



**REPORT OF THE
NCAA GENDER EQUITY TASK FORCE
JUNE 7, 2024, VIDEOCONFERENCE**

KEY ITEMS.

- **Communication to NCAA leadership bodies regarding equity in intercollegiate athletics.** The NCAA Gender Equity Task Force reviewed the current landscape of intercollegiate athletics and expressed significant equity concerns for women's sports and overall broad-based athletics programs, particularly in light of the settlement discussions in the *House vs. NCAA* case.

Accordingly, the task force agreed to compose a letter to the NCAA Board of Governors, Division I governance committees, and national office senior leadership (with copies to other relevant groups within the NCAA governance structure and other athletics stakeholders) outlining its concerns and advocating for the protection of programs and initiatives within the NCAA structure that advance opportunities for underrepresented student-athletes and athletics leaders. Staff will work with the task force co-chairs to draft a letter that will be reviewed by the full task force and then disseminated. (Attachment)

ACTION ITEMS.

- **None.**

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. **Welcome and introductions.** Gender Equity Task Force Co-Chairs Noreen Morris and Judy Sweet welcomed the group, and new member Sarah Otey to her first meeting.
2. **Review of previous reports.** The task force approved the report from its January 25, 2024, videoconference as presented.
3. **DEIB Committees Review Working Group status and proposal.** NCAA Staff updated the task force on the charge from the NCAA Board of Governors for all Association-wide committees to determine their relevance and review whether changes are necessary to better align their work with the requirements outlined in the new NCAA Constitution. The task force co-chairs who represent the task force on this working group provided an update on the steps taken since beginning the review in January. It was noted that the working group met five times and is considering establishing one centralized DEI committee with an administrative subcommittee to meet the needs of the four existing DEI committees/task force with a more streamlined approach. The working group is expected to meet again June 20 to finalize its recommendation, and the four committees/task force will have the opportunity via email to endorse the recommendation. The board will consider the recommendation during its August meeting.

4. DEIB committee reports and updates.

- a. Committee on Women's Athletics.** During its May videoconference, the committee received biannual updates from the six emerging sports and reviewed a draft of the Emerging Sports for Women program guide to help support the current sports. The committee also provided feedback on a proposal in Division II that would eliminate the current legislation restricting voting on football-specific proposals only to schools and conferences that sponsor football; reviewed the NCAA Woman of the Year process, including the application procedures; received updates related to recently released Title IX regulations on sexual harassment; and were made aware of the Government Accountability Office May report that asserts that the Department of Education should improve its enforcement of Title IX across intercollegiate athletics. Additionally, the committee noted that all three divisions are making progress to sponsor legislation for the 2025 NCAA Convention to transition women's wrestling from an emerging sport to an NCAA national collegiate championship sport. The committee also received an update on the likelihood that women's flag football will apply to the Emerging Sports for Women program by the August 1 deadline.
 - b. Minority Opportunities and Interests Committee.** During its May videoconference, the committee reviewed and approved the proposed dates and themes for the 2024-25 NCAA Diversity and Inclusion Social Media Campaign, which will be conducted October 15-17. The committee also reviewed the new process beginning with the 2024-25 academic year for selecting the Award for Diversity and Inclusion to honor three recipients (one representing each division) rather than the current process of selecting one overall recipient, and reviewed programs and initiatives designed to increase engagement among athletics diversity and inclusion designees.
 - c. Board of Governors Committee to Promote Cultural Diversity and Equity.** The committee met by videoconference in December 2023 and reviewed its goals for 2023-24, which focus on hiring practices to support leadership across athletics that better reflects the increasingly diverse student-athlete population.
- 5. NCAA Transgender Student-Athlete Participation Policy update.** NCAA legal counsel updated the task force on litigation regarding the policy and the board's decision in May for the Association to remain in Phase Two of the policy until further notice.
- 6. Review of updated definition of "gender equity."** The task force reviewed and approved the following definition of gender equity that was revised based on feedback provided during its January meeting:

"An athletics program can be considered gender equitable when the participants would accept as fair and equitable the overall program(s) offered

for other genders. No individual should be discriminated against on the basis of gender, institutionally or nationally, in intercollegiate athletics.”

7. **External gender equity review update.** The task force received a historical summary of the external gender-equity review and ongoing efforts within the national office to assess operations from an equity perspective proactively. Staff noted that modules are being developed for national office staff to address equity in all aspects – not just gender – in their work. The modules should be available this fall.
8. **Review of task force goals and progress.** Staff provided the task force with a document listing the history of the task force recommendations and highlighting key successes and remaining tasks. The task force offered feedback on how the document could be structured to prioritize items that have not been started or completely accomplished. Staff agreed to update the document based on the input received.
9. **Updates relevant to equity in athletics.** The task force discussed the many issues that could impact equity within intercollegiate athletics, including [new Title IX regulations](#) that were released in April 2024; a [Government Accountability Office report on College Athletics Title IX Enforcement Efforts](#) that was published in April 2024 and includes important information from the Office for Civil rights on ways to improve Title IX enforcement efforts; and the potential impact of the settlement discussions in the *House vs. NCAA* case that may affect equity in athletics going forward. The discussion prompted significant concerns regarding the potential for these issues to negatively impact equity and detract from the progress that has been made since the adoption of Title IX. Accordingly, the task force agreed to notify the NCAA Board of Governors and Division I governance committees via formal correspondence regarding these concerns as outlined in the Key Item at the beginning of this report. (Attachment)
10. **Other business.**
 - **Potential inclusion of AIAW in NCAA statistics and records.** The task force asked about national office efforts to explore the feasibility of including statistics and records from women’s athletics programs that operated under the auspices of the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women as part of the NCAA records and statistics program. Staff explained that there are ongoing conversations about opportunities to highlight student-athletes and coaches from the AIAW era.
11. **Future meetings/videoconferences.** Staff will notify the task force regarding potential meeting dates for the fall.
12. **Adjournment.** The meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m. Eastern time.

Committee Chairs: Noreen Morris, Northeast Conference
Judy Sweet, Gender Equity Consultant
Staff Liaisons: Ashlesha Lokhande, Office of Inclusion
Gretchen Miron, Office of Inclusion
Amy Wilson, Office of Inclusion

NCAA Gender Equity Task Force June 7, 2024, Videoconference	
Attendees:	
Chuck Ambrose, Higher Education Consultant.	
Renee Bostic, State University of New York at New Paltz.	
Joan McDermott, Colorado Mesa University.	
Jacqie McWilliams, Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association.	
Noreen Morris, Northeast Conference.	
Bernard Muir, Stanford University.	
Sarah Otey, Ohio Athletic Conference.	
Judy Sweet, Gender Equity Consultant.	
Absentees:	
None.	
Guests in Attendance:	
None.	
NCAA Staff Liaisons in Attendance:	
Ashlesha Lokhande, Gretchen Miron and Amy Wilson.	
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance for Portions of the Meeting:	
Gary Brown, Gail Dent, Stephanie Quigg, Jen Roe and Jared Tidemann.	



June 27, 2024

VIA EMAIL

NCAA Board of Governors
NCAA Division I Board of Directors
NCAA Division I Council
NCAA Presidents Cabinet

Dear NCAA Governance Leaders:

College sports is at a critical juncture. Legal settlements, the evolving name, image and likeness environment, and future revenue sharing opportunities require a deliberate focus and commitment to many things to ensure college athletics are equitable. The NCAA's Gender Equity Task Force writes this letter to you—leaders within the NCAA divisional governance structure and national office—to reiterate the crucial need for gender equity and Title IX to be at the forefront of all ongoing and future conversations about college sports, particularly in Division I.

Fifty-two years after Title IX passed, inequities remain throughout intercollegiate athletics. Women still have far fewer opportunities to compete at the collegiate level. Based on [NCAA Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates](#) in 2022-23, men had over 71,000 more participation opportunities than women. Financial resource gaps continue to persist between men's and women's programs. Division I already has the greatest gap in spending between men's and women's teams in several areas, [generally spending twice as much](#) on their men's programs than their women's programs. A recent [Government Accountability Office report](#) reinforced these gaps and identified inconsistencies in Title IX enforcement that can create barriers to schools proactively complying with Title IX.

While some progress has been made to close these gaps, the dynamic environment, particularly in Division I, threatens the support of broad-based athletics programs and women's opportunities. We are in an incredibly exciting time for women's sports. Although we are in an uncertain legal environment, it is irresponsible to take a wait-and-see approach to equity as it threatens to put institutions at risk of Title IX non-compliance. Instead, leaders must consider Title IX and equity in ongoing conversations to ensure that there are not unintended consequences that negatively impact women when discussing and acting on these challenging topics.

The task force acknowledges how difficult and unknown the next steps of this process may be. When facing uncertainty, it is a moral imperative to maintain an evident commitment to equity in the actions we take. We recognize that institutions, conferences and the

national office face budget implications that must be addressed to move forward in a productive way for the future of intercollegiate athletics for all student-athletes. During these belt-tightening exercises, the Gender Equity Task Force also encourages leaders to maintain services that support equity and inclusion. Too often diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, education and support services are among the first budget cuts made. These cuts are short-sighted, particularly when prioritizing equity will continue to be critical for departments across the country.

In any deliberations about ongoing or future legal settlements and the evolving collegiate landscape, the Gender Equity Task Force advises that leaders consider the following:

- Include Title IX experts and/or Title IX attorneys to advise on equity implications in conversations and decision-making processes related to legal settlements, revenue sharing and other relevant discussions.
- Affirm to member institutions and conferences they must follow all aspects of Title IX (e.g., participation opportunities, financial aid, treatment and benefits) and support their student-athletes in a gender equitable manner, especially when considering revenue distribution implications.
- Prioritize equity in the student-athlete experience across the Association.
- Foster relationships with the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights to encourage collaboration and proactivity related to athletics equity.
- Ensure the NCAA membership is aware of recent changes to [Title IX Regulations](#) and [Office for Civil Rights resources](#) that emphasize athletics equity responsibilities.
- Affirm the NCAA national office's commitment to gender equity including external reviews as needed to follow through on previous gender equity reviews.

Campus and conference leaders must heed these considerations as they discuss the impact of legal settlements and the evolving landscape within their communities.

Thank you for taking the time to consider and implement the task force's recommendations. Rather than hoping for the best, we implore you to be proactive and prioritize gender equity to help protect current and future athletic opportunities. The task force is committed to supporting college sports through this challenging time and welcomes any future opportunities to collaborate or advise on gender equity concerns for the Association.

Sincerely,

NCAA Gender Equity Task Force

Noreen Morris, Chair
Northeast Conference

Judy Sweet, co-Chair
Gender Equity Consultant

Chuck Ambrose
Husch Blackwell

Jacqie McWilliams
Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association

Renee Bostic
State University of New York at New Paltz

Bernard Muir
Stanford University

Joan McDermott
Colorado Mesa University

Sara Otey
Ohio Athletic Conference

ASW:dfb

cc: NCAA Division I Commissioners
NCAA Committee on Women's Athletics
NCAA Committee to Promote Cultural Diversity and Equity
NCAA Division II Executive Board
NCAA Division II Management Council
NCAA Division III Presidents Council
NCAA Division III Management Council
NCAA Minority Opportunities and Interests Committee
Selected NCAA Staff Members