**REPORT OF THE**
**NCAA DIVISON I ACADEMIC CABINET**
**FEBRUARY 2-3, 2009, MEETING**

***ACTION ITEMS*.**

**1. Legislative Item.**

- **Committees – Common Committees – Committees with Governance Administration Responsibilities – Foreign-Student Records Committee -- Composition.**

(1) Recommendation. The NCAA Division I Academic Cabinet recommends the NCAA Division I Legislative Council adopt noncontroversial legislation to specify that the Foreign-Student Records Committee shall consist of eight members, including two Division I representatives, two Division II representatives, two representatives from either Division I or Division II and two ex-officio members, one of whom shall be the NCAA Eligibility Center's primary foreign-student records consultant.

(2) Effective Date. Immediate.

(3) Rationale. The committee's current composition includes three Division I representatives, three Division II representatives and two ex-officio members, one of whom shall be the Eligibility Center's primary foreign-student records consultant. As vacancies become available, it has become increasingly difficult to identify individuals who possess the extensive knowledge of foreign educational systems and credential evaluation required for service. Allowing flexibility in the composition of the committee will alleviate some challenges in finding a qualified member from a particular division and will allow for selection of the best nominee. This proposal does not change the size of the committee or the ex-officio members; it only reallocates specified divisional requirements to permit greater flexibility in the appointment process. As the Foreign-Student Records Committee is a common committee, this recommendation is not effective unless and until the same legislation is supported by Division II.

(4) Estimated Budget Impact. None.

(5) Student-Athlete Impact. None.

**2. Nonlegislative Items.**

- **None.**

***INFORMATIONAL ITEMS*.**

**1. Legislative – NCAA Division I Academic Cabinet Sponsored Amendments-to-Amendments for the 2008-09 Legislative Cycle.**

- **NCAA Division I Proposal No. 2008-77-1 – Eligibility – Transfer Regulations – Two-Year College Transfers – Submission of Information Necessary to Determine Academic Initial-Eligibility Status.** The cabinet sponsored an amendment to Proposal No. 2008-77 to provide a waiver opportunity when the required academic information is not available. The amendment-to-amendment specifies that the cabinet shall have the authority to authorize waivers of the submission requirement, will establish the process for granting such waivers, and shall monitor the waivers requested and granted. Providing waivers via a simple process when extenuating circumstances preclude the submission of a prospect's high school academic information allows a reasonable accommodation to institutions without jeopardizing the integrity of the data collection.

  Further, the cabinet strongly supports Proposal No. 2008-77, which would specify that an institution shall ensure submission of all necessary information (e.g., high school transcripts, test scores, including official or unofficial transcripts and test scores), to the Eligibility Center to determine the academic initial-eligibility status of a two-year or 4-2-4 transfer student-athlete prior to the end of the student-athlete's first regular academic term of full-time enrollment at the institution. The cabinet strongly supports the concept of data collection and analysis in the development of sound academic policy and notes that the collection of this high school academic information for two-year college transfers is vital to support the cabinet's review of the academic performance of two-year college transfers. A number of groups have noted that the performance of two-year college transfers lags behind that of native student-athletes and four-year college transfers and the cabinet prioritized this issue for study and intervention. Currently, only 50 percent of two-year college transfers apply to the Eligibility Center for academic certification, so a significant amount of data is unavailable. The cabinet further noted that this requirement will not place additional financial burden on prospective student-athletes, as they are already required to register with the Eligibility Center in order to have their amateurism status certified.

**2. Legislative – Review of Proposals Scheduled for Final Consideration at the April 2009 NCAA Division I Legislative Council Meeting.**

**a. Proposal No. 2008-32-B – Eligibility – General Eligibility Requirements – Full-Time Enrollment – Requirement for Competition – Nontraditional Courses – Up To 50 Percent of Minimum Requirement.** The cabinet unanimously supports Proposal No. 2008-32-B, which would specify that enrollment in a nontraditional course (e.g., distance-learning, correspondence, extension, Internet courses, independent study or any other course or credit that is not earned in a typical face-to-face classroom environment with regular contact hours between the instructor and the student) offered by the certifying institution may be used to satisfy up to 50 percent of the minimum full-time enrollment requirement for competition, provided the specified conditions are met. The cabinet recognizes the increasing prevalence of nontraditional courses within higher education and the need to modernize NCAA legislation related to such course formats. Student-athletes should be permitted to use nontraditional courses to satisfy the full-time enrollment requirement when an institution considers such enrollment as regular course enrollment for all students. The cabinet acknowledges the proposal as a reasonable alternative to Proposal No. 2008-32-A.

**b. Proposal No. 2008-34 – Eligibility – Freshman Academic Requirements – Core-Curriculum Time Limitation – Students with Education Impacting Disabilities.** The cabinet continues to support Proposal No. 2008-34. The cabinet emphasized that three core courses after high school is a reasonable accommodation for prospective student-athletes who have been diagnosed with an education impacting disability and that the vast majority of such prospects complete only one or two core courses after high school. The cabinet also noted that a specialist in education impacting disabilities was consulted in the development of the concept and the determination of three core courses after high school graduation as a reasonable accommodation. Finally, the cabinet noted the opportunity for all courses taken up to initial full-time enrollment by a prospective student-athlete with an education impacting disability to be considered through the initial-eligibility waiver process.

**c. Proposal No. 2008-75 – Freshman Academic Requirements – Eligibility for Financial Aid, Practice and Competition – Qualifier – Exception – Early Academic Certification – Submission of Transcript.** The cabinet continues to strongly support the concept of data collection and analysis in the development of sound academic policy. The proposal is intended to fill a large and growing hole in the academic data available to help the division make informed decisions

related to academic legislation and policy in the future. The cabinet believes that the time spent on collecting transcripts and other data would result in better academic policy and requirements, including the ability to validate the early academic certification requirements, to study changes in core-course taking patterns, and to model predictors of long-term academic success.

**3. Legislative – Cabinet Sponsored Proposal for the 2009-10 Legislative Cycle.**

- **NCAA Bylaw 21.7.6.1 – Committees – Division I Cabinets and Committees – Academic Cabinet.** The cabinet sponsored legislation to eliminate the cabinet's duty to serve as the final appellate body for academic waivers and to specify that the NCAA Division I Initial-Eligibility Waivers Committee shall become the final appellate body for initial-eligibility waivers and that the NCAA Division I Progress-Toward-Degree Waiver Committee shall become the final appellate body for progress-toward-degree waivers. Current legislation allows two appeal opportunities – the waiver committee, then the cabinet subcommittee – after staff decisions for initial-eligibility and progress-toward-degree waivers. However, the second appellate level is rarely used. In the past two years, eight initial-eligibility waivers out of 913 submitted and nine progress-toward-degree waivers out of 1,030 submitted were appealed to the cabinet subcommittees. Of these nearly 2,000 cases, only three resulted in different outcomes by the cabinet subcommittees. Further, most other waiver processes (e.g., student-athlete reinstatement, NCAA Division I Legislative Council Subcommittee for Legislative Relief) include only one appeal opportunity. Eliminating the second appellate opportunity will reduce bureaucracy and streamline the waiver process with virtually no impact on the outcome of waiver decisions.

**4. Nonlegislative.**

**a. Data-Driven Legislation and Policy Development.** Throughout its discussions, the cabinet emphasized the importance of data collection and analysis in the development of policy. Accordingly, the importance of research and data-driven decision-making was incorporated into the cabinet's guiding principles. To support this goal, the collection of academic data regarding two-year college transfers and early academic qualifiers is critical. In addition to its strong support for Proposal Nos. 2008-75 and 2008-77, the cabinet will work with the NCAA Division I Committee on Academic Performance to collect additional data regarding two-year college transfers through the NCAA Division I Academic Performance Program (APP). The cabinet reviewed the proposed list of data items to be collected through the APP and provided feedback for consideration by

the Committee on Academic Performance during its ongoing review of the data collection process.

**b. Facilitating Learning and Achieving Graduation (FLAG).** The cabinet reviewed the final report of the Working Group to Review Issues Pertaining to Academic Risk of Student-Athletes and unanimously endorsed the concept of developing the FLAG program, a new management system designed to assess each student-athlete's level of risk. The working group defined risk as a student-athlete's risk of not graduating from the institution, as determined by both academic and nonacademic factors. The group also noted that every student has some level of risk that he or she will not graduate, and that each student's level of risk may fluctuate throughout the course of his or her collegiate enrollment.

The voluntary Web-based FLAG system proposed by the working group includes a tool that can be implemented at the institutional level to identify student-athletes with various levels of risk of not graduating and to leverage campus resources to provide appropriate support to all student-athletes. The group recommends using an existing data collection platform like the APP to gather data related to each student-athlete's potential barriers to graduation, and to assess the student-athlete's cumulative risk of not graduating.

The proposed system also will include a module to help institutions match appropriate support services to each student-athlete, based on that individual's particular risks. The data and outcomes then could be used to help evaluate the effectiveness of support programs on individual campuses to determine whether institutional resources are adequately supporting student-athlete graduation success.

The cabinet charged the NCAA staff to implement the FLAG program and asked to receive periodic updates and previews as the program is developed.

**c. Academic Performance of Two-Year College Transfers.** The cabinet continued its review of the academic performance of two-year college transfers by receiving a presentation from the NCAA research staff including data on the frequency and performance of two-year college transfers. The cabinet noted that two-year college transfers accounted for approximately five percent of all Division I student-athletes in the 2006-07 academic year, and that this percentage had declined in each of the previous three years. Baseball and men's basketball have the highest rate of two-year college transfers, with over 17 percent in each sport, while women's sports other than basketball have the lowest rate of two-year transfers, at about 2.5 percent. The data also show that two-year college

transfers tend to have lower high school academic performance than non-transfers and transfers from four-year colleges, and that status as a transfer student-athlete is independently predictive of a student-athlete's likelihood to leave the institution while academically ineligible (i.e., to be 0/2 in the NCAA Division I Academic Progress Rate), even after one controls for high school academic performance.

**d.** **Nontraditional Courses.** In addition to supporting Proposal No. 2008-32-B, the cabinet reviewed the comments and concerns related to the proposals that were defeated by the Legislative Council at the 2009 NCAA Convention (Proposal Nos. 2008-32-A, 2008-35-A and 2008-35-B). The cabinet also noted that, given the increasing prevalence of nontraditional course delivery within higher education, the use of nontraditional courses remains a priority topic for the cabinet and it will continue its work on the issue. To this end, the cabinet reviewed the report of the National Association for Academic Advisors (N4A) Nontraditional Courses Task Force Report, which includes suggested guidelines and possible strategies for monitoring student-athlete enrollment in nontraditional courses. The report will be posted on the cabinet's page of the NCAA Web site and be distributed to the Division I membership.

**e.** **Academic Support Services.** Consistent with its efforts to increase communication with relevant constituent groups, the cabinet hosted its annual meeting with representatives from N4A. The association's president and president-elect reported on efforts to provide academic support to student-athletes enrolled in nontraditional courses, as well as the impact of academic reform on academic support professionals. Results from a 2006 survey of the N4A membership regarding the impact of academic reform on the focus and workload of academic support personnel were shared with the cabinet. The N4A representatives agreed to repeat the 2006 survey in order to update the findings. The cabinet also is working with representatives from N4A and the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) to design a comprehensive study regarding academic support services provided to student-athletes.

**f.** **Time Demands on Student-Athletes.** The cabinet began its review of time demands on student-athletes by receiving a presentation from the research staff on the results of the GOALS and SCORE surveys. In general, Division I student-athletes report spending 30 to 40 hours per week on athletic activities. Baseball and men's basketball student-athletes reported the least time committed to class work and study, while Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) players reported the most time dedicated to sports. Student-athletes in baseball, men's basketball, football, men's golf and men's ice hockey reported more hours spent on athletics than academics during the season; all other sports reported more time on academics.

Fifty to 75 percent of student-athletes (varying within that range by sport) report spending about the same or more time on athletics in the off-season as compared to during their sports seasons. Student-athletes in baseball and women's basketball reported missing the most class time during an average week in season. Stress reactions (e.g., physical and mental health issues) were reported at the highest rates among football players in the FBS subdivision and among female student-athletes, which also are the groups with the highest combined athletics and academics time commitments during the season.

The cabinet also reviewed the results of a study on the academic impact of competition during the institution's final-examination period. In general, many of the teams studied continue to compete during final exams. Teams from low resource institutions are more likely to play games and travel further distances during the final-examination period. Overall, more nuanced data are necessary, but are not currently available, to detail the specific effects of competition during final exams, especially among student-athletes at risk for academic difficulties.

The cabinet did, however, review the results of a similar study that compared the academic performance of student-athletes during the season to performance during the out-of-season time period. Contrary to commonly held beliefs, student-athletes consistently earn fewer credit hours and achieve a lower grade-point average during semesters when they are competing. The greatest negative impact was seen among student-athletes in sports with high reported time demands (e.g., football, baseball, softball) and for student-athletes who entered college less academically prepared.

**g.** **"Good Academic Standing".** The cabinet responded to a request for a review of the NCAA's legislation and interpretations regarding institutional "good academic standing" and reaffirmed that each institution should define and apply academic policies, including good academic standing, on its own campus. The cabinet also referred to the NCAA Division I Legislative Review and Interpretations Committee an August 9, 1995, official interpretation regarding the application of institutional good academic standing policies, with a suggestion that it be archived to permit full institutional autonomy in the interpretation of good academic standing policies and in the application of such policies to student-athletes.

**h.** **Academic Requirements during the Recruiting Process.** The cabinet began discussions related to academic requirements during the recruiting process, including the appropriate timeline for the exchange of academic information between prospective student-athletes, institutions, and the Eligibility Center. The issue is a joint agenda item with the NCAA Division I Recruiting Cabinet. A review of the current legislative requirements (e.g., registration with the

Eligibility Center and placement on an institution's Institutional Request List before a written offer of athletically related financial aid) was provided, and the cabinet requested that the staff present additional information and concepts at its next meeting.

**i.** **Academic Waivers.** The cabinet received a report on the number and outcome of initial-eligibility and progress-toward-degree waivers submitted during the 2008-09 academic year. The Eligibility Center staff has processed 547 initial-eligibility waivers thus far, compared to 360 waivers for all of 2007-08 (52 percent increase). It is believed that the increase is largely due to the move from 14 to 16 required core courses and that the number of waiver requests will decrease over time, as has happened with previous changes in core-course requirements. Approximately 79 percent of waiver requests receive some type of relief, which is the same rate as in 2007-08. Regarding progress-toward-degree waivers, the staff has received 485 requests, compared to 386 for the same time period in 2007-08. This represents a 29 percent increase. The 70 percent approval rate for progress-toward-degree waivers is consistent with previous academic years.

The cabinet also reviewed a report on progress-toward-degree waivers filed during the 2008 fall term for baseball student-athletes. Of the 27 waivers submitted, 19 have been conditionally approved contingent on the student-athletes following established, individualized academic-recovery plans for the fall term. Further, conditional approval requires a student-athlete to pass all of his fall courses with grades that would allow the courses to be degree applicable.

After receiving a presentation on the current progress-toward-degree waiver decision criteria and an update on a new electronic case management system under development, the cabinet directed the staff to continue to develop a procedure to consider a student-athlete's high school academic information and previous initial-eligibility waivers in the review of progress-toward-degree waivers, and to report back at the cabinet's next meeting.

Finally, the cabinet charged the staff liaisons to continue to discuss with the staff team supporting the Subcommittee for Legislative Relief the appropriate avenue for appeal of waivers related to the division's transfer legislation, noting that many requests for waivers of the transfer residence requirement contain significant academic considerations (e.g., transferrable credit hours, satisfying progress-toward-degree requirements).

**j.** **Core-Course Review Appeals.** The cabinet approved revisions to the NCAA High School Review Committee policies and procedures as recommended by the

High School Review Committee to grant the committee the authority to hear appeals of core-course decisions. This will result in the dissolution of the NCAA Core-Course Ad Hoc Committee. The cabinet noted these policies also must be approved by the NCAA Division II Academic Requirements Committee and will be distributed once that action has been taken.

***KEY ITEMS.***

1. **Data-Driven Legislation and Policy Development.** The cabinet emphasized the importance of data-driven decision-making as the basis for cabinet legislation and policy development. As such, the collection of data regarding the academic performance of 2-4 transfers and student-athletes certified by the early certification process is critical and necessary. Therefore, the cabinet strongly supports Proposal Nos. 2008-75 and 2008-77 (as amended by Proposal No. 2008-77-1).

2. **Nontraditional Coursework.** The cabinet unanimously supports Proposal No. 2008-32-B, which would permit student-athletes to use nontraditional courses to meet up to 50 percent of the full-time enrollment requirement. The cabinet noted the conditions outlined in proposal offer guidance to institutions seeking to ensure student-athletes receive quality instruction through nontraditional course delivery. In addition, the cabinet will distribute a document produced by N4A to assist institutions in the monitoring of nontraditional course enrollment by student-athletes.

3. **Facilitating Learning and Achieving Graduation (FLAG).** The cabinet endorsed the conceptual framework presented by the working group examining issues pertaining to academic risk. FLAG is an optional management system that will enable member institutions to determine each student-athlete's potential barriers to graduation, match support services to address each student-athlete's risk, and evaluate the overall effectiveness of institutional and athletics academic support and life skills programming. The cabinet requested further development of the system within existing NCAA Web-based programs, such as the APP. Progress reports, programming previews, results of pilot studies and training and outreach updates will be reported to the cabinet periodically.

*Cabinet Chair: Carolyn Callahan, University of Virginia, Atlantic Coast Conference*
*Cabinet Liaisons: Matt Burgemeister, Academic and Membership Affairs*
*Julie Cromer, Academic and Membership Affairs*
*Diane Dickman, Academic and Membership Affairs*