

Membership Options for Varsity Athletics at the Vancouver Campus

Consultation Process Feedback Report

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a place of mind

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FEEDBACK ON CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE PRESENT REVIEW

Below is a summary of the three primary reasons, as outlined in the *Review of the Issues*, for considering the move to the NCAA Division II and the feedback received during the consultation process (see APPENDIX A).

1. Competitiveness

The influx of new universities – with quite small programs – joining the CIS in BC and the limitations of travel, means that UBC is playing more games against smaller schools. Regional play means fewer games against like-minded schools that have the same commitment to sport. Some argue that a move to the NCAA Div II would be a lateral move at best, while others argue that the level of competition will be much higher than experienced in the CIS/NAIA. SFU has stated it is their experience that the level of competition is higher than experienced in the CIS/NAIA.

2. Future of NAIA Teams

The potential for the entire NAIA to merge with the NCAA – possibly within the next five years – poses a serious challenge to UBC, which currently has eight teams in NAIA competition: baseball, cross-country (m/w), golf (m/w), softball, and outdoor track and field (m/w). Of these sports, cross-country could compete in the one meet per year organized by the CIS. Track and field (m/w) would have the option to compete in the indoor category of the CIS, albeit with a reduction in number of events. There is no competition option for baseball, golf (m/w) and softball in the CIS. Some debate the future of the NAIA but all agree that it will look different in the future. This is largely due to many NAIA schools applying for membership to the NCAA Div II. Other than a move to the NCAA Div II, no option has been offered to secure the future of the teams who currently compete in the NAIA. Community supporters of those teams see a move to NCAA Div II as soon as possible, as the only course.

3. Retaining Canadian Student Athletes

Each year talented Canadian athletes choose to attend American colleges or universities to compete in intercollegiate sport. The motivations to leave Canada are often the opportunity to compete at a higher level and more financial support. By joining the NCAA Div II, UBC would have the ability to offer larger athletic scholarships that would cover tuition and living expenses and a higher level of competition in most cases. Many disagree that a move to the NCAA Div II would be an attractive option for top Canadian athletes who, they say, are seeking the highest level of competition, namely NCAA Div I. With a move to the NCAA, UBC would have an opportunity to immediately compete in hockey (m/w) and volleyball (m) in Div I which would create an attractive option for top Canadian athletes from across the country who wish to remain in Canada and compete at the highest level in their sport.



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MAIN TOPICS RAISED DURING CONSULTATION PROCESS

The majority of the feedback received during the consultation process from the UBC community could be grouped into seven broad topic areas. For each topic area, a brief overview and summary of feedback is provided.

1. Resource impact

UBC meets all of the requirements for facilities, staffing, and scholarship funding for both the CIS/NAIA and the NCAA Div II. During the consultation, feedback was given that resources would need to be increased in a number of areas to maintain a high level of competitive performance in either the CIS/NAIA or NCAA Div II.

Facilities & Coaching Staff

UBC has made significant improvements in athletic facilities and hired a complete complement of full time coaches and assistant coaches over the past ten years. Consultation feedback suggests that a field house on the south end of campus, a larger varsity weight room, and a new aquatic centre are vital enhancements to ensure competitiveness. A number of the varsity teams identified a need for more strength and conditioning staffing.

Operating Funds

The *Review of the Issues* included a financial statement that highlighted the annual net savings in Athletics travel budget with a move to the NCAA Div II. During the consultation those operating savings have been called into question. Drawing on the experience of SFU, it was confirmed that the travel costs of competing in the NCAA Div II are lower than competing in the CIS. It was also confirmed that there have been no unforeseen costs with the move to the NCAA Div II.

Consultation feedback cited that UBC competes in 29 varsity sports and has a budget slightly below the average for athletic programs in NCAA Division II, many of whom compete in fewer sports. This has raised the question of UBC's ability to be competitive in the NCAA Division II if we are not able to fund varsity to the same level.

Scholarship Funding

Both membership options provide an opportunity for increased scholarship funding for athletes. With the upcoming capital campaign, a fundraising target of \$75 million has been set for Athletics with \$50 million for athlete scholarships and \$25 million for capital costs. That estimate is predicated on going the NCAA route.

As clarified in the *UBC NCAA Addendum*, UBC does not award nearly as many Athletic Financial Awards (AFAs) as it could under CIS rules. Most UBC student athletes who receive scholarship funding do so on the basis of academic merit alone. Athletics believes that moving to the NCAA will enlarge fund raising opportunities and bring more money to fund athletic scholarships.



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It has been called into question whether the fundraising target is achievable and the impact that not reaching the fundraising target would have on competing at a high level in the NCAA Div II.

UBC Rec

The Athletics & Rec student fee helps fund both the UBC Rec program and Thunderbird sport. The programs offered by UBC Rec provide a valuable opportunity for broad student engagement at UBC. The AMS has asked for assurances that the existing UBC Rec program will not be adversely impacted by a move to the NCAA Div II.

2. Academic Impact

Concern has been raised that many universities in the NCAA treat sport as a business and do not maintain an appropriate balance between academics and athletics for student athletes. While this is most notable in Div I commentary, caution has been expressed that even a move to Div II could lead to distortion in practices related to admissions and academic progression and to a constrained educational experience for student athletes. These concerns are speculative. As detailed in APPENDIX 5 of the *Review of the Issues*, the NCAA Division II has higher academic criterion than the CIS for student athlete eligibility. SFU noted that they needed to do significant work in order to comply with the criterion.

Others noted that the majority of top internationally ranked American universities compete in the NCAA Div I and serve as a good example that a university can compete at the highest level in sport without sacrificing academic integrity and a fulsome student educational experience.

Some community members voiced concern that there is only one university in Div II, UC San Diego, that would be considered a UBC peer. Though universities in Div II have a similar approach to sport they are not UBC's academic peers. Only a move to Div I, which is not possible immediately, would place UBC among its institutional peers.

Those who support the move to the NCAA Div II cite that a move to the NCAA would provide an opportunity for Canadian athletes to stay in Canada and study at a world-class university while still competing in the NCAA. Data to test this hypothesis with respect to Div II is not available, although the CIS has commissioned a study expected to be available in June. SFU's experience to date supports this contention for certain sports.

3. Athlete Eligibility

The athlete eligibility rules are more involved in the NCAA Div II and would require new systems outside of Athletics to manage compliance.

A move to the NCAA Div II would mean 4 years of eligibility compared to 5 in the CIS. In some sports (football, hockey (m), soccer (m)) participation in junior leagues either counts toward the athlete's number of years of eligibility or makes them completely ineligible to compete in the NCAA. The impact of athlete eligibility would be greatest for current CIS teams making the transition to the NCAA. Current athletes who will either lose or have their eligibility reduced do not support a move to the NCAA Div II because of the impact on their athletic career.



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Athletes who no longer would be eligible or would prefer to transfer to a CIS university have expressed concern around the timing of the decision to join the NCAA Div II. A decision now would leave little time for athletes who wished to transfer to another school for the 2011-12 academic year. Athletics has assured that it will work with the CIS to support athletes who wish to transfer to another CIS university.

The impacts listed above are short term, and will be limited to a particular cohort of athletes during the transition from the CIS to the NCAA Div II. Such impacts are unavoidable but much can be done to support the student athletes during this transition.

4. Institutional Accreditation

Place and Promise, the UBC Plan, provides a compelling vision for the future of UBC and identifies the commitments, goals, and actions that will move the university toward that vision. Concern has been raised as to whether the transition to the NCAA Div II and the required accreditation process would divert attention and effort and adversely impact implementation of the strategic plan.

The accreditation process is a significant investment of time and energy, particularly for Associate Deans and Department Heads. Comments from the community noted the expense of the process and the work required by the Faculties. SFU and faculty who have experienced accreditation at an American university confirmed the investment required.

While benefits of institutional accreditation were cited, particularly development of learning outcomes, if accreditation is only being done for the purpose of joining the NCAA Div II there will be opposition from some faculty who will see no benefit of the process to their Faculty and Programs. Those who oppose accreditation for this purpose, feel the varsity program should not be influencing the overall university.

The latest information from Athletics is that approximately 600 students are involved in varsity sports at Vancouver. Several points were made with respect to consideration of changes in the entire university for such a small number of students. While other initiatives, to improve the student experience, have the potential for greater impact at UBC.

Concern has been raised that the university be very clear in its understanding of the objectives of pursuing institutional accreditation. Issues such as how deep into university academic and business operations an accrediting body delves are important to understand.

5. University Sport in Canada

UBC is a cornerstone of the CIS. As a founding member, many supporters of remaining in Canada have expressed concern over UBC leaving to join the NCAA Div II. Instead, in their view, as a leader of sport in Canada, UBC should step forward and continue to engage in negotiating a solution on behalf of strengthening interuniversity sport in Canada. Others familiar with the CIS chronicled a lengthy and unrewarding effort by many schools, including UBC, to work for change within the organization.

Since the release of the *Review of the Issues*, CIS has expressed concern about the loss of UBC and an intention to re-investigate the issues raised by UBC and other CIS universities. With the exception of action on the Presidents Oversight Committee to be



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voted on at the June AGM, no concrete steps have been taken to address the issues. Many question whether change is even possible when a large portion of member institutions support the status quo.

6. Sport Specific Impact

As outlined in the *Review of the Issues* there are differential impacts by sport for both membership options with neither option providing an optimal solution that works for all sports.

It is clear that should the NAIA merge with the NCAA Div II, eight UBC teams would no longer have a league if we remain in the CIS. Other than NCAA Div II membership, no viable option has been provided during the consultation process for the eight NAIA teams.

Hockey (m/w) and volleyball (m) would have the opportunity to compete in NCAA Div I because their sports are not offered in NCAA Div II. This opportunity would provide an option for Canadian athletes who wish to stay in Canada and compete at the highest level in their sport.

Volleyball (w), swimming (m/w), and football have expressed a strong desire to remain in the CIS because that provides a good level of competition in their respective sports, maintains traditional rivalries, and successfully attracts top Canadian student-athletes to their programs. Football players and supporters noted that Canadian football is a different game than American football and many of the players now here specifically wish to play Canadian football.

For the near term, many coaches, athletes, and supporters of current CIS teams have expressed some qualms about whether the NCAA Div II is the best fit for UBC. In many cases this is largely due to the understandable fear that accompanies transition to a generally more competitive athletic environment alongside uncertainty around having the resources (operating funds, scholarship support, and recruits) to be as successful as in the CIS.

Others have questioned whether competing against smaller schools is a good move for our athletics program, particularly if UBC does not enjoy the same level of success as experienced in the CIS/NAIA. If the right resources were in place, many feel that competing in the NCAA Div I, among the best in the world, is where UBC truly belongs. This option would not be available until completing 5 years of competition in Div II.

As a pilot, joining the NCAA Div II does provide a good option to test out the NCAA and get experience before both parties make a decision to fully commit. Participating in the international pilot would keep open the options of remaining in NCAA Div II, applying for NCAA Div I membership or returning to the CIS.

7. Community Support

Feedback from the university, local, and alumni communities was divided on whether the move to the NCAA Div II would increase school spirit and drive higher student and alumni engagement in varsity sport. SFU has been clear that they have seen increased fan support as a result of the higher level of competition and the novelty.

Some community members indicated that the sport culture is very different between the



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US and Canada generally and that a move to a league where sport plays a more prominent role in university culture would have little impact at UBC.

Both membership options have strong support in the community and neither option will please everyone. There is a real risk of erosion in support regardless of the direction taken on where our teams play in the future. This is unavoidable with such a binary decision.

SUMMARY OF MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS

On page 17 of the *Review of the Issues* a summary of points in favour of remaining in the CIS/NAIA and a summary of points in favour of pursuing membership in the NCAA Div II are listed (see APPENDIX B). Below, is the feedback received on the page 17 summaries and additional points raised in favour of each membership option during the consultation.

1. Remaining in the CIS/NAIA

Over the course of the consultation process no one raised issue with the accuracy of the points in favour of remaining in the CIS/NAIA. In addition, CIS took the opportunity to express their deep concern that UBC would consider leaving the CIS for the NCAA Div II. CIS also provided updates on several upcoming items for the June AGM, including the vote to approve the Presidential Oversight Committee, draft recommendations to enhance compliance with CIS scholarship rules, and a draft report on the factors influencing choices for student athletes. CIS feels these are all necessary steps before they can revisit the scholarship model and competitiveness.

2. Pursuing Membership in the NCAA Div II

Those who support remaining in the CIS have taken issue with several points in favour of pursuing membership in the NCAA Div II. Some have questioned if competing in the in NCAA Div II would increase international engagement and heighten the visibility of UBC beyond our present level. At the Canada West AGM in 2010 a motion was passed agreeing to transition to two regional associations once 19 universities have joined. One of these associations will be made up of the first 11 members of Canada West; the newest 8 members will form a second association. When in place this would address the concern of a BC association; until then UBC will continue to play more games regionally in many sports.

During the consultation process, several additional points were raised in favour of membership in the NCAA Div II. In the *Review of the Issues* it speaks to the loss of the eight NAIA teams but does not list the number of athletes impacted. Approximately 200 student athletes would no longer have the opportunity to compete on Varsity teams as they currently do. SFU has stated it is their experience that the level of competition in the NCAA Div II is higher than they experienced in the CIS/NAIA.



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APPENDIX A: CONSULTATION PROCESS SUMMARY

[Excerpted from *Review of Issues*, pg. 5]*

The further elements of consultation and communication planned are as follows:

- December – Review by University Executive
- January – Athletics Department (Vancouver) and Thunderbird Athletics Council (students)
- January – Committee of Deans
- January – AMS and GSS
- January – DVC Executive - Okanagan
- January – Thunderbird Council
- January – Alumni via UBCAA Board and the Graduate Gazette
- January/February – Round of information sharing and invitation for feedback from academic department heads (Vancouver)
- February – Open Meetings for UBC Vancouver campus community including alumni
- February – On-line consultations
- February – Vancouver Senate (for information)
- February – Board of Governors (for information)
- March – Committee of Deans (second discussion)
- March – Vancouver Dept Athletics and Recreation
- March – Heads up Group (Vancouver)
- March – Vancouver and Okanagan Senates (for comment)
- April – Board of Governors (for comment)
- April – Executive decision on membership direction

* The proposed elements as outlined in the *Review of the Issues* were all completed but due to scheduling issues many were delayed until later in the consultation process.

In addition, the following was undertaken to the further elements of consultation and communication detailed above.

Community Engagement:

- Developed www.students.ubc.ca/ncaa to provide platform for the community to access the *Review of the Issues* Report, the 2009 *Consideration Memorandum*, as well as all additions to these documents and statements issued by the CIS.
- Opened the online Consultation Feedback Form which received 467 survey responses from students, alumni, faculty and staff. Of the 467 individual responses, 80.4 % indicated very strong agreement or disagreement with a move to the NCAA Div II, with a slight preponderance opposed to joining. In addition, approximately 25 people wrote directly to the President to share their feedback.
- Developed promotional materials to raise awareness of the consultation process and open forums. These materials were used on digital signage across campus and were featured on the following websites:
 - www.ubc.ca
 - www.events.ubc.ca



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- www.alumni.ubc.ca
- www.involvement.ubc.ca
- www.learningcommons.ubc.ca

The consultation process and open forums were promoted in the following e-newsletters:

- The Grad Gazette
 - This Week at UBC
 - UBC fyi Newsletter
 - AUS, SUS, CUS, EUS, HKUS undergraduate society newsletters
 - I House Community Bulletin
- Constructed a Facebook campaign connecting and sharing content with 45 other campus organizations.
 - Created a Facebook Ad to specifically target current and graduated UBC students to advertise the open forums. This directed over 61 people in direct click-throughs from the Facebook content to the UBC NCAA Division II Consultation webpage.
 - Teamed with UBC REC at Storm the Wall to promote the open forums speaking with over 90 students about the consultation and providing them with literature to direct them to the online NCAA Division II Consultation Feedback Form.
 - Partnered with the Irving K. Barber Learning with an informational booth in the main concourse and engaged with over 150+ students during the week of March 28, 2011 to provide information on the consultation as well as advertise the open forums.
 - Placed ads on the consultation process and open forums in the Ubyyssey print and online editions.
 - Hosted two University open forums held in the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre March 28 and 30, 2011, attended by athletes, alumni, undergraduates, athlete parents, faculty and staff. 18 community members attended the first event, and 40 attended the second event.

Stakeholder Consultation:

Meetings were held with the following stakeholders to gain feedback:

- Thunderbird Athletic Council (athletes)
- Coaches meeting and invitation to provide feedback in person or by email, received additional from 16 coaches
- Student-athlete forum attended by 45 students
- Thunderbird Council
- Email sent out to the Blue Crew (1,000+ students) mailing list inviting them to attend one of the open forums



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APPENDIX B: MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS SUMMARY

[Excerpted from *Review of Issues*, pg. 17]

Points in Favour of Remaining in CIS/NAIA:

- UBC student-athletes competing in the CIS would retain five years of eligibility, rather than four in the NCAA.
- UBC is spared the expense and logistical challenges of seeking US accreditation.
- UBC maintains traditional rivalries with Western Canadian universities other than SFU.
- Sport specific impact of NCAA membership is significant for some sports. For example, volleyball has a shorter season in the NCAA than in CIS; hockey players who played Major Junior retain eligibility in CIS, but are precluded in the NCAA.
- UBC is a founding member of Canadian Interuniversity Sport; switching to NCAA may be perceived as undermining the organization.
- NCAA membership requires student-athletes to write SATs.
- It's easier to stay; transition is challenging.

Points in Favour of Pursuing Membership in the NCAA:

- In the competition for student athletes, UBC could match scholarship offerings from SFU and other NCAA schools.
- Of the 29 sports in which UBC competes, NCAA offers 25; CIS offers 15.
- The eight sports currently competing in the (threatened) NAIA would be protected.
- The long-standing rivalry with Simon Fraser University would be retained.
- Membership in a US-based league builds international engagement.
- UBC's visibility will be heightened, both institutionally and for international student recruitment.
- It would protect a high competitive standard. (The level of competition in CIS/Canada West is being steadily diluted by the inclusion of small universities and colleges.)
- Creation of a BC Division could end UBC's traditional rivalries against large, like-minded universities in Western Canada.

