

**BLUEPRINT FOR A
NEW LEVEL OF COMPETITIVE FOOTBALL
IN THE NCAA DIVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE**
(Revised April 1, 2006)

Background.

At their April 2005 meetings, the Division II Management Council and Division II Presidents Council approved the creation of a Division II Football Task Force to study a possible new model for football within the NCAA structure. The following composition was approved, which includes (1) representatives from each Division II football playing conference; (2) representatives from the Division II Management Council (including the chair); (3) chair of the Football Committee; (4) chair of the Membership Committee; (5) chair of the Championships Committee; (6) a representative for independent institutions in the sport of football; and (7) representatives from the Division II Collegiate Commissioners Association and the Division II Athletics Directors Association. The group also received assistance from Grant Teaff, executive director of the American Football Coaches Association, who served as an ex officio member to the task force.

- Charles Ambrose, president, Pfeiffer University (ex-officio, Presidents Council chair)
- Barry Blizzard, commissioner, West Virginia Intercollegiate Athletic Conference
- Bob Boeriger, director of athletics, Northwest Missouri State University
- Tom Brown, commissioner, Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletics Conference
- Bob Burke, director of athletics, American International College
- Cory Cangelosi, student-athlete, Gulf South Conference
- Paul Engelmann, faculty athletics representative, Central Missouri State University (ex-officio)
- Lynda Goodrich, director of athletics, Western Washington University
- Larry Holstad, director of athletics, Winona State University
- Kathryn A. Martin, chancellor, University of Minnesota Duluth (Presidents Council representative)
- Ed Matejkovic, director of athletics, West Chester University of Pennsylvania
- Jerry McGee, president, Wingate University (task force chair)
- Jeff McLeod, assistant commissioner, Central Intercollegiate Athletics Association
- Jon McBride, director of athletics, University of Nebraska at Kearney
- Gwen Reeves, director of athletics, Fort Valley State University
- Herb Reinhard, director of athletics, Valdosta State University
- Roger Thomas, commissioner, North Central Conference
- Jill Willson, director of athletics, Texas A&M University, Kingsville (Management Council chair)

Challenge.

The core question facing the task force is what can be done to produce more competitive equity in college football. Division II permits up to 36 financial aid equivalencies in football, but many institutions offer few or no scholarships in the sport.

While no firm line can be drawn between the number of equivalencies offered and a program's ability to compete on a national level, only highly funded programs have reached the last four Division II national championship games.

At the 2005 NCAA Convention, the Pennsylvania State and Rocky Mountain Athletic Conferences sponsored legislation to reduce the number of equivalencies from 36 to 24, the approximate scholarship average for Division II football programs.

Some opponents of the measure, which was defeated, said the legislation was inappropriate because it would take existing financial aid away from a large number of student-athletes. However, many administrators also acknowledged the bigger issue, which is that the current system for NCAA football offers little flexibility for football classification, and the current range of scholarship offerings in Division II impacts competitiveness in the national playoffs.

Presidents from the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference portrayed football as being in an endangered state. One chancellor said: "At some point, the question is not 'Do I reduce scholarships,' but 'Do I do this anymore?'" A president added that the real question was whether many institutions would have to close the doors on their football programs.

In April 2005, the Division II Presidents Council established the Football Task Force to examine what can be done to enhance competitive equity, improve the student-athlete experience in football and possibly reduce the number of reclassifications from Division II to Division I for the sport of football. Further, the task force is to study what can be done to preserve a competitive level of football among all schools in Division II.

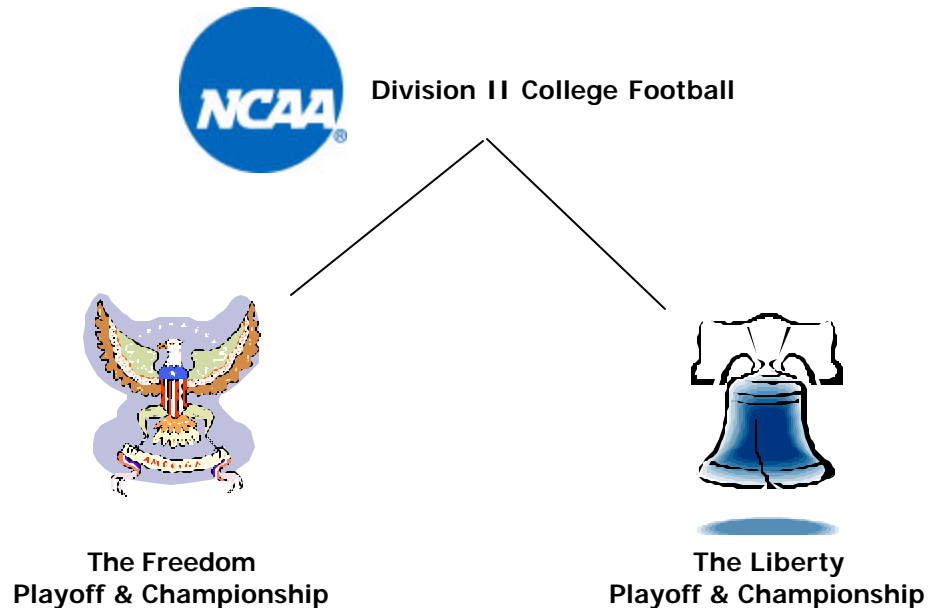
Possible Model.

[Please note that names for championships noted below are merely suggestions and are open to discussion and changes. The key issue for the task force's consideration is the structure suggested by this model.]

The Division II membership should consider establishing a new "NCAA Division II College Football" structure. The new structure will offer two national championships. Institutions and/or conferences would select from two different championships classifications, based on set criteria (e.g., total football equivalencies offered by the school). The NCAA Freedom Football Championship could be established for upper level scholarship programs, and the NCAA Liberty Football Championship could be established for lower level scholarship programs.

Both national championships should be conducted on the same weekend and, preferably, at the same location. Perhaps a community could create an NCAA Division II College Football Festival for these two national championships. All Division II rules and regulations (e.g., recruiting, academic requirements, playing and practice seasons) shall be the same for both

football championships. The only exception is for the total maximum financial-aid equivalencies that would be permitted in each championship.



Preliminary Recommendations.

1. **Administration.** Based on recent Executive Committee policy decisions, Division II should probably consider how to maintain a single Division II football committee that would be responsible for both championships.
2. **Funding.** The current Division II football annual budget would need to support two football national championships.
3. **Bracket Sizes.** It is very unlikely that Division II will be able to expand beyond the current 24 postseason opportunities in football. Therefore, the 24 spots would be split between the two championships (16-8 or 12-12) based on the number of teams competing in each championship.
4. **Declaration.** Conferences would select the championship in which member schools would compete. Some schools in current football conferences might select to compete for a different championship than other conference members, either as an independent or affiliated in a different football conference. Conferences would need to provide a three-year notification if a change in championship in which the conference would compete is desired.
5. **Television.** The current Division II relationship with ESPN and the prime Division II television time block that currently exists should be protected for Division II football.
6. **Festival.** A football festival (e.g., Friday p.m. and Saturday p.m.) could be considered for these two championships (perhaps every three-four years).

7. **Equivalency Differences.** The task force discussed various equivalency limits for the two championships levels. The equivalency limits for the two championships could be: (1) Freedom Football Championship is a maximum of 36 equivalencies and the (2) Liberty Football Championship is for schools sponsoring football with a maximum of 18 or 20 equivalencies. A championship below 20 equivalencies will provide a national championship opportunity to many schools that believe the current structure does not. These equivalency limit divisions are being presented for membership discussion, and the task force will continue to consider rationale for other limitations.