

Division III Philosophy Statement Review: Summary of Membership Feedback

June 1, 2023

Background: A feedback opportunity was provided to member institutions and conferences to inform the Strategic Planning and Finance Committee as it finalizes a recommendation to the Management and Presidents Council to amend the Division III Philosophy Statement.

Response: Responses were received from 21 institutions and 13 conferences.

Introduction

General
Use "academic experience" or "educational experience" consistently throughout the document.
The only suggestion I have is in relation to the use of the word "should". Should does not hold much ground and using it in this statement weakens the statement and commitment.
Overall, this document looks good. Concerns surrounding the philosophy statement were items that are no longer in the document.
I was excited for the current statement to be reviewed as it is way too long and unorganized. This new version is a significant improvement. I do feel it is still too long and wordy, however everything listed feels important to mention. It does provide D3 with good direction on expectations and how things should be worked through. Some states are currently being impacted by anti-DEI items, so some consideration should be given to revising language so our members can work through this in the state they reside. I would vote in favor of the revised draft if it was presented for approval.
The use of the word "primarily", and words like "meaningfully", still will be problematic. How often do we currently hear, "What does primarily mean" in the current statement when considering "primarily a four-year undergraduate experience"? This will continue with people twisting the language to support whatever it they are pushing (usually more creep of athletics into the academic world).

Key constituents who play an integral role in the governance and operation of Division III at the national, conference and institutional levels include, but are not limited to, student-athletes, Presidents and Chancellors, Athletics Direct Reports, Directors of Athletics, Senior Woman Administrators, Faculty Athletics Representatives, Coaches, Conference Commissioners, Athletics Healthcare Administrators, Athletics Diversity and Inclusion Designees, and Senior Compliance Administrators.
Is there a reason for the order that the key constituents are listed? Why are coaches listed before commissioners?
I think it's very odd that the Commissioner role is listed behind coaches in the key constituent line. They should be listed higher as the list reads hierarchal with Presidents coming first.
With additional positions to support the future, this section may have to be edited too often, perhaps leave it out.

Student-Athlete Collegiate Experience

General

Under Student-Athlete Collegiate Experience, it would be meaningful to acknowledge academics, perhaps: "Assure that student-athletes have the same academic opportunities and responsibilities as non-athletes."
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Seek to establish and maintain an environment in which a student-athlete's athletics activities are conducted as an integral part of their educational experience.

While I can understand why we may choose to remove the reference to "four-year experience" as the college experience has changed, but I ask us to consider keeping the notion of an "undergraduate" experience. To the best of our ability, we should be placing guard rails to guide students to their first college degree. Current legislation allows for there to be an exception for graduate students so there is no need to expand the language to "educational experience".

Student-Athlete Athletics Experience

General

Include language regarding national competition as opposed to regional competition.

Support student-athletes in their efforts to reach the highest levels of athletics performance, with a primary emphasis on conference and regional competition, while providing access to national championships.
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Support student-athletes in their efforts to reach the highest levels of athletics performance, with a primary emphasis on conference and regional competition, while providing [EQUITABLE] access to national championships.

Prioritize the experience of the participants, and the internal constituency (e.g., students, alumni, institutional personnel) rather than on the spectators, or the general public and its entertainment needs.

I do not believe that "rather than on the spectators, or the general public and its entertainment needs" is really needed for the Division III philosophy statement. It's a given that the participants should be prioritized but I'm not sure if the impact on the general public is great enough for it to be included.

I don't feel the following should be in a philosophy statement: Prioritize the experience of the participants, and the internal constituency (e.g., students, alumni, institutional personnel) rather than on the spectators, or the general public and its entertainment needs. I think student-athletes want to be publicized and their ability shown and this limits it - just delete it. It's not needed at all.

Develop and maintain an environment that promotes sportsmanship and a positive culture for student-athletes, coaches, and administrative personnel, recognizing the role intercollegiate athletics can play in human development. Ensure spectators contribute to a positive sporting experience in support of all participants.

I would change "Ensure spectators contribute to a positive sporting experience..." to "Ensure spectators contribute to a safe, and respectful sporting experience...". The words "safe" and "respect" appears nowhere in this document, and they are important.

It also appears that "Ensure spectators contribute to a positive sporting experience in support of all participants" is just a throw-in add. Ultimately, that should not be in a philosophy statement for the entire division.

Member Responsibility and Oversight

General

Financial aid is no longer in here. Is that intentional? We need to be much more transparent about that being pulled out and why.

I strongly urge the NCAA to return the prohibition on financial aid/scholarship that is tied to athletic participation, performance, or leadership. To me, the prohibition on such financial aid or scholarships is an essential feature -- in fact, one of the key defining features -- of Division III.

Encourage participation and provide equitable opportunities with support for gender and ethnic/racial diversity. Give equal emphasis to men's and women's sports.

While included in the original philosophy statement, consider removing the new statement, "Give equal emphasis to men's and women's sports." This is a membership responsibility rooted in Title IX, but it should not be implicitly stated as there is no current bylaw that requires equal emphasis. The NCAA constitution intentionally placed Title IX compliance with its members and this statement implies it still is a function of NCAA membership.

Assure all teams are provided with adequate facilities, competent coaching, and appropriate competitive opportunities.

This statement is unmeasurable and puts the institution in a bad place as this is left to subjective interpretation.

Assure student-athletes are treated similarly to the student-body in the areas of admissions, enrollment, financial aid, academic and career support, academic performance, and degree completion.

The final bullet of the entire document used to say, "Assure that athletics participants are not treated differently from other members of the student body." The new draft has eliminated that initial statement and now only states that athletes need to be treated similarly in admissions, enrollment, financial aid, academic and career support, academic performance, and degree completion. There is no mention of behavioral/code of conduct expectations. In the new language, it would seem permissible to treat athletes differently in areas of behavioral discipline. For example, an athlete could either be punished more severely, or more leniently - because he/she is an athlete. The original statement in the previous document, allowed for interpretation that athletes should be treated similarly to all students in ALL areas of the institution..... not just the areas that are currently identified. Keeping that statement (or something similar) would retain the perspective of athletes should be treated similarly in all areas.