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**Sent Via Email**

October 20, 2021

Jere Morehead, President, University of Georgia  
Chair, NCAA Division I Board of Directors

Dear President Morehead:

The Knight Commission's December 2020 report, "[Transforming the NCAA D-I Model: Recommendations for Change](#)," outlined a number of proposals that we believe are pertinent to the upcoming October 27 meeting of the Division I Board of Directors. Here we want to single out a Commission recommendation for national governance—namely, that it should provide *“meaningful representation for college athletes at all levels, and [that]major national governance bodies should have a majority of independent directors, including former athletes”* (page 18).

We understand that the Division I Board of Directors will soon appoint a committee to oversee an examination of Division I rules that will act upon expected changes to the NCAA Constitution.

We write now to underscore the importance of our governance recommendation and its relevance to this committee's composition, which will have significant impact on the future of Division I.

As you know, corporate and nonprofit boards typically have a majority of independent directors, who provide independent and expert input to minimize the risk that board decisions are unduly influenced by one interest or member group at the expense of others. In addition, given public concern that college athlete concerns have been underrepresented in Division I decision-making, we believe it is essential that current and former student-athlete voices play an integral role in Division I's looming governance reforms.

We were encouraged that our earlier calls, in [2013](#) and [2018](#), for independent directors to be included on the NCAA governing boards, helped lead to the addition of five independent directors to the Board of Governors. The expertise and objectivity of these leaders has greatly benefited the entire Association.

The importance of adding independent directors and college athlete voices both to the Division I Board of Directors and to the upcoming committee for reforming Division I rules has widespread support. A June 2020 Knight Commission [survey](#) of D-I leaders (e.g., CEOs, Directors of Athletics, and Conference Commissioners) found that respondents favored adding independent directors to the Division I Board of Directors by a more than 2 to 1 margin (52 percent to 24 percent). Division I CEOs were even more supportive of independent directors for the Division I Board, with 63 percent in favor vs. 18 percent opposed. And nearly 80 percent of all respondents supported having some board members explicitly represent the health, safety, and well-being of athletes.

Dr. Jere Morehead  
October 20, 2021

We wish you and your fellow board members the best as you proceed with this historic work, and we would be happy to assist in any way that we can. We hope and believe that our thoughts and recommendations support our mutual goal of maintaining college athletics as a public trust, rooted in the mission of higher education.

Best regards,



Arne Duncan  
Co-Chair



Len Elmore  
Co-Chair



Nancy Zimpher  
Co-Chair

Cc: Jack DeGioia, chair, NCAA Board of Governors  
Mark Emmert, president, NCAA  
Robert Gates, chair, NCAA Constitution Committee  
James Harris, vice-chair, NCAA Division I Board of Directors  
Members of the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics