



# Knight Commission On Intercollegiate Athletics

A PROJECT OF THE JOHN S. AND JAMES L. KNIGHT FOUNDATION

## Impacting the Future of College Sports

Issues and Solutions Update — Fall 2022

Edition No. 5

### Knight Commission Renews Call for New FBS Football Governance Following LEAD1 Meeting



LEAD1's September meeting reaffirmed what college sports leaders, including athletics directors, [told our Commission in 2020](#): FBS football needs a new and different leadership structure.

Discussion of college football governance issues by FBS athletic directors is an important step from leaders within the industry.

Unlike every other sport that the NCAA governs, the NCAA receives \$0 in revenue from FBS football or from the lucrative College Football Playoff, and yet, the NCAA assumes legal liability and covers tens of millions in national costs each year for FBS football, including catastrophic insurance costs. It is time for FBS football to pay for its own national costs and fund a unified leadership structure—**either as part of or separate from the NCAA.**

The lack of financial transparency from the separate corporate entity that manages the College Football Playoff is deeply at odds with the governing principles of a non-profit educational activity.

"FBS football should ultimately be guided by the principles that guide other educational non-profits," says Commission co-chair Nancy Zimpher. "New governance should include independent directors, including health and safety experts, as well as football players to ensure that athletes' rights are protected and that health, safety, and educational opportunities for athletes are top priorities."

Reform of FBS governance is especially urgent now. Reform should precede any CFP expansion, which is projected to generate multi-billion dollars in revenues, resulting in the CFP dwarfing NCAA revenues.

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**KNIGHT COMMISSION  
CO-CHAIR**

**Nancy Zimpher,  
Chancellor Emeritus, SUNY**

[Read more about our reform proposals here.](#)

## Knicht Commission Response to U.S. Senators’ Inquiry on Possible NIL Legislation



On Aug. 29, 2022, [the Knight Commission responded](#) to an Aug. 3, 2022 letter [from U.S. Senators Tommy Tuberville and Joe Manchin](#) for input on potential legislation to address compensation to college athletes for the use of their names, images and likenesses (NIL). The letter stated that “the NCAA abdicated its responsibility to enforce its constitutional principles and operating bylaws with respect to NIL, which led to predictable results—many athletes benefited from legitimate NIL deals, but NIL compensation quickly devolved into thinly disguised ‘player compensation’ and ‘recruiting inducements.’”

The Commission’s response reflects its [study of this topic](#) for more than a decade, most notably in April 2020 when the Commission released five key principles on NIL activity to ensure fair treatment for college athletes.

The Commission’s letter outlined five principles that it believes should be considered in any future legislation:

- 1) Fairness to Athletes as Students;
- 2) Informing Athletes on their NIL Rights;
- 3) Oversight of NIL Rights;
- 4) Guardrails for NIL Rights; and,
- 5) Uniformity.

The Commission’s principles are consistent with those cited by [commissioners of the ACC, Big 10, Big 10, PAC-12, and SEC in their response letter](#).

## **Knight Commission co-chair Len Elmore discusses soaring coaching buyouts and financial accountability for athletics programs**

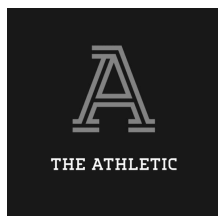
Listen to this **50-second clip** of Len Elmore's interview with Paul Finebaum discussing the more than half a billion dollars spent by FBS schools on football coaching buyouts over the past decade.



[50-second audio clip](#)

[Listen Here.](#) (audio clip from ESPN)

## **Knight Commission in the News**



### **"The future of College Football, Inc.: Where the sport's money and management go from here"**

*The Athletic* | September 27, 2022

"The positioning of FBS college football as continuing to be half-in and half-out of the NCAA is not tenable, and it has to be addressed," said Amy Perko, the chief executive officer of the Knight Commission, an advocacy group that first recommended breaking FBS football out from under the NCAA's umbrella back in 2020. Perko noted that the current setup — with all the revenue generated by FBS football flowing through the CFP — means that football's postseason governance and its financials are "shielded from public transparency." She said she believes that is "inappropriate for the marquee event for what is currently structured as an educational nonprofit."

[Read Here.](#)



### **"Big Bucks, Big Buyouts: Public universities shell out millions of dollars firing coaches who didn't win enough"**

*InvestigateTV.com* & national distribution | Sept. 19, 2022

[In response to InvestigateTV's report that Division I schools spent more than \$1 billion on coaching buyouts since 2004, Knight Commission co-chair Len Elmore said]: "It's obvious that institutions are throwing money away that could be used to enhance the education, health, safety and well-being of student athletes on mistakes that have been made on hiring."

[Read Here.](#)



## Knight Commission responds to Sen. Tommy Tuberville, criticizes NCAA for failed NIL enforcement

*On3* | August 31, 2022

“The NCAA abdicated its responsibility to enforce its constitutional principles and operating bylaws with respect to NIL, which led to predictable results,” the Knight Commission’s co-chairs penned in their letter. “Many athletes benefited from legitimate NIL deals, but NIL compensation quickly devolved into thinly disguised ‘player compensation’ and ‘recruiting inducements.’”

[Read Here.](#)



## College Football: A Whole New Ballgame

*Sports Business Journal* | August 29, 2022

“If you were sending an email to the person in charge of college football, who would be the recipient?”

It’s the new trendy question to ask. The point is that there isn’t anyone really in charge...

...

There are even some entities that don’t exist yet, but soon could, like the National College Football Association, the administrative body proposed by the Knight Commission.”

...Chris Howard, executive vice president and chief operating officer at Arizona State, a former player at Air Force, a Rhodes Scholar and Harvard Business School MBA: “The system we have needs to be strongly reconsidered so that the game can be governed by something that deals with the realities of today’s game — the dollars, the health issues, the diversity.”

[Read Here.](#)



## "Who should run college football in the future?"

*ESPN.com* | August 5, 2022

[On the Knight Commission's proposal for new FBS Football governance, separate from the NCAA and funded by the College Football Playoff:] “The Knight Commission first proposed this idea in December 2020, and its report included a survey that found that more than 70% of FBS athletic directors favored a position similar to a commissioner of the sport.”

[Read Here.](#)



**"What is the future of college football? Over 200 coaches, players and administrators respond"**  
*ESPN.com | August 1, 2022*

Amy Perko, chief executive officer of the Knight Commission [points out] "more than 80% of leaders [said] there needs to be a seat at the table for an independent expert on athlete physical and mental health and well-being -- and that hasn't happened yet."

[Read Here.](#)

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