FROM THE EDITOR

I hope all of you have had a good summer, whether it involved a bit of rest, travel abroad, or a chance to catch up on scholarship you wanted to complete, or perhaps all of the above. This will be a trying year for many of us, including most state schools, where very substantial budget cuts have been imposed, even as many private schools continue to struggle with endowments that have been severely cramped by the problems with our economy. The good news is that we are all getting ready to launch a new school year, even though our belts have been considerably tightened. And the excitement of the fall sports season is already in the air.

We have several pieces for you this month. The first is by Ralph Bertrand, President of FARA, who attended the June meeting in Dallas of the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics (N4A). FARA shares with this group a strong interest in improving the academic well-being of our student-athletes, and Ralph’s report discusses several aspects of this that were examined during the N4A meeting.

Next we have companion pieces by Leo Munson, chair of the Division I Degree-Completion Consultants, and Ellen Summers, NCAA Librarian and NCAA liaison to the Division II Degree-Completion Awards Committee, who reports on the details of the Division II program. While there are significant differences between these programs, as will become clear when you read these two reports, both are focused on providing financial support to student-athletes who have exhausted their eligibility, but are reasonably close to completing their undergraduate degree. I am a member of the Division I consultants group, and have seen all the good it has done over the years. I strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with these fine programs if you are not already knowledgeable about them, and to use them to help student-athletes on your campus who are close to graduation but need a financial boost in order to complete their work.

The last piece is mine, reporting on the Division I Presidential Retreat held in Indianapolis August 9 and 10 under the leadership of NCAA President Mark Emmert. I had the good fortune to attend the meeting as FARA’s representative. Not
only was this a highly engaging meeting, with important issues in intercollegiate athletics being very frankly discussed, but it also is generating the opportunity for numerous significant, positive changes in intercollegiate athletics. I will have more to say in my piece.

Welcome to the new academic year, and to a new and enjoyable year of intercollegiate athletics.

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JUNE 2011 MEETING OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ACADEMIC ADVISORS FOR ATHLETICS

For those of you not familiar with the N4A (National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics), it is a diverse organization of tutors, academic advisors, faculty, life skills coordinators, psychologists, high school guidance counselors and athletic administrators from both two- and four-year institutions. The mission of the N4A is to provide educational services in order to better support and guide the personal development of student-athletes.

I attended the June 2011, N4A Convention in Dallas and was fortunate to be invited to serve on a panel to discuss the academic success of student-athletes and integrity in intercollegiate athletics. The panel included: John Nichols, Co-Chair of The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA); Jason Lanter, President of The Drake Group; Amy Perko, Executive Director of the Knight Commission; Tony Hernandez, President of the National Association for Athletics Compliance (NAAC); Dr. Richard Southall, Director of the College Sport Research Institute (CSRI), and Jennifer Strawley, NCAA Director of Academic and Membership Affairs. During the discussions there was a special emphasis on the problems associated with the academic success rate (GSR, APR), especially in basketball and football, the problems with monitoring online courses, the success of two-year transfers and proposed Division I legislation for incoming freshman. Although there was polite disagreement about the academic success of student-athletes and academic reform, it is clear that all organizations have the best interest of student-athletes in mind, although there are differences in how to best approach the issues.

Other highlights of the meetings included presentations on Academic Risk Assessment, updates on proposed Division I legislation regarding academic advising, and keynote addresses from Dr. Mark Emmert, President of the NCAA, and R. Gerald Turner, Co-Chair of the Knight Commission.

This was my first N4A meeting and I was impressed with the number of attendees and the content of the convention. It is clear that the N4A has very similar objectives to FARA in that they are dedicated to providing information, resources, and expertise to help ensure that student-athletes have the best academic and athletic experience at their respective institutions. The FARA – N4A connection is a good one and I hope that we can continue to develop and strengthen our relationship in the future.

Ralph Bertrand
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THE NCAA DIVISION I DEGREE-COMPLETION AWARD PROGRAM

Did you know that the NCAA supports former athletes who are no longer qualified to receive institutional aid?
For more than 20 years, the National Collegiate Athletic Association has distributed funds to former student-athletes who received athletics-related assistance at Division I institutions. Nearly 2,500 former student-athletes have received $18,000,000 since the program’s inception in the late 1980’s. The graduation rate for degree-completion recipients is 94 percent.

How does a former student-athlete become qualified?
The degree-completion program was created to financially help individuals who have exhausted the five years of athletics-related aid allowed by the NCAA. It is important to note that the student-athlete is not eligible for NCAA funding in the fifth year if the institution chooses not to fund the eligible student-athlete through their own sources. The program is not designed to supplant or augment local funding. Rather the program was created to allow the former student-athlete to complete their first undergraduate degree after NCAA defined institutional eligibility has lapsed.

In addition to the fifth year requirement, former student-athletes must have no more than 30 hours remaining in their undergraduate program and have the numerical capability of achieving the minimum grade-point average required by the institution for graduation. The individual must have received institution-related athletics aid although it is not necessary that they receive aid for all years of competition.

The NCAA Degree-Completion Award is competitive. Approximately 60 percent of the applicants receive awards. Attributes of a successful application include the number of terms required to graduate (fewer is better), the number of years absent from education (more is better), the financial condition of the applicant, the applicant’s grade-point average and the director of athletics’ assessment of probable graduation success. Neither the individual’s sport nor degree major is considered in the selection process.

What can the institution do to assist the former athlete?
Be aware of the program and stay in touch with qualified former student-athletes. Program information can be found at www.ncaa.org by searching Degree Completion. Online applications are made available in the spring with a submission deadline of late May for funding review of the following fall, winter and spring academic terms, and again in early fall with a late September deadline for winter, spring and summer term. The school will be asked to certify that the former student-athlete is at or within 30 hours of graduation, outline a course degree plan and verify that the individual did receive athletics-related aid.

What does the award cover?
Former student-athletes selected for the award will receive an amount equivalent to institutional tuition and fees for each academic term. In addition, they receive a book allowance based on the number of hours in which they are enrolled each term.

Leo W. Munson
Associate Provost
Texas Christian University
Chair, NCAA Division I Degree Completion Consultants

THE NCAA DIVISION II DEGREE-COMPLETION AWARD PROGRAM

The NCAA Division II Degree-Completion Award Program was established in 2001 as one of the Division II Academic Enhancement Initiatives. The purpose of the program is to provide deserving student-athletes financial assistance for them to complete their first baccalaureate degree.

To date, the program has awarded over $3 million to approximately 830 deserving student-athletes. Of those student-athletes who have received the award since its inception, 94 percent have
earned their undergraduate degree using this program.

Qualifications for the award are:

- Applicant shall be a student-athlete who has exhausted athletics eligibility at an active NCAA Division II institution within the past calendar year.
- Awards are limited to student-athletes during their first 10 semesters or 15 quarters of full-time collegiate attendance.
- Applicant shall not be participating in another intercollegiate sport during the period of the award.
- Applicant must have received athletics-related financial aid from the NCAA Division II member institution.
- Applicant must be within 32 semester or 48 quarter hours of completion of his or her first undergraduate degree at the completion of the spring term.
- Applicant must have a 2.50 cumulative grade-point average.
- Applicant shall not receive any athletics aid if awarded a Division II Degree-Completion Award.
- Applicant shall use the grant to complete undergraduate degree requirements from the Division II institution where the applicant last competed.

Selections are made by a committee of representatives from six NCAA Division II member institutions. On average, 42 percent of applicants are able to be funded and therefore the selection process is competitive and emphasizes the academic performance of the student-athlete. Other factors considered by the committee are financial circumstances, athletic achievement and involvement in campus and community activities.

The award value is determined by the lesser amount of the student-athlete’s athletics aid from his or her final year of eligibility; tuition for his or her remaining credits toward completing an undergraduate degree, or $6,000.

The application and additional information regarding the program can be found at www.ncaa.org. Applications for the upcoming academic year are available in February with a submission deadline the first Tuesday in April. Award selections occur in May.

Ellen L. Summers
Librarian/NCAA Division II Degree Completion Award Program Liaison
National Collegiate Athletic Association

DIVISION I PRESIDENTIAL RETREAT

Under the leadership of President Mark Emmert, the NCAA conducted a Division I Presidential Retreat August 9 and 10 in Indianapolis. Present at this retreat were more than fifty Division I presidents, representing all Division I subdivisions. They included the Division I Board of Directors, members of the Presidential Advisory Group, as well as other Division I presidents. Other groups were also represented, such as conference commissioners, athletics directors and faculty athletics representatives. I attended as the representative of FARA, and Jo Potuto attended representing the D1A FAR group. A number of NCAA staff were also present.

The group was convened by President Emmert for a frank discussion of key problems in intercollegiate athletics, with an eye toward formulating ways to deal with these problems effectively. There were presentations by several NCAA staff members. Important packets of data pertaining to these problems were also reviewed.

The three focal points for discussion were: academics, fiscal responsibility and integrity. It was quite clear that the presidents feel a sense of urgency, and plan to move quickly to address persistent problems in all three areas. In the area of academics, the perception was that, while there had been substantial gains during the past decade, a good deal still remains to be accomplished. In the area of fiscal responsibility, the data showed that there is a wide gap in the resources available not only across the entire membership of Division I, but also within the Football Bowl Subdivision, where the disparity is dramatic. In the area of integrity, there was considerable concern that the measures used to encourage institutional and individual integrity and compliance with the rules are often quite ineffective.

In response, the presidents decided to take a number of specific steps to address these problems. I refer you to the most recent issues of the NCAA News Direct Daily Update, where a number of reports have already appeared, but here I want to mention several particular items of importance.
The presidents plan to:

1. Establish a group to rewrite the NCAA Division I Manual focusing on significant issues, while removing trivial rules and unduly complicated minor regulations.

2. Revamp the NCAA penalty structure to contain several levels of violations, and not just the current two (secondary and major). These current levels are seen to be too simplistic, inarticulate, and ineffective.

3. Refocus the NCAA enforcement staff so that they may concentrate primarily on serious violations of the NCAA’s core principles, rather than on large number of violations of trivial rules.

4. Strengthen academic requirements for incoming freshmen, and for student athletes who transfer from two year institutions. Transfers from two year institutions present a very high rate of failure upon matriculation at a four year campus.

5. Increase academic standards for continuing student athletes, while making a particular team’s participation in its NCAA championship conditional upon its presenting an acceptable APR score in its most recent four year rolling average.

The Division I Board of Directors moved especially quickly on this last point at their meeting August 11. The Board of Directors voted unanimously to move the APR benchmark from 900 to 930, and to make eligibility for a team’s postseason competition contingent upon its meeting the 930 benchmark. The presidents directed the Committee on Academic Performance to work out the details for moving to this new APR benchmark, including a phase-in timeline for both the 930 APR and the accompanying penalty structure.

President Emmert and the Board of Directors will appoint several working groups to deal with various issues discussed during the retreat, with the expectation of moving as quickly as possible to the implementation of these new initiatives. These various initiatives discussed by the presidents have the potential to make major, meaningful changes in the profile of intercollegiate athletics. Clearly, the time to make significant strides toward solving a number of these persistent problems in intercollegiate athletics is now, and the changes could be historic.

We will follow these developments in subsequent issues of FARA Voice.

Alan J. Hauser
Appalachian State University
Editor, FARA Voice

DATES TO REMEMBER

FARA Annual Meeting and Symposium
November 10-12, 2011, San Diego

NCAA Scholarly Colloquium “NCAA Academic Reform: Progress, Problems and Prospects”
January 10-11, 2012, Indianapolis (To be held in conjunction with the NCAA National Convention)

NCAA Convention
January 11-14, 2012, Indianapolis

NCAA Regional Rules Seminar
May 14-18, 2012, Anaheim

NCAA Regional Rules Seminar
June 4-8, 2012, Atlanta
2011 Annual Meeting and Symposium
Tentative Schedule of Events

Thursday, November 10
9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Registration
9:30 – 11 a.m. Orientation Session – Open to All Attendees
11 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Lunch (on your own)
12:15 – 12:30 p.m. Opening remarks
12:30 – 1:30 p.m. Keynote Address (Dr. Cedric Dempsey)
1:30 – 2:15 p.m. FARA Survey Report
2:30 – 5 p.m. Academic Issues, FARA, Diversity and Inclusion and the Effect on APR/GSR Hot Topics
Division I
2:30 – 5 p.m. Economic Impact of Athletics at the Division II Level Partial Scholarship Model
Division II
2:30 – 5 p.m. Financial Dashboard Indicators What Do We Want from an FAR? Workshop on Position Description
Division III
6 – 6:30 p.m. Reception
6:30 – 8 p.m. Awards Dinner (honoring McKay and Byers Scholars and David Knight Award Winner)

Friday, November 11
7:30 – 10 a.m. Registration
Association-Wide
8:30 – 11:30 a.m. NCAA Scholarships Hot Topics from Divisions I, II and III GOALS
11:40 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. Luncheon/Keynote Speaker (Dr. Mark Emmert)
Division I
1 – 5 p.m. Men's Basketball Issues NCAA Legislative Review and Updates
Division II
1 – 5 p.m. Retirement Planning for FARs NCAA Legislative Review and Updates
Division III
1 – 5 p.m. NCAA Legislative Review and Update Governance Update Best Practices

Saturday, November 12
Association-Wide
7:45 – 8:30 a.m. Breakfast and Closing Remarks
Division I
8:30 a.m. – Noon Nuts and Bolts of Being an FAR Discontinued Sports (organized by D1A FARs; all Division I FARs are invited) Balancing the Conflict Between Compliance and Student-Athlete Well Being
Division II
8:30 a.m. – Noon Advanced Leadership Institute Nuts and Bolts of Being an FAR
Division III
8:30 a.m. – Noon Mistakes I Have Made