

**Reform in Intercollegiate Athletics; Division I-A Presidents' Perspective**

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In 1989, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation commissioned The Lou Harris Poll to conduct a study on American attitudes about college sports. This study indicated that 80% of Americans felt big-time collegiate sports were corrupt and out of control ("Keeping faith", 1991). Since that time, intercollegiate athletic programs have wrestled with a myriad of issues that continue to this day to confront and confound the tenuous relationship between the academic mission of member institutions and the big business enterprise that today defines Division I-A college sports.

The relative value of college athletics in the dynamics of the academy's mission may have prompted Chancellor Robert Hemenway from the University of Kansas to describe universities as ".the most complex social institution(s) in society.each with a lengthy list of interest groups." (Nethery, 2004, p. 31). These interest groups or stakeholders, including university and athletic administrators, faculty, student-athletes, alumni, donors, fans, coaches, sponsors and the media all have a vested interest in the future of college sports.

University presidents and chancellors, designated leaders in higher education, have been given the responsibility to ensure the viability of intercollegiate athletics. The place of college athletics in the dynamics of the academy's mission has confounded various stakeholders' i.e., faculty and staff, donors, fans, coaches, and university administrators, as each has struggled to clarify their appetite for reform. By providing their opinions on athletic-related matters affecting their institutions, this assessment may provide more appropriate and viable solutions.

With a recent report indicating that fewer than a dozen of the 117 Division I-A athletic programs operate fiscally in the black, the presidents' attitudes on the issues confronting college athletics would appear to be of vital interest. Since the NCAA's restructuring in 1996, the athletic directors' role has shifted from policy-making to advisory through their representation on the Division I-A's Management Council, even further empowering chief executive officers.

This study examined the attitudes of the 117 Division I-A Presidents on the financial, academic, and student-welfare issues, and the impact of corporate and media influences on college athletics, among other issues. The results of this study indicate strong consensus among presidents for reform on financial issues, but similarly strong and divergent attitudes on student-welfare issues.

**Selected References**

Keeping faith with the student-athlete (1991, March). Report of the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics.

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Nethery, R. (2004). Brand awareness. *Sports Business Journal*, 7(31), 22-34.