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DII Management Council addresses membership-growth matters

By David Pickle
NCAA.org

The Division II Management Council moved the division a step closer toward clarity about long-range membership growth issues at its fall meeting Monday and Tuesday in Indianapolis.

However, Management Council chair Kathleen Brasfield cautioned that it was a step and nothing more.

"Certainly it's going to be the next big issue of the next 12 months and probably a little bit longer," said Brasfield, the athletics director at Angelo State. "The decisions that are made about strategic growth are going to be vital because we've got to decide what we want our division to look like over the next 15 to 20 years."

The Management Council's discussion about strategic membership growth is part of a larger conversation being conducted with other Division II groups, including the Presidents Council, the Long-Range Projections Task Force and the Membership Committee. The effort originated in June at the [Division II Chancellors and Presidents Summit](#).

As a starting point, the Council was provided Monday and Tuesday with models that projected membership expansion based on current trends. If the current rate of expansion and attrition remain the same (a big if, some members noted), Division II membership would expand more than 20 percent to more than 370 members over the next 13 years.

Division II conference commissioners engaged the topic at their fall meeting last week and at that time endorsed a four-part approach that would:

- Avoid the concept of a membership cap and would focus instead on a philosophy of "controlled excellence."
- Require prospective new members to have an invitation from an existing conference.
- Strengthen membership requirements for Division II conferences.
- Prioritize geography in considering new member applications.

While the CCA concepts were generally supported, the discussions about those points and others revealed the complexity of the matter, along with the challenges that will be involved in building a consensus.

For instance, although Management Council members acknowledged the need for more Division II members in the West and Northern Plains, most were reluctant to restrict growth to those areas, even though additional national membership could strain membership benefits (enhancement funds, conference grants and championships access, among other considerations) for existing members.

Members also cautioned against absolute restrictions since no one can know future new members might look like. While most attention currently focuses on the possibility that new members will continue to migrate from the NAIA, Division II may want to keep its policies flexible enough to include attractive members from Division III and members who find themselves overextended in Division I.

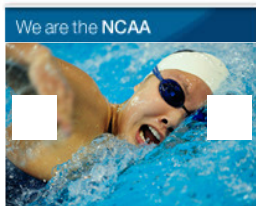
Likewise, while the idea of requiring a prospective member to have a conference invitation before joining a conference had some appeal, others expressed concern that an overly restrictive policy could inhibit solutions in areas of the country where Division II membership is sparse. Other Council members noted a concern about whether all conferences currently have policies and procedures in place to assess the readiness of institutions to enter the Division II membership process.

The next step in the examination will occur in November when the Membership Committee and the Long-Range Projections Task Force meet jointly. That will be followed in January by educational sessions at the Convention, where the membership will have an opportunity to provide feedback.

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The project remains on track for legislation to be considered at the spring and summer Management and Presidents Council meetings, with votes at the 2012 Convention.

"A lot of it's going to be determined by the fact that we need schools in the West," Brasfield said. "We need to decide how many conferences are enough in the regions. It all relates to the funding that's available. There are so many critical issues to be decided. It'll be an exciting time for the Membership Committee, the Long-Range Projections Task Force, for this group and for the Presidents Council. Certainly, it's the new 'Life in the Balance' because it's going to be critical over the next year."

Convention legislation

As it happened, the Council wasn't quite finished with the old "Life in the Balance," last year's landmark legislative initiative to reform Division II playing- and practice-season standards.

In addition to reviewing the [three Phase II Life in the Balance proposals](#) that will be considered at the January Convention, the Council also reviewed a Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference and Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference proposal (No. 2-5, as listed in the Second Publication of Proposed Legislation) to modify the seven-day winter break legislation that was approved as part of the [Phase I package](#) in January.

The current winter-break rule prohibits athletically related activities on campus between December 20 and 26. Some administrators believe the seven particular dates are too restrictive and pushed for legislation that would provide more flexibility. In that vein, the PSAC/RMAC proposal would amend the regulation so that any team could take the imposed break on any seven consecutive days between December 20 and 30. The Division II Legislation Committee supported the proposal, but the Management Council hesitated, noting that the PSAC/RMAC proposal comes with complexities of its own in how the seven-day periods would match up from sport to sport, conference to conference and region to region. In the end, the Council voted to take no position on the proposal.

The Council determined its positions on four other membership-sponsored proposals that will be considered at the 2011 NCAA Convention in San Antonio.

Although the Division II Legislation Committee and the Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports voted to oppose Proposal No. 2-4, the Management Council chose to take no position on the legislation, which would permit voluntary strength and conditioning training in the summer under specified conditions. Critics have expressed concerns about how the proposal would affect competitive equity, safety and time demands on student-athletes, but several Management Council members believed that the concerns were not so clear-cut as to recommend a negative vote and agreed that the vote should be left to the overall membership to decide in January.

With other membership-sponsored proposals, the Council followed the lead of the Legislation Committee by:

- Supporting No. 2-12, which would make Division II's organized competition provisions regarding Canadian Junior A men's ice hockey players consistent with those in Division III.
- Opposing No. 2-15, which would establish a quiet period in the 48 hours preceding the National Letter of Intent signing date for prospects who are not eligible to sign (it would remain a dead period for those who are eligible to sign).
- Supporting No. 2-17, which would not charge fall-sport student-athletes with a season of competition for competition in the nonchampionship segment, provided the student-athlete was academically eligible at the start of the academic year.

Health and safety

The Council also addressed several important health and safety concerns.

After reviewing a report about sickle-cell trait testing, the Council voted to refer the matter to the Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports to determine the best approach for Division II. Council members stressed that Division II is committed to protecting student-athletes against this and other dangerous conditions that can manifest themselves in the stress of athletic training or competition. Division III also has sought guidance from the competitive-safeguards committee on the sickle-cell matter.


The Council also asked the competitive-safeguards committee to review discrepancies in how individual and team sports are treated with regard to positive drug tests. In individual sports, the current policy vacates individual awards for those testing positive (including for non-performance-enhancing drugs) and also requires the vacation of any team points that student-athlete earned. However, positive tests in team sports carry no team-wide ramifications. The competitive-safeguards committee likely will examine the matter from an Association-wide perspective.

In another safety-related matter, the Council approved a proposal that would ratify the emergency legislation to require that each Division II institution have a concussion-management plan as a condition of membership. The vote to ratify the emergency legislation will occur at the January Convention.

Other actions

In other actions at its meeting in Indianapolis on Monday and Tuesday, the Division II Management Council:

- Approved proposed legislation from the Division II Academic Requirements Committee to modify the Division II philosophy statement relevant to the behavior of institutional staff members and student-athletes: "That institutional staff, including presidents and athletics personnel, shall hold student-athletes and themselves to the highest standards of personal conduct at all times, including exemplary behavior that reflects respect for the rights and dignity of opponents, teammates, officials, other students and the community at large."
- Approved a Championships Committee recommendation to increase the penalty a sports committee is permitted to levy for failure to adhere to championships policies and procedures from \$300 to \$600.

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