models ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.297$) than the ACC/Pac-12 conference-affiliated schools ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 1.436$), but there was tremendous variability within these subsets.

Figure 6



IV. CURRENT DIVISION I CONFERENCE MULTI-SPORT GOVERNANCE PHILOSOPHY

DIVISION I CONFERENCE MINIMUM SPORT-SPONSORSHIP REQUIREMENT

Fundamental to the current multi-sport conference model is NCAA legislation that encourages multi-sport conference affiliations. One such rule requires Division I *conferences* to sponsor a minimum number of varsity sports in order to secure an automatic bid to the NCAA basketball tournament. Respondents largely agreed that this system works well with a mean of 4.02 ($SD = 0.863$) on a scale from (1) strongly disagree, to (5) agree. No significant differences between comparison groups emerged. Narrative responses provided insight into this strong support for the present system, though many of the narratives focused on the importance of *institutions* offering a broad-number of sports rather than conferences. This distinction is critical and may have led to an inflated mean due to misinterpretation. Narratives broadly expressed the importance of the multi-sport conference model for 1) recognition, funding, and protection of non-revenue sports, and 2) facilitation of consistency, unity, branding, support and cross-conference rivalries throughout a department. Some key narratives are listed below:

It requires the conference to be legitimate NCAA affiliates and not just basketball leagues. It also increases the possibility that an institution will have all of their sports competing in the same conference which can unify departments (ACC/Pac-12 SWA)

It ensures that Athletics is not just football baseball and basketball (ACC/Pac-12 Coach)

Requires a commitment from administration beyond the revenue sports...(FBS Coach)

Protects all sports (ACC/Pac-12 Coach)

Scheduling, common regulation, and similar mission across sports (DI-AAA SWA)

Recognition and funding for otherwise marginal sports (FBS Coach)

Adequate staff to support programs and advocacy for sports (ACC/Pac-12 SWA)

A broad based sports sponsorship results in more opportunities to participate in intercollegiate athletics, places value on all sports, and diversifies the student athlete experience (DI-AAA Coach)

Each school has a broad based program affording multiple opportunities to participate in sport to students. I would like to see the autonomy conferences increase the minimum required number of sports (ACC/Pac-12 FAR)

Four narratives expressed specific challenges of the multi-sport conference model that should be addressed. Each of these narratives are included below.



Olympic sports should have more regionalized conferences, which are not necessarily the same as the leagues in which their football and basketball teams play. If this were to happen, the rules on automatic bids would need to change (FCS Coach)

Higher rankings provided to certain schools due to conference strength versus the lower seed given to conference winners of "assumed lower divisions" (FCS FAR)

If schools at division 1 participate in a sport there should be a mandated number of scholarships they have to offer (FBS Coach)

It forces us to sustain more sports than is wise for the institution (FCS President)

DIVISION I SINGLE-SPORT CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENT

Another NCAA regulation that has encouraged the multi-sport conference model is the legislation that allows single-sport conferences to receive an automatic qualification spot for a national championship only if the sport is sponsored by less than 50% of the NCAA Division I membership. Respondents were somewhat apathetic about this system with a mean of 3.24 ($SD = 0.731$) falling in the “neither agree nor disagree” category on a scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree, to (5) agree. There were no significant differences in any of the comparison groups.

Narrative responses addressing the importance of the single-sport conference championship qualification emphasized the importance of conference alliances and motivation to offer championship opportunities in a breadth of sports. An ACC/Pac-12 institution head coach mentioned this rule “legitimizes sports to all universities in the conference.” An FCS FAR voiced belief that this system “keeps schools from picking/choosing conferences that would give them temporary competitive advantage...” Without the rule, the professor mentions, “schools could be in a different conference for each sport. This would be ridiculous”. This narrative points out how distinctly foreign the concept of multiple sports in multiple conferences seems to many who are used to, and supportive of, the traditional multi-sport conference format.

DIVISION I REGULATIONS

Addressing some of the basic Division I governance regulations, respondents were asked whether the current minimum scholarship, sport sponsorship, and DI contest requirements were on par with the needs of the membership. Less than half felt the minimum scholarship requirements were rated “just right”, and roughly two-thirds of respondents felt the sport sponsorship and number of DI contest minimums were “just right”. Variability was evident between respondents (see Table 3), and significant differences emerged in the scholarship and sport sponsorship variables.



Table 3
Division I Conference Multi-Sport Governance Philosophy

	Too low	Just right	Too high	Unnecessary	Other*
Minimum scholarships requirements are:	16%	42%	9%	11%	7%
Minimum institutional sport sponsorship requirements are:	10%	62%	11%	8%	4%
Minimum number of contests against DI opponent requirements are:	6%	68%	5%	8%	8%

*"Other" responses included: Don't know, depends on the sport, depends on institution's ability to fund

Institutions that sponsor fewer than 19 sports ($p = .004$) or rely on institutional subsidy for more than 50% of their athletics budget ($p = .002$) were significantly more likely to indicate the current NCAA scholarship minimums were “just right” or “too high”, while those who sponsored 19 or more sports and relied on less institutional subsidy were more likely to indicate the scholarship requirements are “too low.”

Table 4
Current Division I scholarship requirements are:

	≤ 18 sports	≥ 19 sports	Subsidy < 50%	Subsidy > 50%
Just right	56.3%	42.2%	39.5%	53.3%
Too high	17.2%	4.9%	0.0%	17.4%
Too low	11.5%	24.5%	31.6%	12.0%
Unnecessary	9.2%	15.7%	15.8%	8.7%

Significant differences also emerged between comparison groups related to the minimum number of sports Division I institutions are required to sponsor. Those with a high amount of reliance on institutional subsidy ($p = .006$), those who sponsor lower numbers of sports ($p = .007$), and non-ACC/Pac-12 ($p = .006$) institutions were all more likely to indicate regulations were just right or too high, and less likely to indicate they were too low or unnecessary.

Table 5
Current Division I minimum institutional sport sponsorship requirements are:

	≤ 18 sports	≥ 19 sports	Subsidy < 50%	Subsidy > 50%	ACC/Pac-12	DI
Just right	67.4%	57.7%	48.9%	65.4%	48.1%	66.1%
Too high	15.8%	4.9%	2.2%	14.4%	3.8%	11.5%
Too low	4.2%	14.6%	15.6%	5.8%	19.2%	7.3%
Unnecessary	5.3%	9.8%	15.6%	4.8%	15.4%	5.5%



NATIONAL SPORT-SPECIFIC REGULATIONS

With a fair amount of variability, the general sentiment was to treat sports as equally as possible at the national level in terms of academic eligibility and amateurism rules. Less support was evident for equal treatment of national championship formats and conference automatic qualification (see table 6).

Table 6

At the Division I national level, it is important to treat all teams as equally as possible in terms of:

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Academic eligibility rules	4.45	1.092
Amateurism rules	4.15	1.260
National championship formats and conference automatic qualification	3.78	1.293

Note: Scale ranged from (1) Strongly Disagree, to (5) Strongly Agree

V. SUSTAINABILITY

An examination of perceptions about the sustainability of current conference structures revealed some areas of concern. Sustainability of regular season travel cost within the respondent’s current geographic footprint garnered a mean of 3.45, in the “neither agree nor disagree” range. This mean and the standard deviation of 1.11 reflected a fair amount of variability in responses, but the only significant difference among the 12 comparison groups came from NCAA football sub-division with DI-AAA schools more confident in the sustainability of the travel costs within their conference geographic footprints than their FBS counterparts (see Table 7).

The ability to reduce regular season travel costs and missed class time by developing a more efficient competitive geographic footprint were ranked the same, both garnering a mean of 3.24 (also in the “neither agree nor disagree” range), but private institutions and those from California-based conferences indicated less agreement that costs could be reduced with a more efficient structure.

Respondents as a whole disagreed that regular season travel within their conference’s current geographic footprint leads to too much missed class time, though there was, perhaps predictably, significant disparity between FARs ($M = 3.46$) “neither agree nor disagree”, and head coaches ($M = 2.51$), “disagree”.



Table 7
Sustainability of current conference structure

	<i>Cum Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean 1</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean 2</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>
Regular season travel costs within our conference's geographic footprint are sustainable.	3.45	1.11					
DI-AAA v. FBS			3.93	0.93	3.16	1.12	0.002
Regular season travel costs for my institution could be reduced by developing a more efficient competitive geographic footprint.	3.24	1.10					
Public v. Private			3.39	1.04	2.92	1.17	0.005
Virginia v. California			3.44	0.97	2.82	1.09	0.008
North Carolina v. California			3.43	1.11	2.82	1.09	0.002
Missed class time could be reduced for my institution by developing a more efficient competitive geographic footprint.	3.24	1.10					
Regular season travel within our conference's geographic footprint leads to too much missed class time.	2.64	1.02					
Faculty Athletics Rep v. Head Coach			3.46	0.97	2.51	1.01	0.010

Note: Scale included (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree

The data for this study was collected in the wake of a fluid legal and financial climate in the NCAA. Respondents were asked what the anticipated effects of this environment might be on their respective campuses in the next five years. Collective responses varied widely, with the majority of respondents anticipating the number of sports and athletics scholarships would likely either stay the same or decrease (see Table 8).

Table 8
Anticipated effects of the current college sports legal and financial climate and expected changes in some NCAA rules.

	Decrease	Stay the Same	Increase
What do you believe will happen to the number of varsity sports offered at your institution in the next five years?	35.9%	55.7%	8.3%
What do you believe will happen to the number of athletic scholarships offered at your institution within the next five years?	32.5%	48.7%	18.8%

Significant differences in perceptions about these anticipated benefits were revealed. In the anticipated number of varsity sports offered, significant differences emerged between 1) coaches and administrators ($p = .007$), and 2) institutions who sponsor less than 18 or fewer sports and

those who sponsor 19 or more sports ($p = .000$). Coaches were more likely to anticipate a decrease in the number of sports offered (42.6%) than administrators (22.2%). Similarly, respondents from institutions who sponsor a high number of sports were significantly more likely to anticipate a decrease in the number of sports offered (47.6%), compared with their peers who sponsor fewer sports (22.5%).

Table 9

Anticipated changes to the number of varsity sports offered in the next five years

	Administrator	Coach	≤ 18 sports	≥ 19 sports
Decrease	22.2%	42.6%	22.5%	47.6%
Stay the same	63.5%	51.9%	64.0%	48.5%
Increase	14.3%	5.4%	13.5%	3.9%

Significant differences in perception were also revealed related to the number of athletic scholarships participants anticipated their institutions being able to offer in the coming years. Differences emerged between 1) “ACC/Pac-12” and all other Division I institutions ($p = .010$), 2) institutions with low v. high amounts of public subsidy ($p = .013$), 3) institutions who sponsor less than 18 or fewer sports and those who sponsor 19 or more sports ($p = .019$), and 4) public v. private institutions ($p < .019$). See tables 10 & 11 for specific differences between comparison groups.

Table 10

Anticipated changes to the number of athletic scholarships offered in the next five years

	ACC/Pac-12	Other DI	Subsidy < 50%	Subsidy > 50%
Decrease	12.5%	23.7%	10.8%	18.3%
Stay the same	52.5%	31.3%	54.1%	26.9%
Increase	35.0%	60.3%	35.1%	54.8%

Table 11

Anticipated changes to the number of athletic scholarships offered in the next five years

	≤ 18 sports	≥ 19 sports	Public	Private
Decrease	15.7%	21.4%	41.2%	24.6%
Stay the same	24.7%	38.8%	48.9%	70.5%
Increase	59.6%	38.8%	9.9%	4.9%



VI. DIVISION I CONFERENCE MULTI-SPORT PRIORITIES

A series of Likert-scale questions were posed in order to gauge the importance of conference membership institutional benefits, allowing for possible differences between sports. Respondents were asked to rank sixteen conference benefits on a scale of importance ranging from (1) very unimportant to (5) very important. Overall, each of the 16 benefits listed were highly ranked for most sports, with the perceived most important conference benefit overall being *access to postseason revenue* in men’s basketball with a mean of 4.6, and the least important conference benefit *generating revenue through conference tournament championships* for “all other sports” (those other than football or men’s basketball) with a mean of 3.09. These means are listed in Table 12 in order of the largest mean differences demonstrating the variation in overall benefits between sports. Priorities appear to be relatively consistent between sports in most non-financial factors. Additional variance is evident when analyzed by sport and comparison factors.

Table 12

Importance of conference membership institutional benefits, allowing for possible differences between sports

	Largest Mean Difference	Men's Basketball		Football		All Other Sports	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Generate revenue through conference tournament championships	1.02	4.11	0.84	3.64	1.08	3.09	1.20
Generate revenue through broadcast/digital rights	0.80	4.12	0.94	4.07	1.09	3.32	1.21
Access to postseason competition revenue	0.68	4.60	0.74	4.22	1.06	3.92	1.07
Scheduling between institutions with similar academic standards	0.54	3.99	0.96	3.93	1.08	3.45	1.15
Access to postseason competition publicity	0.45	4.49	0.75	4.38	0.83	4.04	0.97
Access to intra-conference collaboration and administrative support	0.35	4.00	0.85	3.98	0.89	3.65	0.97
Scheduling between institutions with similar athletic spending	0.35	3.99	0.88	4.00	0.85	3.64	1.10
Provide opportunities for strong conference regional rivalries	0.32	4.30	0.65	4.18	0.81	3.98	0.99
Access to participation on NCAA sport and governance committees	0.27	4.04	0.98	4.14	0.85	3.87	0.94
Scheduling that minimizes missed class time	0.24	4.42	0.72	4.40	0.81	4.18	0.92
Strengthen/maintain athletics program brand	0.24	4.32	0.75	4.25	0.81	4.08	0.90
Strengthen institutional brand through quality institutional affiliations	0.22	4.29	0.74	4.18	0.81	4.07	0.90
Provide conference competition in NCAA-mandated number of sports	0.20	4.07	0.82	4.00	0.85	3.87	0.97
Strengthen ability to recruit top student-athletes	0.17	4.45	0.76	4.33	0.77	4.28	0.87
Scheduling that maximizes strength of schedule	0.17	4.04	0.91	3.79	0.99	3.87	1.00
Scheduling that minimizes travel costs	0.12	4.00	0.89	3.91	0.95	3.88	1.03

Note: Scale ranges from (1) very unimportant to (5) very important



When analyzed for differences between subgroups, several distinctions emerged. Throughout the next three tables, the importance of conference membership benefits is displayed in order of importance by sport. Access to postseason competition and revenue topped the list of conference membership benefits for basketball followed closely by the ability to recruit top student-athletes and facilitate scheduling that minimizes missed class time. Statistically significant differences are highlighted in categories where differences emerged. Beginning with the importance of conference membership benefits for men's basketball, revenue generation through broadcast/digital rights garnered means of 4.9 with very low standard deviations for the wealthier, ACC/Pac-12, FBS schools. Similarly, conference benefits that maximized strength of schedule ($M = 4.48$) and facilitated the recruitment of top athletes ($M = 4.76$) was also much more critical for schools with budgets greater than \$57 million.

The importance of conference membership benefits for football are displayed in Table 13. Items of top importance for football across all of Division I included scheduling that minimizes missed class time, access to postseason competition publicity, and the influence of a conference in enabling the recruitment of top student-athletes. Significant differences between comparison groups include tremendous disparity in the value of generating revenue through broadcast/digital rights. ACC/Pac-12 respondents uniformly ranked the conference's generation of revenue through broadcast/digital rights in football as the very important ($M = 5.0$, $SD = 0$). The importance of this benefit was echoed with more weight given by FBS institutions, those with less institutional subsidy, and greater budgets, number of sports sponsored, and conference basketball fund distributions.



Table 13

Importance of conference membership institutional benefits for men's basketball

	<i>Cum Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean 1</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean 2</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>
Access to postseason competition revenue	4.60	.74					
Access to postseason competition publicity	4.49	.75					
Strengthen ability to recruit top student-athletes	4.45	.76					
Budget > \$57 million v. < \$57 million			4.76	.44	4.37	.56	.012
Scheduling that minimizes missed class time	4.42	.72					
Public v. Private			4.56	.54	4.05	.97	.008
Strengthen/maintain athletics program brand	4.32	.75					
Provide opportunities for conference regional rivalries	4.30	.65					
Strengthen institutional brand through affiliations	4.29	.74					
Generate revenue through broadcast/digital rights	4.12	.94					
Institutional subsidy < 50% v. > 50%.			4.90	.32	4.05	.78	.002
ACC/Pac-12 v. Other DI			4.90	.32	3.98	.94	.004
Budget > \$57 million v. < \$57 million			4.70	.47	3.89	.80	.000
FBS v. FCS			4.68	.48	3.63	1.08	.000
Conference NCAA bball distribution > \$6 Mil v. < \$6 Mil			4.59	.59	3.89	.99	.003
Generate revenue through conference championships	4.11	.84					
Provide conference competition in NCAA-mandated number of sports	4.07	.82					
Scheduling that maximizes strength of schedule	4.04	.91					
Budget > \$57 million v. < \$57 million			4.48	.60	3.74	.86	.002
Access to participation on NCAA committees	4.04	.98					
Administrator v. Coach			4.18	.85	3.30	1.34	.008
Scheduling that minimizes travel costs	4.00	.89					
Public v. Private			4.19	.67	3.53	1.17	.005
Access to intra-conference collaboration and support	4.00	.85					
Scheduling institutions w/ similar academic standards	3.99	.96					
Scheduling institutions w/ similar athletic spending	3.99	.88					



Table 14

Importance of conference membership institutional benefits for football

	<i>Cum Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean 1</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean 2</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>
Scheduling that minimizes missed class time	4.40	0.81					
Public v. Private			4.63	0.55	3.85	1.07	0.002
Access to postseason competition publicity	4.38	0.83					
Strengthen ability to recruit top student-athletes	4.33	0.77					
Budget > \$57 million v. < \$57 million			4.67	0.49	4.14	0.53	0.007
Strengthen/maintain athletics program brand	4.25	0.81					
Access to postseason competition revenue	4.22	1.06					
FBS v. FCS			4.79	0.42	3.81	1.20	0.001
Sponsor ≥ 19 sports v. Sponsor ≤ 18 sports			4.72	0.57	3.89	1.19	0.008
Provide opportunities for regional rivalries	4.18	0.81					
FBS v. FCS			4.53	0.51	3.92	0.89	0.009
Strengthen institutional brand through affiliations	4.18	0.81					
Access to participation on NCAA committees	4.14	0.85					
Generate revenue through broadcast/digital rights	4.07	1.09					
ACC/Pac-12 v. Other DI			5.00	0.00	3.79	1.09	0.001
Institutional subsidy < 50% v. > 50%.			4.90	0.32	4.00	0.84	0.003
FBS v. FCS			4.83	0.38	3.54	1.10	0.000
Budget > \$57 million v. < \$57 million			4.71	0.47	3.79	0.89	0.001
Sponsor ≥ 19 sports v. Sponsor ≤ 18 sports			4.71	0.59	3.67	1.14	0.001
Conference NCAA Bball fund distribution > \$6 Mil v. < \$6 Mil			4.55	0.83	3.67	1.13	0.006
Conference competition in NCAA-mandated # of sports	4.00	0.85					
Sponsor ≥ 19 sports v. Sponsor ≤ 18 sports			4.44	0.62	3.70	0.87	0.003
Scheduling institutions with similar athletic spending	4.00	0.85					
Access to intra-conference collaboration and support	3.98	0.89					
Sponsor ≥ 19 sports v. Sponsor ≤ 18 sports			4.39	0.70	3.70	0.91	0.010
FBS v. FCS			4.37	0.68	3.69	0.93	0.010
Scheduling institutions with similar academic standards	3.93	1.08					
Scheduling that minimizes travel costs	3.91	0.95					
Conference NCAA Bball fund distribution < \$6 Mil v. > \$6 Mil			4.13	0.95	3.67	0.91	0.000
Scheduling that maximizes strength of schedule	3.79	0.99					
FBS v. FCS			4.39	0.50	3.36	1.04	0.000
Conference NCAA Bball fund distribution > \$6 Mil v. < \$6 Mil			4.30	0.47	3.35	1.11	0.001
Sponsor ≥ 19 sports v. Sponsor ≤ 18 sports			4.29	0.59	3.46	1.07	0.005
Generate revenue through conference championships	3.64	1.08					
ACC/Pac-12 v. Other DI			4.50	0.53	3.38	1.07	0.003
FBS v. FCS			4.33	0.69	3.15	1.05	0.000
Sponsor ≥ 19 sports v. Sponsor ≤ 18 sports			4.24	0.75	3.26	1.10	0.002



Table 15

Importance of conference membership institutional benefits for all other sports

	<i>Cum Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean 1</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean 2</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>
Strengthen ability to recruit top student-athletes	4.28	0.87					
Scheduling that minimizes missed class time	4.18	0.92					
FAR v. Coach			5.00	0.00	3.98	0.95	0.003
Administrator v. Coach			4.54	0.73	3.98	0.95	0.000
Strengthen/maintain athletics program brand	4.08	0.90					
Strengthen institutional brand through affiliations	4.07	0.90					
Access to postseason competition publicity	4.04	0.97					
Provide opportunities for regional rivalries	3.98	0.99					
DI-AAA v. FCS			4.39	0.77	3.74	1.01	0.003
Public v. Private			4.15	0.80	3.63	1.24	0.002
Access to postseason competition revenue	3.92	1.07					
Scheduling that minimizes travel costs	3.88	1.03					
Budget < \$57 million v. > \$57 million			4.27	0.72	3.79	0.81	0.002
Scheduling that maximizes strength of schedule	3.87	1.00					
Provide competition in NCAA-mandated # of sports	3.87	0.97					
Access to participation on NCAA committees	3.87	0.94					
Access to intra-conference support	3.65	0.97					
Scheduling institutions w/ similar athletic spending	3.64	1.10					
Conference bball fund distribution < \$6 Mil v. > \$6 Mil			3.86	0.98	3.35	1.18	0.003
ACC/Pac-12 v. Other DI			3.81	0.99	3.10	1.25	0.000
Scheduling schools w/ similar academic standards	3.45	1.15					
FAR v. Coach			4.45	0.52	3.25	1.16	0.007
Administrator v. Coach			3.83	1.03	3.25	1.16	0.002
FCS v. FBS			3.69	1.08	3.07	1.19	0.009
Generate revenue through broadcast/digital rights	3.32	1.21					
DI-AAA v. FCS			3.73	0.99	2.90	1.21	0.002
Public v. Private			3.50	1.13	2.92	1.28	0.004
Generate revenue through conf. championships	3.09	1.20					
Conference NCAA bball distribution < \$6 Mil v. > \$6 Mil			3.34	1.15	2.77	1.19	0.003
Public v. Private			3.31	1.12	2.63	1.24	0.001

Note: Scale ranges from (1) very unimportant to (5) very important

Overall, the conference benefits were deemed less important for sports other than football or men’s basketball with recruiting, scheduling, and branding the most important conference benefits. Scheduling that minimized class time was deemed significantly more important by FARs and Administrators than head coaches, and ranked as the most important conference benefit by FARs and Administrators. Generating revenue was the least important benefit of conference membership for these sports.



VII. FEASIBILITY OF NEW INITIATIVES

In light of the discussions surrounding autonomy and imminent changes in the college sport landscape, respondents were asked about the feasibility of initiatives in discussion at the national level, and whether feasibility differed between sports. Table 16 displays the cumulative responses by sport. Increased scholarship initiatives fell in the “moderately feasible” (3.0) mean range for men’s basketball and football, with all other means in the “not at all feasible” (1.0) or “slightly feasible” (2.0) ranges.

Table 16

Anticipated feasibility of providing additional student-athlete benefits on campus, allowing for possible differences between sports.

	Men's Basketball		Football		All Other Sports		Max Mean Difference
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Increased scholarship values to cover "full cost of attendance expenses" or additional monthly stipends	3.33	1.36	3.12	1.56	2.37	1.31	0.96
Increased scholarship values to cover "full cost of attendance expenses" for those in need	3.05	1.27	3.02	1.23	2.53	1.18	0.52
Financial support for family members to attend post-season tournaments	3.05	1.43	2.93	1.46	2.72	1.37	0.33
Additional permitted official visits for high school prospects	2.95	1.39	2.60	1.43	1.91	1.17	1.04
Lifetime medical coverage for injuries sustained during intercollegiate athletics	2.80	1.37	2.84	1.45	2.46	1.37	0.34
Four-year (or multi-year) scholarship guarantee	2.11	1.26	1.98	1.30	1.78	1.10	0.33
Lifetime learning guarantee for past, current, and future athletes to complete their undergraduate degree if they left the institution without completing their education	2.08	1.26	1.95	1.25	1.43	0.80	0.65

Scale ranged from (1) not at all feasible to (5) completely feasible

There was tremendous variability in responses with significant differences in the following six comparison groups:

1. Institutional governance variables:
 - a. Institutions that sponsor ≥ 19 sports v. those that sponsor ≤ 18 sports
 - b. NCAA football subdivision (FBS, FCS, DI-AAA)
 - c. Conference autonomy (ACC/Pac-12 v. Other DI)



2. Institutional funding variables:

- a. Conference NCAA basketball fund distribution < \$6 Mil v. > \$6 Mil
- b. Publics: budget < \$57 million v. > \$57 million (median)
- c. Publics: institutional support < 50% v. >50%

In nearly all initiatives, the wealthier, ACC/Pac-12 Conference institutions sponsoring more sports indicated significantly greater levels of perceived feasibility to implement the new initiatives. These schools also had the greatest amount of variability between sports indicating these initiatives might be possible/probable for football and men’s basketball, but much less likely for the other sports their institution sponsors. This is most evident in breakdown of ACC/Pac-12 institutional respondents in Table 17.

Table 17

Anticipated feasibility of ACC/Pac-12 Conference institutions providing additional student-athlete benefits

	Men's Basketball		Football		All Other Sports		Mean Difference
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Increased scholarship values to cover "full cost of attendance expenses" for those in need	4.82	0.4	4.82	0.4	3.21	1.3	1.61
Increased scholarship values to cover "full cost of attendance expenses" or additional monthly stipends	4.36	0.5	4.09	0.83	2.66	1.19	1.71
Four-year (or multi-year) scholarship guarantee	4.3	1.25	4.3	1.25	3.46	1.26	0.84
Additional permitted official visits for high school prospects	4	1.1	3.91	1.14	2.61	1.1	1.39
Lifetime learning guarantee for past, current, and future athletes to complete their undergraduate degree if they left the institution without completing their education	3.73	1.49	3.73	1.49	3.16	1.31	0.57
Financial support for family members to attend post-season tournaments	3.64	1.29	3.18	1.4	1.68	0.9	1.95
Lifetime medical coverage for injuries sustained during intercollegiate athletics	3	1.41	2.82	1.4	2.08	1.17	0.92



Direct mean comparisons of three groups with significant differences provide additional insight into the perceived feasibility of these initiatives in Tables 18, 19, and 20.

Table 18

ACC/Pac-12 Conference v. Other DI Schools - Anticipated feasibility of institutions providing additional student-athlete benefits

	Men's Bball			Football			All Other Sports		
	ACC/ P-12	Other DI	Mean Diff	ACC/ P-12	Other DI	Mean Diff	ACC/ P-12	Other DI	Mean Diff
Increased scholarship values to cover "full cost of attendance expenses" for those in need	4.82	3.04	1.78	4.82	2.53	2.29	3.21	2.11	1.10
Increased scholarship values to cover "full cost of attendance expenses" or additional monthly stipends	4.36	2.67	1.69	4.09	2.09	2.00	2.66	1.68	0.98
Four-year (or multi-year) scholarship guarantee	4.30	2.82	1.48	4.30	2.50	1.80	3.46	2.50	0.96
Additional permitted official visits for high school prospects	4.00	2.85	1.15	3.91	2.72	1.19	2.61	2.50	0.10
Lifetime learning guarantee for past, current, and future athletes to complete their undergraduate degree if they left the institution without completing their education	3.73	2.62	1.11	3.73	2.53	1.20	3.16	2.23	0.92
Financial support for family members to attend post-season tournaments	3.64	1.76	1.87	3.18	1.53	1.65	1.68	1.36	0.33
Lifetime medical coverage for injuries sustained during intercollegiate athletics	3.00	1.93	1.07	2.82	1.68	1.14	2.08	1.69	0.39

Scale ranged from (1) not at all feasible to (5) completely feasible



Table 19

Low v. High number of sports sponsored - Anticipated feasibility of institutions providing additional student-athlete benefits

	Men's Basketball		Mean Diff	Football		Mean Diff	All Other Sports		Mean Diff
	19+	<18		19+	<18		19+	<18	
Increased scholarship values to cover "full cost of attendance expenses" for those in need	3.79	3.00	0.79	3.89	2.56	1.33	2.52	2.18	0.34
Four-year (or multi-year) scholarship guarantee	3.74	2.55	1.19	3.94	2.24	1.70	2.97	2.43	0.53
Increased scholarship values to cover "full cost of attendance expenses" or additional monthly stipends	3.57	2.50	1.07	3.44	2.00	1.44	2.09	1.70	0.39
Additional permitted official visits for high school prospects	3.39	2.79	0.60	3.39	2.76	0.63	2.63	2.40	0.23
Lifetime learning guarantee for past, current, and future athletes to complete their undergraduate degree if they left the institution without completing their education	3.18	2.53	0.65	3.44	2.40	1.04	2.69	2.18	0.51
Financial support for family members to attend post-season tournaments	2.68	1.63	1.05	2.72	1.40	1.32	1.59	1.25	0.34
Lifetime medical coverage for injuries sustained during intercollegiate athletics	2.50	1.81	0.69	2.44	1.63	0.82	1.94	1.58	0.36

Scale ranged from (1) not at all feasible to (5) completely feasible



Table 20

By budget - Anticipated feasibility of institutions providing additional student-athlete benefits

	Men's Basketball			Football			All Other Sports		
	>\$57M	<\$57M	Mean Diff	>\$57M	<\$57M	Mean Diff	>\$57M	<\$57M	Mean Diff
Increased scholarship values to cover "full cost of attendance expenses" for those in need	4.15	2.36	1.79	4.06	1.71	2.34	2.91	1.72	1.19
Four-year (or multi-year) scholarship guarantee	3.79	2.25	1.54	3.63	2.21	1.41	3.11	2.07	1.04
Lifetime learning guarantee for past, current, and future athletes to complete their undergraduate degree if they left the institution without completing their education	3.70	2.04	1.66	3.76	1.71	2.05	2.98	1.77	1.21
Increased scholarship values to cover "full cost of attendance expenses" or additional monthly stipends	3.60	2.07	1.53	3.41	1.50	1.91	2.36	1.38	0.98
Additional permitted official visits for high school prospects	3.25	2.64	0.61	3.12	2.79	0.33	2.76	2.28	0.49
Lifetime medical coverage for injuries sustained during intercollegiate athletics	2.68	1.50	1.18	2.63	1.21	1.41	1.93	1.46	0.46
Financial support for family members to attend post-season tournaments	2.65	1.43	1.22	2.47	1.29	1.18	1.61	1.15	0.46

Scale ranged from (1) not at all feasible to (5) completely feasible



VIII. RESPONDENT NARRATIVES

At the conclusion of the survey, participants were invited to share additional thoughts relative to concepts and priorities that should guide the development of any alternative scheduling and affiliation approaches. Forty-one respondents (X % of the sample) provided comments. These thoughts fell into four main themes. These themes and particularly insightful narratives are included below.

REGIONALIZE COMPETITION SCHEDULES

General sentiment by the majority of respondents who shared comments was that the current conference alignments are “ridiculous”. The respondents believed conference footprints are harmful to student-athlete well-being in most sports as they lead to missed class time and tight travel schedules. Current conference alignments also contribute to ever-growing costs, do not foster regional rivalries, and are not fan friendly. Respondents voiced pleas to regionalize conference alignments in order to bring the fun back to sport, cut costs, and reduce missed class time.

I support drastic measures to increase sustainability of non-revenue men's sports. On the surface, it seems to me that regional conferences for non-revenue sports is highly logical. Cutting any costs necessary to protect the ability of a university to have non-revenue sports with good scholarship opportunities is vital for athletic departments and for the student-athlete experience, as well as the global health of sports. As litigation seems to be pulling more funds to football and basketball, it is imperative we shift our thinking to protect our future. Thanks for your work (FBS Coach)

Outside of the Big 5, President's and Chancellor's should band together to regionalize conference memberships. Media right fees are meager outside of the Big 5, so travel costs and missed class times MUST be the priority (FCS AD)

I believe college athletics is completely out of control at the present time- in almost every area. My conference has expanded to include institutions north, south, east and west. Our travel has increased but our budget has not to this point. Schools in our league charter flights while others take a bus- for the same trip! Expansion was for football and basketball only and all other sports were ignored but now heavily impacted (FBS Coach)

Put an emphasis on regionalizing conferences for sports that play weekday contests. Regional conferences will also contribute to the academic success of students that play two semester sports (I-AAA Coach)

Right now there is very little incentive for the Big 5 power conference schools to play others. We are getting away from what used to make athletics fun. It is so getting out of hand with the costs and travel all over the country. It is so sad to see it all become about the rich getting richer and leaving everyone else behind. We all want to take care of our



athletes, but we don't all have the \$ to do so. Making it about the kids to me, should be throwing all conferences to the wind, starting over and conferences be by state or 3 state region. Then parents can come see their kids play, rivalries develop, and kids don't miss as much class. Get back to basics! (FBS Coach)

The current regional alignments are absolutely ridiculous. The word "region" should say it all. How can a team in Boston be in the same "region" as a team in Miami. The move to this arrangement was purely the powerful schools dictating to the rest of us; I am unable to fathom the rationale behind the current alignments! I repeat: ABSOLUTELY RIDICULOUS!! (FCS Coach)

The current trend today is taking Regional Rivalries away from the fans. If conferences were to align according to geography you would create regional rivalries, lower costs and conferences would still be equally competitive with each other across the country (FCS Coach)

I like that our conference is regionally based, and frankly I can't see how the other conferences that experience lengthy travel can properly educate their students (FCS Coach).

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS TO ENHANCE THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE / REDUCE COSTS

Some respondents offered suggestions that complement the concept of regionalization, with a focus on reducing travel costs and missed class time.

When you are in a conference that does not lend itself to close rivalries, it would be helpful for there to be incentives to play teams where rivalries outside of conference become important, not only for the schools, but for their access to post-season play. (FBS Coach)

The rules regarding the ability to form new conferences and conference affiliations are far too restrictive. Many institutions would consider changes, but have very limited options (i.e., they must wait to see if they get invited to another preexisting conference) (FCS President).

I'm not sure that affiliation is the best way to address some of the issues you are trying to get at. Reducing maximum competitions per sport (without altering the season length) is the best way to address scheduling and missed class time. It would also help address travel costs, and potentially provide student-athletes with more physical recovery time between contests. My suggestion is to reduce maximum competition dates by 10-15%, and add a requirement that student-athletes get two consecutive days off every three weeks with at least one day off per week all of the other weeks they are in-season (FCS SWA)

I think we should consider playing fewer contests in season and out of season. I think our out of season practice schedule should be modified more as well to allow more time for kids to be kids and focus on their studies. (ACC/Pac-12 Coach)



Longer season for more weekends to take longer travel without missing class (ACC/Pac-12 Coach)

The calculation of the carbon footprint for each sport should be calculated and efforts made to reduce the environmental impact of our extracurricular activities, include the supporters who follow our teams (DI-AAA FAR)

ONE UNIVERSITY – ONE ATHLETIC CONFERENCE

Four respondents who shared comments to emphasize their opposition to any changes in the conference model believe that history and tradition of conference affiliation in addition to the unity it facilitates within a department were too important to dissolve.

Each university belongs to a conference. Every sport that the university offers should compete in the same conference (FBS Coach)

I would NEVER want to give up conference affiliation--there is so much value and tradition (ACC/Pac-12 Coach)

OTHER PRIORITIES FOR THE KNIGHT COMMISSION TO ADDRESS

Many respondents thanked the Knight Commission for their efforts to facilitate positive change in intercollegiate athletics and asked for help in addressing other pressing issues. These issues included:

1. Early recruiting
2. Season-lengths (adjusting – some too long, some too short)
3. Limits on equivalency scholarships need to be updated
4. Encourage ACC/Pac-12 to increase minimum sport threshold so money to fball/bball does not diminish opportunities for others

The one area that the Knight Commission really needs to begin considering and looking at is RECRUITING. The culture of recruiting in the non-revenue field sports (soccer, lacrosse, field hockey) is very poor. Collegiate programs are recruiting freshmen and sophomores in high school which has created an intensely accelerated process that is both unhealthy for PSA's, college coaches and programs. Our coaches organization has tried repeatedly to propose solutions to the NCAA for years only to be turned down or told to wait due to a moratorium on new legislation. It is a significant problem on so many levels and warrants attention from the very top in order to restore reason to a very important process for everyone. (ACC/Pac-12 Coach)



IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

An analysis of eleven institutions deemed “most interested in exploring alternative conference models”¹ underscores the variance even within this sub-grouping (see Tables 21 and 22). The interest in exploring alternative scheduling and affiliation alignments by sport cuts across sub-divisions, budgets, conference alignment, and institutional designation...which is in many ways why this study was commissioned. There are tremendous inefficiencies within the current model that are worthy of further analysis. This broad analysis indicates interest in alternative scheduling that should be investigated more deeply through qualitative discussion with groups of key administrators, coaches, and commissioners across conference and divisional boundaries.

¹ Institutions within this group were selected based on a minimum of three respondents indicating interest in the exploration of alternative models in addition to a minimum of two supporting open-ended narratives.



Table 21

Demographic characteristics of 46 respondents from 11 institutions most interested in exploring alternative conference models

	<i>Individual Responses</i>		<i>Institutional Responses</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Title				
President/Chancellor	4	9%	4	36%
Director of Athletics	4	9%	4	36%
Faculty Athletics Representative	4	9%	4	36%
Senior Woman Administrator	5	11%	5	45%
Head Coach	29	63%	11	100%
State				
North Carolina	28	61%	7	64%
Virginia	15	33%	3	27%
California	3	7%	1	9%
Institutional Designation				
Public	32	30%	3	27%
Private	14	70%	8	73%
DI Football Sub-Division				
"ACC/Pac-12 Conference"	4	9%	1	9%
DI-FBS	16	36%	3	27%
DI-FCS	14	31%	3	27%
DI-AAA	11	24%	4	36%
NCAA Basketball Fund Distribution				
Under \$6 Mil	25	54%	7	64%
Over \$6 Mil	21	46%	4	36%
Current sport-specific conference affiliations				
Yes	14	30%	6	55%
No	21	46%	5	45%
Not Sure	11	24%	0	0%

Table 22

Demographic information of 11 institutions most interested in exploring alternative conference models

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Median</i>
Number of Sports Sponsored	19.72	3.77	14	28	19
Percent Budget Subsidy*	64%	24%	11%	84%	73%
Total Budget*	\$26,877,254	\$24,380,459	\$5,774,228	\$82,792,342	\$19,775,727

*Information only available for public institutions



X. SUPPLEMENTAL DATA

Information about the method by which different sports travel to competition indicated that over 60% of respondents in sports other than football or men’s basketball bus to competition greater than an eight-hour drive from campus, with an additional 5% taking vans.

Figure 7

> 8-Hour Drive From Campus

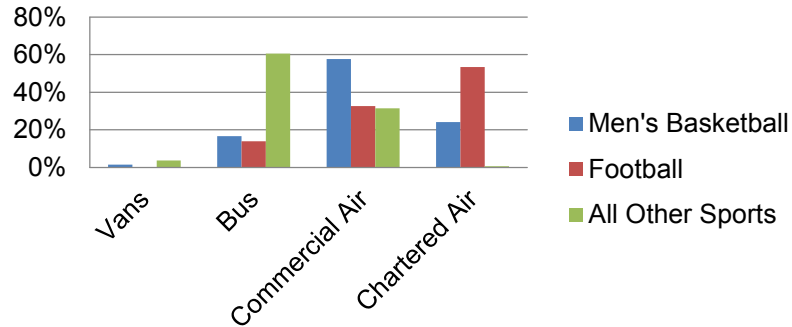


Figure 8

Two - Eight Hour Drive From Campus

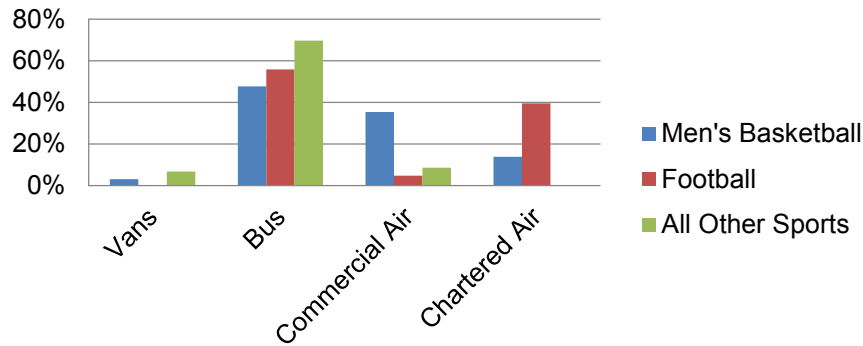


Figure 9

< 2-Hour Drive From Campus

