

CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE JANUARY 2011 REVIEW OF THE ISSUES (Issued 25 March 2011)

Competitive Structure Within the Canada West Conference of the CIS

One of UBC Vancouver's concerns is that recent expansion of the Canada West conference has, and will continue to, dilute the level of competition for UBC Vancouver varsity athletes. Since 1998-99, Canada West has expanded from its six founding members to 13 members. In 2001, the Great Plains Athletic Conference was dissolved and four of its members joined Canada West (Regina, Manitoba, Winnipeg and Brandon). One member, SFU, has left the organization, and UBC's Okanagan campus is currently a probationary member (bringing total participating membership to 14 institutions).

The most recent new members, prior to UBCO, are Thompson Rivers University and the University of the Fraser Valley. In the same round as UBCO, UNBC and Vancouver Island University also applied to be probationary members but their applications were not accepted at that time.

Newer members generally compete in fewer sports than does UBC:

School	Year of initial Probationary status	CIS Sports participation
Thompson Rivers University	2005	Men's and Women's Volleyball and Basketball
University of the Fraser Valley	2006	Men's and Women's Basketball and Soccer
UBCO	2011	Women's and Men's Basketball and Volleyball

Canada West has been concerned about how growth in the conference will affect competition. Its Committee on the Future Competitive Structure reported in 2010. At the Canada West AGM in 2010 this report was approved and 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.

It is not clear when this transition will occur as there are not five potential applicants on the horizon. Only two new applications for membership (by UNBC and Mount Royal) will be considered in 2011. In the interim, competition schedules are being adjusted because of the growing membership. It appears likely that over the next 2 to 5 years at least, UBC Vancouver will play more games against the geographically proximate schools, and fewer against the original members of Canada West. Scheduling for competition within Canada West is currently organized 'divisionally' for game schedules on a sport by sport, year by year basis. A 'BC only' schedule may emerge for a given sport in a given year, where only a few 'interlocking' games would be played with other divisions.

In 2010, CIS commissioned a feasibility study of aligning with the Canadian Colleges Athletics Association. The benefits of such a collaboration might include cost savings, greater participation rates, and opportunities for creating various levels, or 'tiers', within the competitive structures. This feasibility study did not make it to consideration at the AGM because of concerns raised by several university presidents about the approach taken to alignment and about tiering. CIS has not conducted a study of tiering within the existing organization.

Scholarships for Athletes

Funding for student athletes in Canada includes Athletic Financial Awards (AFAs), academic merit awards, and 'other' awards, an important sub-set of which are considered 'leadership' awards for which all students at an institution are eligible. CIS rules limit AFAs, as outlined in the January 2011 report. CIS is concerned that its scholarship rules are not well adhered to and is bringing forward a compliance program for consideration at the June 2011 AGM.

For several years now, UBC has advocated for the ability to give 'full ride' scholarships to student athletes in order to retain more top level student athletes in Canada. UBC felt that that 2009 CIS flexible scholarship proposal did not move either fast enough or far enough in this direction, but in any case this model was rejected by CIS. The compliance program will not address this issue. UBC is concerned that the new proposal will constrain flexibility in 'leadership' awards, a very small number of which do support student athletes at UBC. CIS states that it has no intention of constraining the award of leadership awards to student athletes at UBC.

UBC does not award nearly as many AFAs as it could under CIS rules. The January 2011 report erroneously stated that UBC awarded 80% of the CIS limit last year. The 80% figure included non-AFA awards to student athletes, AFA awards at UBC were only 11% of the CIS limit. Most UBC student athletes who receive scholarship funding, do so on the basis of academic merit alone. UBC Athletics believes that moving to the NCAA will open up fund raising opportunities that will bring more money to fund athlete scholarships.

CIS Governance

A proposal for Presidential oversight in CIS governance will be considered at the 2011 CIS AGM. If this proposal is successfully ratified, the CIS Executive will propose that the first item of business for the Presidents to address is scholarship policy. Other items of concern to UBC such as membership and tiering would likely also be considered by this presidential group.

International Competitive Opportunities

If UBC were to join the NCAA Division II, all competitors except SFU teams would be 'international' in the sense of being based in another country. On the other hand, some opportunities, in some sports, to represent Canada internationally would be reduced because in some cases CIS has the right to represent Canada (for example at the world university games) or the right to appoint coaches for Canadian teams. At the 2011 winter world university games (known by the French acronym 'FISU' games) only CIS athletes were eligible to compete in the sports of ice hockey and curling. In the selection of athletes for the Canadian men's basketball team for the upcoming summer FISU and Pan Am games, athletes must be intending to compete in the CIS in autumn 2011 in order to be eligible. Students competing in CIS, CCAA, NAIA and NCAA, as well as those who are university students but whose sports have no university competitive structure, are (or were, in the case of the winter games) eligible to compete in the world university games (winter and summer) in 2011.