California Institute of Technology cited for lack of institutional control

California Institute of Technology (Caltech) lacked institutional control when it allowed 30 ineligible student-athletes in 12 sports to practice or compete during four academic years, according to findings by the NCAA Division III Committee on Infractions. Penalties, including those self-imposed by Caltech, include three years probation, a postseason ban, a vacation of athletics records, and recruiting limitations.

This case was resolved through the summary disposition process, a cooperative effort where the involved parties collectively submit the case to the Committee on Infractions in written form. The NCAA enforcement staff, university and involved individuals must agree to the facts of the case in order for this process to be utilized instead of having a formal hearing.

The student-athletes were ineligible due in large part to Caltech’s unique academic policy that allows students to “shop” for courses during a three-week period of each quarter before finalizing their class schedules. During those three weeks, because they were not actually registered in some or all of the courses they are attending, some students were not enrolled on a full-time basis. Other student-athletes failed to meet good academic standing requirements.

The committee noted that Caltech’s failure to have procedures to verify the full-time enrollment status or academic standing of the student-athletes contributed significantly to the lack of institutional control. Caltech did not have a written process or procedure in place for performing certification duties and ensuring the eligibility of all student-athletes. The former director of athletics relied on the registrar’s office to communicate information to him, but he never formally requested the information and did not communicate NCAA eligibility requirements to personnel in that office. Further, the athletics department was not made aware when student-athletes were placed on academic probation or when student-athletes fell below good academic standing requirements. Similarly, coaches were not informed of the academic status of members of their teams.

A failure by Caltech to provide rules education to its coaches, student-athletes and administrators also contributed to the lack of institutional control. The only compliance and education activities on campus occurred at the beginning of each team’s season, when the former director of athletics visited the campus and distributed NCAA-mandated forms.

Caltech found the violations when the current director of athletics recommended a review of academic records of all 2010-11 student-athletes. When the review revealed eight student-athletes competed while ineligible, Caltech expanded the review of records to previous years. The sports affected include: men’s water polo; men’s and women’s fencing; men’s soccer; men’s basketball; baseball; men’s tennis; women’s track and cross country; men’s track; and women’s swimming and diving.

The penalties include:

• Public reprimand and censure.
• Three years of probation from July 12, 2012, through July 11, 2015.
• A 2012-13 postseason ban for the sports of men’s and women’s track and field; men’s and women’s cross country; women’s swimming; baseball; men’s and women’s fencing; men’s soccer; men’s water polo; men’s basketball; and men’s and women’s tennis. The ban extends to all the annual exemptions of Bylaw 17.1.4.5 and is further detailed in the public report. (Self-imposed by the university)
• Vacation of all wins and individual records earned when ineligible student-athletes participated. (Self-imposed by the university)
• A financial penalty of $5,000. (Self-imposed by the university)
• Elimination of off-campus recruiting activities for the 2012-13 academic year. (Self-imposed by the university)

The members of the Division III Committee on Infractions who reviewed this case include Keith R. Jacques, chair and attorney; Dave Cecil, director of financial aid at Transylvania State; Amy

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