



**ON
THE
RISE**

STRATEGIC PLAN

LETTER FROM THE COMMISSIONER



Welcome to the Summit League and a new Strategic Plan!

With over 40 years of history and tradition as an NCAA Division I conference, the Summit League has a committed foundation of academic and athletic success. With this foundation, a strong membership, and strategic thinking, the League is well positioned to be a preeminent Division I conference for the next 40 years and beyond.

Students have been competing in athletics on college campuses for over a century. During that time, various inflection points and evolutions have occurred in intercollegiate athletics; challenges have continually come and been overcome along the way. Yet, what we face now is

arguably the most significant disruption in the history of college sports.

We must remain grounded in what has allowed college athletics to thrive for decades by maintaining a focus on student-athlete experience and opportunity. It is one of the best human-development models in the world. No other model provides academic, athletic, and holistic personal development opportunities like NCAA sports. Support of student-athletes across these three areas constitutes the core of college athletics and must be prioritized. Through a new Strategic Plan, the Summit League and its member institutions are committed to providing exceptional experiences and opportunities for our student-athletes, anchored in the ideals of what makes college athletics so great!

Now is the time for renewed focus and the Strategic Plan modernizes our approach and commitment to the future of the League and intercollegiate athletics. A special thank you is due to College Sports Solutions, Planning Advisory Committee, Presidents Council, Joint Council, Summit League Leadership Team, and Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) for providing valuable input and perspectives throughout the Plan's creation.

With this Strategic Plan serving as our roadmap, I am confident that the Summit League and its member institutions will continue to reach greater heights in the years to come, as an NCAA Division I conference that is 'On The Rise'.

Sincerely,

Josh Fenton
Commissioner

MISSION

The Summit League promotes and supports member institutions dedicated to integrity in the development of student-athletes through exceptional experiences across academics and broad-based athletics.

VISION

To be a preeminent NCAA Division I conference in its commitment to academic achievement, broad-based competitive excellence, and holistic personal development for student-athletes.

VALUE STATEMENTS

The Summit League will...

- Act with Discipline & Integrity
- Be Bold & Innovative
- Celebrate & Promote Success
- Collaborate & Communicate Effectively
- Perpetuate a Culture of Respect & Belonging

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Summit League has a responsibility to...

- Make decisions guided by prioritizing student-athlete experiences and opportunities.
- Operate and act for the collective interests of all member institutions. Member institutions will have a similar obligation to promote and support the League.
- Work alongside other conferences to positively shape the future of college sports, ensuring a cocurricular approach to athletics and academics is at the core.



LEAGUE OVERVIEW

The Summit League has been a proud NCAA Division I member for over 40 years. The League is comprised of nine member institutions – six public and three private – with a combined enrollment of approximately 100,000 students, and more than 3,000 student-athletes competing in 19 championship sports. Under the Basic Carnegie Classification, the Summit League is comprised of eight Doctoral Universities and one Master's College & University. The average institutional endowment is over \$300M. Five member institutions are in the top 73 national media markets, including two in the top 16. Summit League universities connect with approximately 13M people across their geographic footprints.

The Summit League has produced 15 NCAA National Champions, more than 140 All-Americans and 110 Academic All-Americans, and numerous student-athletes who compete at the highest professional level in their respective sports.

Since the 2015-16 season, the Summit League has produced two national postseason team tournament champions in women's basketball (WNIT), an NCAA Men's Soccer College Cup semifinal appearance, a Men's College World Series appearance, a trio of Sweet 16 appearances across men's and women's basketball, and eight individual NCAA Champions. This level of success also carries into the classroom. Summit League student-athletes have earned an average cumulative GPA of 3.41 over the past five years. Thirty Summit League teams achieved perfect NCAA Academic Progress Rates (APR) in the most recently released figures.

MEMBER INSTITUTIONS



University of
Denver



University of
Missouri-Kansas City



North Dakota
State University



University of
North Dakota



University of
Nebraska Omaha



Oral Roberts
University



University of
St. Thomas



University of
South Dakota



South Dakota
State University

SPONSORED SPORTS

Men's Sponsored Sports

| | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Baseball | Soccer |
| Basketball | Swimming & Diving |
| Cross Country | Tennis |
| Golf | Track & Field |

Women's Sponsored Sports

| | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Basketball | Swimming & Diving |
| Cross Country | Tennis |
| Golf | Track & Field |
| Soccer | Volleyball |
| Softball | |

PLANNING PROCESS

Since the Fall of 2022, the Summit League has engaged in a comprehensive strategic planning process, wherein input was solicited and received from university and athletics leaders across all member institutions. The League's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) was also consulted throughout the process. An appointed Strategic Planning Advisory Committee, composed of leaders from member institutions (President/Chancellor, Athletics Director, Senior Woman Administrator, and Faculty Athletics Representative), provided valuable feedback, guidance, and leadership in the Plan's creation, and was mindful of the unique and unprecedented times that currently exist within college sports. Finally, the Summit League's Leadership Team also contributed greatly to the Plan's development. The final draft of the Strategic Plan was reviewed by the Joint Council prior to being approved by the Presidents Council.

The League enlisted the assistance of College Sports Solutions (CSS) to help manage the overall planning process. CSS conducted more than 40 interviews with institutional and League office leaders, staff, and constituents. The Plan is reflective of the consensus feedback and insight regarding future opportunities that were gleaned from those interviews.

This resulting Plan sets forth five overarching Strategic Priorities that identify the League's greatest areas of focus for the future. This document outlines those Priorities along with associated goals.

In addition to this document, an internal 'tracking document' has been created, which assigns responsibility to individuals or groups for each goal, with acknowledgement of the potential financial resources needed, timeline for completion, status of each goal, and the measurements of success. The Summit League Leadership Team will work closely with member institutions on the advancement and completion of each goal.

AS YOU REVIEW THE PLAN



STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES

1

Enrich Student-Athlete Opportunity & Experience

2

Elevate League Competitive Excellence

3

Grow Engagement & Activation of League Diversity, Equity, and Belonging

4

Build the League Brand

5

Enhance Membership Value





1

Enrich Student-Athlete Opportunity & Experience

Goals

- 1. Student-Athlete Voice in Governance:** Amplify the voice of and educate League student-athletes on league and national issues impacting their experiences through greater involvement in League governance.
 - 2. League Consistency in NCAA Legislative Requirements Impacting Student-Athletes:** Build and implement strategies for League involvement to ensure consistency of all members with NCAA legislative requirements (where applicable) that impact student-athlete experiences.
 - 3. Mental Health:** Develop mental health education programming and awareness initiatives to complement institutional work that will impact all student-athletes.
 - 4. Leadership Development:** In collaboration with the SAAC, develop and implement League-sponsored leadership development, holistic well-being, and community engagement opportunities for student-athletes.
 - 5. Championship Experience:** Conduct an audit, including the feedback of student-athletes, and implement strategies based on audit results to elevate League championships, ensuring the prioritization of gender equity, consistent operational/facility standards, and optimizing other important student-athlete experiential items.
 - 6. Academic Performance:** Develop a platform where academic best practices of member institutions can be shared with all League members, including staff management, at-risk & transfer student support, and other items impacting academic performance of student-athletes.
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2

Elevate League Competitive Excellence

Goals

- 1. Basketball Excellence:** Implement a comprehensive Basketball Success Plan (men's and women's basketball) to elevate the overall national competitiveness of the League, defined as finishing annually in the top 50% of all Division I conferences, using the NCAA's NET rankings (or other most current applicable metric).
 - Increasing institutional investments that correlate to competitive success.
 - Creating data-informed non-conference and conference scheduling strategies.
 - Activating a Basketball Student-Athlete Engagement Group.
 - Developing basketball marketing and media strategies to build exposure.
 - Enhancing the conference basketball championships.
 - 2. All-Sport Excellence:** Engage sport committees and student-athletes in all League-sponsored sports to develop two to three sport-specific goals focused on enhancing overall competitiveness and student-athlete experience, along with an appropriate metric threshold to benchmark achieving higher success.
 - 3. Sport Sponsorship:** Create and execute a plan to solidify existing and assess new sport sponsorship opportunities that will add value to the League.
 - 4. Officiating:** Develop a League plan that supports national officiating efforts and has a positive impact across the League's geographic footprint to grow the officiating population in all sports.
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3

Grow Engagement & Activation of League Diversity, Equity, and Belonging

Goals

- 1. Awareness & Advocacy:** Create a platform to provide awareness campaigns and advocacy opportunities across the League to complement and align with institutional initiatives.
 - 2. Equity:** Conduct an equity review of League office programming, policies, and championship experiences. Implement recommendations to ensure equitable experiences across all League operations.
 - 3. Institutional Collaboration:** Conduct an annual League survey to collect data useful for member institutions and create a forum by which those institutions can incorporate best practices and collaborate on campus initiatives impacting student-athletes.
 - 4. Hiring Practices:** Review League policy on hiring practices to ensure equity and determine what adjustments, if any, are needed to create a more inclusive hiring process for League staff.
 - 5. NCAA Attestation Conference Framework:** Create a report outlining past and future League initiatives to meet the NCAA's conference attestation requirement.
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4

Build the League Brand

Goals

- 1. League Brand:** Develop and follow a process to reinvent the League brand, including the review of marks/logos/name and creation of a brand strategy to drive greater awareness, equity, and sentiment among League stakeholders and the public.
 - 2. Fan Engagement & Activation:** Create and implement a fan engagement and activation plan, inclusive of all media avenues, unique content, intriguing matchups, noteworthy accomplishments, and modern technologies to increase the League's profile, revenue opportunities, and fan affinity.
 - 3. Media Rights:** Work with the League's linear broadcast and streaming partners to maximize revenue and exposure while properly positioning for future opportunities.
 - 4. Digital Production Standards:** With the goal of creating consistency and elevating the League brand, implement digital production standards in the League office and on each member campus to meet approved requirements across all streaming broadcasts.
 - 5. Revenue Generation:** Expand existing League revenue sources and seek new opportunities to support member and League initiatives, along with increasing membership distributions.
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Enhance Membership Value

Goals

1. **Financial Policy:** Study, strengthen, and codify the League policies and procedures to improve financial operating efficiency.

2. **Strategic Priorities Fund:** Create a Strategic Priorities Fund and establish guiding principles and a process by which the Fund resources are allocated to identified League initiatives.

3. **Compliance Service:** Collect feedback from the member institutions on how compliance-related information is disseminated to membership constituents and implement any recommended changes to the process with the goal of increased efficiency.

4. **Conference Partnerships:** Study and seek partnerships and alliances with like-minded conferences that add value to the League.

5. **Governance Structure:** Fully assess the League governance structure, including bylaws and sport operating policies, with the goal of modernizing and creating efficient and effective operations among and with the League and its members.

6. **League Communication Model:** Build a systematic, consistent, and meaningful communication approach from the League staff to member institution constituents to ensure information is properly conveyed.

7. **Sports Wagering:** Develop a plan to educate and protect student-athletes, institutional constituents, and League-affiliated parties related to sports wagering.

8. **League Data Repository:** Conduct a feasibility assessment to create a dashboard with League membership data that can be shared across institutions to assist with benchmarking and future decision-making.



**ON
THE
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**THE
SUMMIT
LEAGUE™**

