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Sent Via Email
March 27, 2018

Dr. Condoleezza Rice
Denning Professor in Global Business and the Economy
Stanford Graduate School of Business
Hoover Institution, Stanford University

Dear Dr. Rice,

This is to follow-up on our March 19 conversation. Thank you again for your time and consideration of the suggestions we discussed.

Over our more than 25-year history, the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics has established a legacy of promoting reforms that support and strengthen the educational mission of college sports.

Early efforts called on presidents themselves to govern college sports with tougher academic standards that ultimately helped lead to improved graduation success for athletes. Over the past decade, several recommendations to align financial and athletic incentives with educational values and to treat athletes like students helped propel the following policy changes: Requiring teams to be on track to graduate at least 50 percent of their players to be eligible for March Madness and other postseason championships and bowl games; adding substantial academic incentives in the NCAA's revenue distribution plan (and decreasing the amounts awarded for success in the men's basketball tournament); and reducing athletics time demands on college athletes.

In many cases, our recommendations were met with cynicism and initial resistance. To cite one example, when Arne, as Secretary of Education, embraced the Knight Commission's recommendation that teams be on track to graduate half of their players to be eligible for postseason play, a prominent college basketball coach told USA TODAY that the idea was "completely nuts."

Collectively, these reforms made significant improvements to Division I intercollegiate athletics by placing greater value on the "college" in college sports. However, further change still is needed and men's college basketball, in particular, needs a far more radical overhaul than what has taken place in recent years.

Unfortunately, in the past, change and improvements have taken years to accomplish. We think the ground is more fertile now for far-reaching reforms that the Commission on College Basketball may be considering.

Like the Commission on College Basketball, our group recognizes that basketball-specific changes should move forward in coming months. In response to your request for additional input, we offer two broad suggestions on NCAA governance and the responsibilities of coaches.

These recommendations grew out of research conducted for the Knight Commission with university presidents and higher education leaders in 2009 and again in 2012, and from the many public meetings the Commission has held over the years with university presidents, faculty, athletics administrators, coaches, athletes and other experts.

First, the Knight Commission has recommended that **independent directors** be added to the NCAA governing boards. This recommendation was initially made, but not accepted, when the NCAA restructured in 2013. We think at least one of these independent directors should be a former men's basketball player, given the role that March Madness plays in funding the NCAA and its member conferences and institutions, and in holding the NCAA together. There could be another spot among the independent directors for a former female athlete in any sport. Other independent directors could be experts in fields like athlete health, safety and wellness.

We believe that the appointment of your group, in fact, shows the value of having external and independent perspectives on issues that often become bogged down when the interests of individual conferences and institutions drive the agenda.

The second broad recommendation is for the NCAA, conferences and/or institutions to develop standards to emphasize coaches' responsibilities as educators.

A few coaches' associations have implemented successful programs for coaches to achieve various levels of coaching licenses but the associations for men's basketball and football have not. It is telling, we think, that the only competency or training requirement for any NCAA Division I coach is passing an open-book NCAA recruiting rules test. Some institutions and conferences are doing more in this area than others, but college sports would be helped with incentives or requirements that place a greater emphasis on coaches' roles as educators.

Thank you for considering these suggestions and the additional recommendations from the Commission's October 30, 2017 meeting outlined by Knight Commission CEO Amy Perko in her November 9, 2017 letter to you.

We reiterate our strong support for far-reaching reforms to men's college basketball. We look forward to hearing your commission's recommendations and to working collaboratively with you as well as with others to advance the changes needed.

Please let us know if we can be of any further assistance.

Best regards,



Carol Cartwright
Co-Chair



Arne Duncan
Co-Chair

Cc: Mark Emmert
Donald Remy
Members of the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics