



## STRATEGIC POSITIONING INITIATIVE

### Welcome & Greetings

Greetings again from the Division II Presidents Council. I hope your academic year ended well and that your summer will be enjoyable. This memo is the second monthly update on the Division II strategic positioning initiative. This version of the update will provide you with information about the results from the Division II image survey, a summary of the Division II positioning platform that the Division II Presidents Council recently endorsed, and an update regarding the first meeting of the Division II Community Advisory Group. I hope you find this information helpful, and I encourage you to contact me or a representative of the Division II Presidents Council in your area if you have questions, suggestions or concerns.

### Survey Results

As I mentioned in the May update, the Division II Presidents Council was very pleased with the response to the online survey regarding the image of Division II.

The online quantitative research survey was launched in late March to test existing themes and ideas about Division II membership (e.g., balance) and to explore many new concepts about the attributes for Division II. The Presidents Council surveyed three groups: (1) Division II campus and conference office personnel; (2) Division II student-athletes; and (3) the general public, screened to identify college sports fans.

Preliminary online survey results showed that approximately 4,100 surveys were completed. Of this total, the Division II membership completed approximately 1,250 surveys.

The research survey report is 70 pages long. The Presidents Council received the report in early June and discussed the findings during a teleconference June 19. One key finding is that Division II is strongly perceived by all audiences as fulfilling the NCAA's mission to "govern competition in a fair, safe, equitable and sportsmanlike manner and to integrate intercollegiate athletics into higher education so that the educational experience of the student-athlete is paramount." I encourage you to review the Executive Summary for the Division II Quantitative Research Report, which can be found on Page Nos. 6-8 of the report. You can access the report by linking to it at the following Web address:

[http://www1.ncaa.org/membership/governance/division\\_II/strategic\\_positioning/research\\_report.pdf](http://www1.ncaa.org/membership/governance/division_II/strategic_positioning/research_report.pdf)

### Division II Positioning Platform

The Presidents Council has learned the following from the data we have gathered.

1. For Division II, "balance" is a commonly associated theme. However, it is more likely a supporting fact or attribute of the division and is not recommended as the strategic positioning for the division. The benefits derived from balancing academics and athletics are a more appropriate positioning and message to the general population and student-athletes. For the membership, these benefits should embody a philosophical approach to collegiate athletics for our division.
2. Division II does not appear to have a well understood positioning. Without a clear and consistent message, audiences are left to decide on their own what Division II means within the NCAA and college athletics. A proactive approach to creating a strategic position and message to key audiences will help alleviate misunderstandings about the division.
3. There is a clear opportunity to use student-athletes in helping develop and carry the message of the Division II experience. An endorsement from those who have first-hand experience with Division II athletics carries a legitimate and powerful message with other audiences.

The Presidents Council is building a brand strategy to articulate the strengths and key characteristics of Division II. Within the strategy, a brand communications platform is being developed that will incorporate a mission and positioning statement for Division II, key attributes and points of differentiation for key audiences. This platform will provide the membership of Division II with a common set of principles and talking points that will create consistency or "one voice" across Division II communications.

The following statement has been endorsed by the Division II Presidents Council as the strategic positioning statement for Division II. This is not our new theme or tag line. Rather, this is the definition of who we are, what we believe in and why we do the things we do. From this statement, all communication themes and strategies for our division will flow.

***Life in the Balance.** Higher education has lasting importance on an individual's future success. For this reason, the emphasis for the student-athlete experience in Division II is a comprehensive program of learning and development in a personal setting. The Division II approach provides growth opportunities through academic achievement, learning in*

*high-level athletic competition and development of positive societal attitudes in service to community. The balance and integration of these different areas of learning opportunity provide Division II student-athletes a path to graduation while cultivating a variety of skills and knowledge for life ahead.*

Presidents Council representatives will be contacting presidents and chancellors in their respective regions this fall to discuss this Division II positioning statement, to highlight the Division II attributes we have identified, to specify the Division II audiences we will target and to summarize future Division II communication strategies.

## **Division II Community Advisory Group**

As you might guess, our research data indicates that community is a key attribute for Division II. Division II has entered into a contract with Rich Luker, principal of the Luker Company, to facilitate discussions of the newly formed Division II Community Advisory Group and develop a tool that will assist Division II institutions enhance community based programs. Dr. Luker is recognized as one of the nation's best researchers in analyzing sport and leisure trends in American culture. Luker is best known for his creation of the ESPN Sports Poll, which began in 1994. In addition to forming the Leisure Intelligence Group in 2001, Dr. Luker is an associate professor of business in the Haab School of Business, Concordia University, and adjunct associate professor, Division of Kinesiology, University of Michigan.

Many of you may remember hearing Dr. Luker speak at last summer's Chancellors and Presidents Summit in Orlando. During the Summit, Luker suggested that many Division II institutions are better positioned than they might think, given the public's increasing appetite for "reality" entertainment. He believes that increased fan interest in minor league baseball serves as an effective model that Division II should emulate. Luker will serve as a presenter at a Division II education session at the 2007 NCAA Convention and will work with Division II over the next couple of years to develop a tool kit to help institutions strengthen the link between athletics programs and local communities.

The Division II Community Advisory Group, composed of 18 top Division II administrators (12 past or present Presidents and Management Council members, seven of whom have been or are currently a Council chair) and Dr. Luker, conducted its first meeting this month in Indianapolis. I attended this first meeting and can attest to the group's unwavering enthusiasm about building support for athletics and other institutional programs by strengthening relationships with communities through a coordinated national effort.

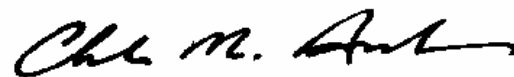
The timeline for the development of this initiative continues to progress. Looking to the future, the strategic positioning and development phase will begin at the Division II Management Council meeting July 17 in Dallas, when the Council will review the strategic positioning initiatives and discuss the next steps in creating a 'new look' for Division II. The Presidents Council will consider final strategic positioning recommendations at its August 2 meeting.

Phase III, which is the implementation phase, will begin this fall when Rich Luker begins to create a Division II community toolkit to help Division II schools enhance community-based programs. The "new look" (theme, key attributes, etc.) for Division II will be unveiled at the 2006 Fall Sports Festival in Pensacola November 14-20.

## **NCAA Convention**

The 2007 NCAA Convention in Orlando (January 6-8) will be the location for the membership demonstration of the tools that Dr. Luker and the Community Advisory Group are developing. Division II chancellors and presidents will help launch the new Division II strategic position during their meeting and luncheon, also to be held during the Convention Sunday, January 7. The Presidents Council recognizes that these dates conflict this year with the annual meeting of the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) in Arizona. The NCAA regrets this conflict, but I am happy to note that this conflict does not appear in future schedules. The NCAA is committed to exploring all realistic options to minimize this conflict and is working with the CIC staff to develop some alternatives.

I hope this update has been helpful. Again, feel free to contact me or any Presidents Council representative listed below if you have any questions about this Division II initiative.



Charles M. Ambrose  
President, Pfeiffer University

## **Division II Presidents Council Representatives**

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