

REPORT OF THE NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL DISCUSSION GROUP

The NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Discussion Group submits the following report from its September 21, 2006, meeting:

1. INFORMATIONAL ITEM.

a. Goals and Objectives of the Discussion Group.

- (1) To grow women's basketball beyond its present status. The game of women's basketball is currently in a positive position, but future growth initiatives must be discussed and implemented in a timely fashion to ensure the continued growth of the game.
- (2) A "window" of growth opportunity is available for women's basketball and measurable and sustainable initiatives must be implemented.
- (3) Growth initiatives must serve as guideposts to the enhancement of women's basketball, both for regular-season competition and championship competition.

b. September 21 meeting objectives.

- (1) Continue to review and define identified growth initiatives so that the group can finalize its specific recommendations to advance the game of women's basketball at the next group meeting, approximately at the time of the 2007 Women's Final Four.
- (2) This group will forward its recommendations to the appropriate Division I governance bodies for the specific action.
- (3) Develop strategies to educate the membership about the initiatives that will impact the growth of Division I women's basketball.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP FINANCIAL MODEL.

The group received an update from the senior vice president for administration and chief financial officer regarding women's basketball revenue and expenses to assist in identifying potential revenue growth areas. During the course of this review, the group noted that focus should be placed on preliminary site attendance and revenue that can be generated with increased attendance.

3. **UPDATE ON DISCUSSIONS RELATED TO USE OF MALE PRACTICE PLAYERS.**

The group received an update on the ongoing examination in Division I regarding the use of male practice players and indicated general support for the continued use of male practice players in women's basketball. It was suggested that the governance structure could best approach this issue on a sport-by-sport basis.

4. **INITIATIVES.**

The discussion group reviewed the previously identified five critical growth initiatives for Division I women's basketball, developed a focused vision for each initiative and developed the following preliminary recommendations.

a. Initiative No. 1. Develop a marketing plan for women's basketball.

(1) Establish a funding program "to grow the game from the inside out and at a grass roots level." This program would include:

- Funding commitment from the NCAA national office to assist in activation of attendance goals.
- NCAA would commit annual funding for a three-year pilot program in an effort to enhance attendance growth.
- The grant program would be administered by a program committee comprising the following individuals: one Division I faculty representative with a marketing background and grant writing experience; one Division I conference commissioner; one Division I director of athletics; and three to four external marketing experts.
- The program would be implemented at the institutional level, with the grant program managed at the conference level.
- Institutions would submit a comprehensive application and proposal for funds, including applicable metrics and measurable outcomes. Grants would be awarded based on proposal merits.
- The group agreed that each grant would range from \$50,000 to \$100,000.
- The program would provide contributable data that would help to develop a "best practices" database for all institutions.

(2) Engage media entities and corporate partners (e.g., television, print, new platforms) in growth opportunities.

- Conduct creative planning sessions with media partners to develop growth plans.

- Engage corporate partners in delivering the women's basketball message nationally.
- In keeping with legislative limits, use one of the game's strongest assets, current women's basketball student-athletes, to give meaning to marketing campaign.

Measurable Outcomes and Applicable Metrics.

The primary measurable outcome is the growth of women's basketball attendance during the regular season.

- Double the number of women's basketball programs, nationally, averaging a minimum of 5,000 in regular-season attendance in a five-year period.
- Build the average regular-season attendance to 5,000-plus in a five-year period.
- Within a five-year period, all first- and second-round sites should be sold out or averaging a minimum of 8,000 per session, and all regional round sites should be sold out or averaging a minimum of 10,000 per session.

b. Initiative No. 2. Women's basketball postseason competition opportunities.

(1) Women's National Invitation Tournament (WNIT) and Women's National Invitational Championship (WNIC).

- Monitor the WNIT and its recent announcement of expansion to 48 teams.
- Monitor the addition of the WNIC postseason competition.
- If NCAA general counsel concurs, the NCAA women's basketball staff would reach out to both entities and, if desired, would meet with the WNIT and WNIC representatives to discuss operational logistics, policies and procedures and issues and concerns of the NCAA membership.

(2) NCAA Tournament.

- Continue to explore bracket expansion opportunities and their impact on the growth of the game.

Measurable Outcomes and Applicable Metrics.

The primary measurable outcome is increased participation opportunities for female basketball student-athletes.

- Provide additional postseason competition opportunities for more women's basketball student-athletes.

- Increase in fan base for more women's basketball programs, as a result of postseason hosting opportunities and postseason competition experience.
- Quality postseason opportunities would include: (1) better game atmosphere; (2) additional media coverage; (3) possible destination site for the championship game; (4) mementos and gifts; (5) quality travel experiences; (6) monitored team selection; and (7) proper branding at competition sites.
- Additional postseason competition opportunities will provide more success measures in more women's basketball programs, improve coaching stability and will grow the game of women's basketball on campuses at the "grass roots" level.
- Additional postseason competition opportunities will increase parity in the game of women's basketball.

c. Initiative No. 3. Women's basketball regular-season and postseason scheduling.

- (1) Recommended moving the NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Championship one week later, with a 2009 implementation date. With the NCAA Women's Final Four weekend as the base point, the start of postseason play would begin one week later. The women's first and second rounds would be conducted on the men's regional weekend. This move would allow the bracket announcement show to be televised on Sunday. Prior to Selection Sunday, conferences would have two weekends to play women's conference tournaments, with one of those weekends to be played on the weekend of the men's first and second rounds.
 - Identified positive impacts of this recommendation including: (1) opportunity of increased advertising sales; (2) less overlap with men's playing and television dates which would enhance broadcast windows and positively impact attendance issues; (3) potential for more print media coverage; and (4) preliminary-round ratings growth potential.
 - The following issues need further consideration: (1) advertising sales opportunities possibly decreasing due to separation of the two championships; (2) loss of prime time windows; (3) exposure/attention implications; and (4) scheduling conflicts, contractual obligations and legislative issues that would need to be addressed.
- (2) Amend current legislation to provide women's basketball teams an agreed-upon number of practice opportunities beginning October 1 through the legislated first playing date (November 10 in the 2006-07 academic year) which do not need to be used on consecutive days. For example, 30 practice opportunities in a 40-day time frame.

- (3) Mandate that all Division I conferences, conducting a postseason conference championship, include all members in their event model.
- (4) Require that all conferences, with 12 members or more, play a minimum of 16 conference games.
- (5) Count all regular-season contests and tournaments as one under the contest limitation, with the possible exception of the WNIT preseason event which would count as one against the maximum contest limitation provided no more than four contests are played.
- (6) Amend current legislation so that the maximum of two permissible exhibition contests may only be played against NCAA member institutions.
- (7) In the summer prior to initial enrollment, allow prospective student-athletes enrolled in summer school at the institution to participate in skill-related activities for two hours per week. Incoming freshmen should be treated like a full member of the squad beginning with the summer semester prior to their first year.

Measurable Outcomes and Applicable Metrics.

The primary measurable outcome is the growth of women's basketball attendance during the championship.

- Increase in attendance during championship competition.
- Increase in television ratings.
- Improve strength of scheduling.
- Health and safety of women's basketball student-athletes.
- Increased ticket sales during championship competition.

Additional Information/Research/Data Needed.

- Examine effect on individual conference tournaments in regard to the movement of all rounds of the championship one week later.
- Examine impact on Division I women's basketball tournament hosts in regard to the movement of all rounds of the championship one week later.

- d. Initiative No. 4. Implement a revenue distribution program for institutions and conferences that invest and commit to women's basketball.
- The group agreed that creating a revenue distribution model, similar to the model used with the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championship, is not feasible at this time, but that work will continue on a model so that distribution can take place when future revenue exists.
- e. Initiative No. 5. Women's basketball grants-in-aid.
- In an effort to enhance parity, the group discussed and agreed not to recommend at this time a reduction in the maximum number of grants-in-aid in women's basketball from 15 to 13 at this time.

Additional Information/Research/Data Needed.

- Engage the WBCA in obtaining data from coaches regarding their position on reducing grants-in-aid.
- Determine research available regarding women's basketball injuries and the impact of reducing grants-in-aid and the issue of injuries.

5. FUTURE MEETINGS.

Future Meetings and Telephone Conferences. The final meeting of the women's basketball discussion group is tentatively scheduled for April/May 2007. Each subgroup will conduct telephone conferences prior to the final in-person meeting.

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