

May 15, 2014



Dr. Nathan Hatch  
Division I Board Steering Committee on Governance  
National Collegiate Athletic Association  
P.O. Box 6222  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206-6222

Dear Dr. Hatch:

The American Athletic Conference appreciates the opportunity to address various issues and concerns arising from the Steering Committee's draft governance redesign document. Although we will have a fuller response after our May conference spring meeting that will, among other things, address each of the questions contained in the governance model review update of May 1, this letter responds to your request for comments on the Board composition item in which the Steering Committee asked if there should be any changes to the recommended model that allocates permanent Board seats to all ten FBS conferences. Our Conference feels very strongly that this is a critical issue that warrants an immediate response.

We strongly support the Steering Committee's vision for the new Board composition, which includes all ten FBS conferences retaining their seats on the Board. To take away seats that our group of five conferences has historically and justifiably held would defeat the purpose of the NCAA governance redesign process. We would, in this instance, be the only group which would have seats taken away, and that has not been the spirit of the governance discussions.

Please permit us to outline and describe the many powerful and convincing reasons for affording our FBS conferences these seats, reasons that have led to our possession of these seats historically. The first, and most compelling and critical, rationale is that we all play FBS football. This fact alone is a key differentiator and places us in alignment with the five "equity" conferences. All FBS institutions are subject to higher membership requirements that require an increased commitment across the full spectrum of their athletics programs, not just in football (See Bylaw 20.9.9).

Like the equity conferences, our conference and the other four conferences in our group can cite a range of items that distinguishes us from the majority of FCS and Division I conferences. These differences include the size of our budgets, our overall revenues, our spending per student-athlete, the level of our investment on infrastructure and other capital investment, our

stadium sizes, our television exposure, our success in football and basketball, our bowl participation, and our regular season scheduling, among others.

As winners of BCS bowl games and national championships in men's and women's basketball, including most recently the University of Central Florida's victory in the 2014 Fiesta Bowl and the University of Connecticut men's and women's 2014 NCAA Division I basketball championships, our conferences are in the public spotlight in football and basketball, and the issues we face are similar to the equity conferences. Elite athletes compete for our institutions at the highest levels in football and basketball, and as a result our successful athletic programs are subject to the intense public scrutiny that the equity conferences receive as well as the same legal challenges and unionization risks.

As a significant component, together with the equity conferences, of FBS football, which has full representation on the Board, we also are signatories to the College Football Playoff Agreement, which creates significant contractual ties and relationships among the FBS membership. We also meet periodically with the equity FBS group, and our groups have many common interests and similar public influence.

In light of the foregoing, we do not feel it is accurate or positive to portray the conference landscape as five equity conferences and the other 27. As mentioned, we comprise half of FBS football. There are ten FBS conferences and 22 FCS and Division I conferences, and that is the distinction that should be made when depicting the collegiate conference landscape. That the five equity conferences will, in the proposed new governance model, have autonomy to pass certain kinds of permissive legislation does not change the fact that all ten FBS conferences share an important role and a bond in NCAA governance matters.

It is also clear that our group would suffer serious economic harm and other collateral damage if we were to lose Board seats that we have held since adoption of the Board structure in 1996. Such a disenfranchisement would create a de facto fourth division, which the Steering Committee eschewed, and would harm our branding and our ability to compete at the highest levels of FBS football and nationally in basketball. Our schools spend at a higher level than the majority of FCS and Division I schools and have made significant investments in their facilities and athletic programs that would be seriously undermined and jeopardized by the loss of our Board seats. Over time, the disenfranchisement would increase for our institutions and student-athletes, which would be detrimental to intercollegiate athletics and could result in a predicament similar to what exists now in our governance system.

The Steering Committee's report clearly demonstrates that the Committee has not been interested in depriving our five FBS conferences of the Board representation that we have historically held and which we should continue to hold in view of our group's position in the collegiate landscape.

We appreciate the excellent work that the Steering Committee and full Board have done in the governance redesign process, and we look forward to a successful NCAA restructuring that will serve the needs of our student-athletes and our institutions in the challenging but promising years to come.

Sincerely,



Dr. R. Gerald Turner  
President, Southern Methodist University  
Chair of the American Athletic Conference  
Board of Directors



Michael L. Aresco  
Commissioner, American Athletic  
Conference

cc: NCAA Board Steering Committee  
NCAA Board of Directors  
Mark Emmert, President, NCAA  
American Athletic Conference Presidents  
American Athletic Conference Directors of Athletics  
Jim Isch, Chief Operating Officer, NCAA  
Donald Remy, Executive Vice President of Law, Policy and Governance  
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David Berst, Vice President for Division I, NCAA  
Jean Frankel, President, Ideas for Action  
Jackie Campbell, Director of Division I, NCAA  
Britton Banowsky, Commissioner, Conference USA  
Jon Steinbrecher, Commissioner, Mid-American Conference  
Craig Thompson, Commissioner, Mountain West Conference  
Karl Benson, Commissioner, Sun Belt Conference