# REPORT OF THE NCAA DIVISION III MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

***ACTION ITEMS*.**

## 1. Legislative Items.

- **Noncontroversial Legislation – Reclassifying Institutions -- Exploratory Year.**

(1) Recommendation. Approve in concept noncontroversial legislation that requires institutions interested in reclassifying to Division III to complete an exploratory year prior to making application to the Division III reclassification program.

(2) Effective Date. May 15, 2010, for institutions that submit an intent to reclassify on or after May 15, 2010.

(3) Rationale. Reclassifying institutions are currently not required to complete an exploratory year prior to making application to reclassify. These institutions may make application for Division III and be accepted to the Division III reclassification process without ever receiving formal education about the division, its structure, rules and bylaws. As a result, reclassifying institutions may commit less time to studying Division III and its potential membership in the division than their provisional counterparts prior to shifting divisional affiliation. The committee noted reclassifying institutions are not well served by the shorter timetable and may face compliance challenges when they are required to meet Division III rules and bylaws as soon as they enter the reclassification process.

For example, under the current process a reclassifying institution could apply for Division III membership in May 2010, be accepted and commence the reclassification process by September 2010. Institutions in this situation must understand Division III rules and implement them well before May 2010 in order to be compliant by September 2010. For instance, an institution seeking reclassification for the 2010-11 academic year should not send athletically related financial aid award letters to incoming student-athletes during the 2009-10 academic year, yet many times these institutions are not aware because they have not received Division III specific education until they informally inquire or read information on the NCAA Web site.

(4) Estimated Budget Impact. None.

(5) Student-Athlete Impact. None.

**2. Nonlegislative Items.**

**a. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Waiver Request.**

(1) Recommendation. Deny the waiver request for Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute to allow a transfer student-athlete in men's ice hockey, which is a Division I sport at the institution, to practice during the 2009-10 academic year and not use a season of participation.

(2) Effective Date. Immediate.

(3) Rationale. The NCAA Division III Membership Committee reviewed a waiver request from Rensselaer and noted that as a Division III institution that sponsors a Division I sport, the institution is required to apply the rules of both divisions or the more stringent rule if both divisions have a rule concerning the same issue per NCAA Division III Bylaw 20.7.1.1 (Division III application). Rensselaer filed a similar waiver two years earlier on behalf of a different student-athlete. That waiver was approved due to lack of institutional knowledge and lack of advisement when recruiting the student-athlete. However, when that decision was issued, the institution was notified in writing that future waivers of this type would not be considered. The institution was instructed to educate men's ice hockey transfer student-athletes about the unique status of the institution. The committee also noted the student-athlete in this particular case was not academically eligible at the previous institution.

(4) Estimated Budget Impact. None.

(5) Student-Athlete Impact. None.

**b. East Texas Baptist University – Sports-Sponsorship Waiver Request.**

(1) Recommendation. To accept the sports-sponsorship waiver request from East Texas Baptist University. Specifically, the institution will sponsor five sports for males and five sports for females during the 2010-11 academic year, despite having a full-time undergraduate enrollment greater than 1,000 which would require sponsorship of six sports for each gender.

(2) Effective Date. September 1, 2010 – September 1, 2011.

(3) Rationale. The committee noted the institution demonstrated its financial hardship and presented a thorough plan for compliance with sports-

sponsorship requirements by the 2011-12 academic year.

(4) Budget Impact. This will provide financial relief to the institution.

(5) Student-Athlete Impact. None.

***INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.***

1. **Provisional/Reclassifying Institutions Do Not Count for Automatic Qualification Purposes**. The NCAA Division III Championships Committee sought feedback from the Membership Committee related to counting provisional institutions toward conference membership totals during provisional year three and year four for purposes of the two-year automatic qualification waiting period. The Championships Committee requested the Membership Committee consider whether granting these types of waivers would serve as an incentive for provisional institutions to adhere to Division III rules. The Championships Committee also requested clarity on what impact granting waivers of this nature may have. The Membership Committee noted that provisional institutions must follow Division III legislation when they commence with the provisional program and should adhere to those rules each of the four provisional years. Committee discussion also focused on the fact that provisional institutions are not guaranteed to become active members and are often times held back and asked to repeat provisional years. As a result, the committee agreed provisional institutions should not be counted toward conference membership needed for a conference to begin its two-year automatic qualification waiting period.

2. **Provisional/Reclassifying Institutions Convention Education Session**. The committee requires provisional and reclassifying institutions attend an education session at the NCAA Convention. The committee recognized this year's year-one institutions are provided a different educational program than the other three classes. The committee also noted provisional and reclassifying institutions seek networking opportunities and a chance to speak with others about best practices and policies and procedures. As such, this year's Convention session will be an informal networking opportunity for provisional institutions to discuss their challenges and share information with their peers. The institutions in the program will not provide a formal review of program requirements.

3. **Provisional/Reclassifying Institutions - Convention Attendance Waivers.** Provisional and reclassifying institutions are required to attend a provisional/reclassifying educational session at Convention as well as the NCAA Division III business session. Birmingham-Southern College, a year-three reclassifying institution, requested the senior woman

administrator attend the provisional and reclassifying education session in lieu of the director of athletics. The institution cited pressing conference business that will occur simultaneously. The institution also noted the senior woman administrator will report back to the director of athletics. The committee approved Birmingham-Southern's waiver request. The committee also reviewed a waiver request from La Sierra University, a year-one provisional institution. The institution requested relief from the business session attendance requirement due to religious conflict. The institution and its staff do not conduct business on Saturdays in accordance with their religion. The institution noted that it will send a number of institutional staff to this year's Convention and will attend all events except those held on Saturday. The committee approved La Sierra's waiver request and cited case precedent.

4. **Provisional/Reclassifying Year-One and Year-Two Campus Visits**. The committee took year-one and year-two campus visits to the following institutions: Berry College; State University of New York at Cobleskill; Covenant College; La Sierra; Penn State University, Abington; and Spalding University. The committee's agenda included educating campus leadership and administration about institutional control, cultivating an atmosphere of compliance and Division III requirements. Committee members and NCAA staff also provided a comprehensive review of Division III rules for coaching staff.

5. **Institutional Self-Study Guide Audit**. The committee completed the 2009-10 Institutional Self-Study Guide (ISSG) audit. All 10 audited institutions were found in compliance with broad-based participation and complete action plans. The committee noted the ISSG is a best practices document and institutions may satisfy Division III requirements and best practices in a variety of different ways, yet the committee also offered feedback geared toward enhancing institutional athletics departments.

*Committee Chair:* *Mark Majeski, Willamette University*
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