

November 29, 2004

TO: The Presidents and Chief Executive Officers of Division III  
FROM: The College Sports Project Coordinating Committee  
SUBJECT: Report and Invitation

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Today, intercollegiate athletics plays a more prominent role at the colleges and universities in Division III than ever before in our history. In spite of differences of opinion reflecting the diverse missions and circumstances of more than 400 member institutions, there is widespread agreement that a well-administered intercollegiate program enhances the undergraduate experience, and that athletic competition provides valuable, life-long lessons for student athletes. The willingness to see athletes as students first remains Division III's defining educational philosophy. The question before us is how can we preserve and strengthen this core identity at a time when intercollegiate athletics, and sports in general, are rapidly moving toward increased specialization and intensification.

The College Sports Project's (CSP) creation in June 2003 was a response to some worrisome trends—the growth in season length, increased emphasis on nontraditional seasons, expanding numbers of contests, and the powerful allure of competing for national championships as the yardstick measuring success—all of which, we believe, threaten institutions' educational values.<sup>1</sup> We expressed concern that on some campuses the increasing intensification of the athletic “arms race” had contributed to a widening “academic-athletic divide” that separated student athletes from their classmates, and that distanced athletic administrators and coaches from faculty colleagues. Since it was unclear how widespread such concerns were across Division III, we initiated a yearlong cycle of conversations, and convened a series of small meetings and working groups to deepen our understanding of these issues across diverse institutions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The College Sports Project's (CSP) creation paralleled the publication of William G. Bowen and Sarah A. Levin's *Reclaiming the Game: College Sports and Educational Values* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003). Our initial focus drew heavily upon the data and experiences of the 33 selective institutions studied in *Reclaiming the Game*, as well as on the findings in James Shulman and William G. Bowen's earlier study, *The Game of Life: College Sports and Educational Values* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

In April 2004, following scores of conversations with presidents, provosts, athletic directors, coaches and faculty members, CSP hosted a meeting of 18 presidents whose institutions reflect the geographic and cultural diversity of Division III. We identified two critical objectives—ensuring the “representativeness” of all students (especially with respect to academic outcomes), and integrating coaches and athletic directors into the mainstream of campus life—that, if implemented and sustained, would reaffirm Division III’s core identity and commitment to educational values.

Two committees were constituted in each subject area: working groups (composed of presidents, athletic directors, chief academic officers, coaches and faculty members) that would study the issues and propose practical steps for moving forward, and presidential advisory groups that would respond to the ideas of the working groups and serve as sounding boards. The initial meetings of the representativeness and integration working groups took place in early summer 2004, when the two working groups held separate meetings aimed at program development. In late October each working and advisory group met to review a draft report and to make further recommendations.<sup>3</sup>

The report we share with you today embodies a collaborative effort on the part of more than 30 dedicated, conscientious, and generous colleagues whose opinions and views represent a broad range of Division III institutions. Their wisdom and insight inform the document, and their negotiating and leadership skills attest to their belief that achieving meaningful athletic reform is more important than an occasional difference of opinion. We share their conviction that this report represents more than a “one size fits all” approach, and that its recommendations have the potential of attracting substantial support across Division III, but there will have to be compromise and statesmanship along the way.

In reading the report, which we hope you will share with your athletic director, senior administrators, and faculty representatives, we ask that you take special note of the areas where future membership in CSP will require institutional action, such as data sharing

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<sup>2</sup> In the fall of 2003, CSP hosted two meetings in Chicago and New York and approximately 35 presidents or their representatives participated. The invitation list drew on institutions represented in the Bowen books, and on expressions of interest from presidents interested in being part of a reform conversation. NCAA Division III Vice President Dan Dutcher attended both meetings and he continues to play an invaluable role as a liaison and resource for CSP to the NCAA Management and Presidents Councils. In an effort to broaden the scope of these conversations, the CSP subsequently sent a letter to 230 college and university presidents from the public and private sectors, inviting their interest in joining a reform conversation. The invitation list reflected earlier expressions of interest, presidential participation in the two fall 2003 meetings, representation on the Division III Management and Presidents Councils, and a roll call analysis of institutional votes on the reform proposals presented at the 2004 NCAA Convention. We received positive responses from approximately 130 presidents and set about the task of identifying singularly important issues of common interest that would cut across the diversity of the Division.

<sup>3</sup> Members of the Integration and Representativeness working and advisory groups are identified in the report’s appendices.

