

For Immediate Release**Jan. 7, 2015****CONTACT:****Amy Perko, perko@knightcommission.org****910.551.6809****Knight Commission Studies Interest in Alternative
Division I Competition Models**

A Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics study reveals interest among university presidents, athletics administrators, faculty and head coaches in exploring alternative models for Division I competition and administration of different sports that may reduce missed class time and travel costs. The study was conducted to assess interest in whether different structures in various sports might offset the challenging effects of some conferences' newly enlarged geographic footprints.

The study, "[Exploring a Division I Model Federated by Sport](#)," was administered by the [Center for Research in Intercollegiate Athletics](#), with assistance from [Collegiate Sports Associates](#), and is intended to serve as a resource to Division I institutions as they discuss many topics emerging within the newly established rules-making structure. Presidents, athletics directors, senior woman administrators, faculty athletics representatives and head coaches from 55 Division I institutions in California, North Carolina and Virginia were invited to participate in an electronic survey. These institutions compete in conferences with overall membership in 40 states. The survey received a 38 percent response rate among presidents and athletics directors, which is a strong response for an electronic survey to senior-level administrators. The lower response rate of the 833 head coaches invited to participate (18 percent) reduced the overall survey response rate to 22 percent (225 respondents total), which remains an adequate rate for an electronic survey.

Forty-three percent of the respondents expressed interest in exploring alternative Division I models for competition and administration for different sports, while 37 percent were not interested. The remaining 20 percent of respondents were ambivalent. Roughly one-third of respondents anticipate a decrease in varsity sports and athletics scholarships in the next five years based on the current legal and financial climate, with the most concern from respondents at public institutions that currently sponsor 19 or more sports. Overall, coaches were twice as likely as administrators to believe the number of sports would decrease.

The Center for Research in Intercollegiate Athletics noted that the responses varied not only in aggregate throughout the survey, but also within traditional comparison groupings such as athletics department budget size, geographic location or Division I subdivision. This variety suggests that there may not be a logical "one size fits all" model for Division I, especially considering potential future changes that may result from new NCAA rules or litigation that

could affect Division I institutions. Also uncertain is the impact of increased costs that are likely to be adopted by the five highest-resourced conferences (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, PAC-12, SEC) at the NCAA's January 2015 Convention, such as increasing athletic scholarship values to cover the full "cost of attendance" at institutions.

Knight Commission co-chairs William E. "Brit" Kirwan, chancellor of the University System of Maryland, and R. Gerald Turner, president of Southern Methodist University, said the study accomplished the Commission's goal of assessing interest in exploring alternative models that might better serve the needs of college athletes and better respond to the financial pressures many athletics programs are experiencing and anticipating.

Kirwan noted that while the study did not produce a clear consensus for specific changes, it did reveal high levels of anxiety and uncertainty about the current Division I model among a significant number of key campus leaders. Kirwan said, "The concerns expressed in the study deserve greater dialogue in campus, conference and NCAA discussions, especially once details of the NCAA's actions are clear from its annual convention in January."

Turner added, "The Knight Commission has a history of providing thoughtful dialogue and research for the major issues impacting the operation of college sports to support the educational mission of our nation's universities. This study makes clear that in this period of significant change and transition, there is wide concern about costs and real indecision, in many quarters, about how to respond to that change. As has been the role of the Knight Commission in previous discussions, we will continue to engage in these important and timely conversations to promote necessary changes."

While there was less interest in exploring alternative models from respondents at institutions in the two higher-resourced conferences in the sample (ACC and PAC-12), the survey did reveal concerns from these institutions as well, particularly from coaches of sports other than football and men's basketball.

The study also found concerns with the feasibility of funding new initiatives to enhance athlete benefits, including expanding athletics scholarships to cover the full cost of attendance and increasing medical benefits for former athletes for injuries sustained during collegiate competition. Although respondents from the two higher-resourced conferences in the study were more confident in their ability to fund such new initiatives than their Division I counterparts, they indicated only modest confidence to do so for sports other than football and men's basketball.

Regarding Division I membership criteria, roughly two-thirds of respondents believe institutional sport sponsorship requirements for NCAA Division I membership are "just right," while less than half (42 percent) believe the minimum scholarship requirements are "just right."

The complete study report is available [here](#).

About the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics

The Knight Commission was formed by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation in October 1989 in response to highly visible scandals in college sports. The Commission's goal is to promote a reform agenda that emphasizes the educational mission of college sports. Over the

years, the NCAA has adopted a number of the Commission's recommendations including the rule that requires teams to be on track to graduate more than 50 percent of their players in order to be eligible for postseason competition. The Commission's [NCAA Division I Athletic and Academic Spending Database](#) provides financial data for more than 220 public institutions to provide greater financial transparency on athletics spending.

About the Center for Research in Intercollegiate Athletics

The Center for Research in Intercollegiate Athletics is committed to facilitating data-driven decision making and practices in intercollegiate athletics. We do this through conducting high quality research driven by a vision to maximize the impact of intercollegiate athletics on the academy and society by increasing the quality and quantity of educational experiences for athletes. For more information, visit www.cria-unc.com.

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