



**NCAA COMMON GROUND VI EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
OCTOBER 30-31, 2023, MEETING**

**VISION, MISSION AND OBJECTIVES**

The Common Ground initiative was established in 2014 to provide LGBTQ individuals and individuals of faith at public and private NCAA member institutions, LGBTQ organizations and faith-based organizations an opportunity to discuss commonalities and differences and learn how to work more cohesively within athletics.

The vision of Common Ground is to live in a world in which individuals of diverse faiths, sexual orientations, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, and any combination:

1. Understand each other's common humanity as demonstrated through empathy, respect and inclusive practices.
2. Intervene when witnessing lack of empathy, respect and inclusion.
3. Understand that we each bring multiple identities (e.g., race, class, ability) to Common Ground work and that these identities affect our perspectives and our experiences.

The mission of the Common Ground initiative is to find practical ways for people of all faiths, sexual orientations and gender identities to participate in intercollegiate athletics programs that model respect for all.

The objective for Common Ground VI was to connect with teams of colleagues at NCAA faith-based schools via the following actions:

- a. Share the vision and mission of the Common Ground initiative.
- b. Build trust between colleagues at faith-based institutions/organizations and the NCAA Common Ground Leadership Team.
- c. Listen to and learn about what faith-based colleagues are facing on their campuses.
- d. Share the following benefits of the Common Ground initiative to faith-based schools:
  - (1) Skill development on how to have respectful dialogue on difficult topics.
  - (2) Deepened understanding of how to support LGBTQ student athletes and students who are religiously diverse/students who have different faith perspectives.
  - (3) Meet other colleagues who care about these issues and develop a support network.
  - (4) Access resources to support individual development and campus engagement.

- (5) Learn how to develop practices, policies and resources for LGBTQ student athletes and students who are religiously diverse that are aligned with campus missions.

### **OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM – DAY 1**

- 1. Welcome from NCAA and Common Ground Leadership Team.** NCAA director of inclusion Jean Merrill welcomed Common Ground VI participants to the national office and offered a land and labor acknowledgement. Senior Vice President of Inclusion, Education and Community Engagement Felcia Martin, on behalf of President Charlie Baker and the NCAA national office staff, extended a warm welcome to participants. Martin's remarks focused on the significant difference a small group of committed individuals can have on making college athletics better for student-athletes.

Pat Griffin and La Shonda Coleman, as representatives of the Common Ground Leadership Team, welcomed participants and invited them to fully engage in the brave and often-challenging Common Ground discussions. Social justice educators and consultants Becky Martinez and Sam Offer served as the program facilitators and provided an overview of the logistics, roles, agenda, objectives and guidelines for Common Ground VI.

- 2. Common Ground Leadership Team Share.** Schuyler Bailar and Gary Pine spoke to participants about their personal experiences attending a Common Ground program for the first time. Participants were invited to reflect in pairs on what they were experiencing and feeling.
- 3. Concentric circles.** Participants created two concentric circles, and individuals from the outer circle paired with individuals from the inner circle. During four rounds, pairs of participants discussed one of the prompts listed below. After each round, new pairings were created to discuss a different prompt. The following prompts were used in the activity:
- a. Talk about a time you felt like you mattered. Talk about a time when you felt like you were marginalized.
  - b. What's hard about discussing LGBTQ issues in athletics? What's easy about discussing LGBTQ issues in athletics?
  - c. What's hard about discussing faith issues? What's easy about discussing faith issues?
  - d. What is the common ground that you seek from your perspective during this session? What are you willing to offer in service of seeking that common ground?
  - e. What is one hope that you have about our time together? What is one fear that you have about our time together?

4. **Common Ground Activity.** Participants stood in a circle and remained silent while the facilitators read out specific statements or identities. When participants identified with the statements or identities and were comfortable expressing to the group, they stepped forward into the circle or raised their hand. After the facilitators read several statements, participants were invited to express their own statements to which the group responded. This exercise created a visual representation of participants' identities and experiences, providing perspective on who shared common ground, and in a few cases, who might be the only person who identified with a statement or identity.
5. **Pair Share/Large Group Discussion.** Participants discussed in pairs and in large group the following prompts:
  - a. What impact did the Common Ground activity have for you?
  - b. What are you thinking about now?
  - c. What information does this give you about yourself?
  - d. What information does this offer you about the group that is gathered?
  - e. What information does it offer you as we do the Common Ground work together?
6. **Common Ground Leadership Team Share.** Helen Carroll and Clyde Doughty spoke to participants about their personal experiences attending a Common Ground program for the first time. Participants were invited to self-reflect and journal on what their personal experience has been thus far at Common Ground.
7. **Creating Common Ground on Campus.** Participant groups were invited to begin considering how to bring Common Ground to their faith-based campuses. The following questions were posed to illicit discussion:
  - a. What impact can the school representatives have?
  - b. What is possible in your role and the campus context?
  - c. What would allyship look like?
8. **Adjournment.** The facilitators closed the first programming day with general announcements about the next day.

## OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM – DAY 2

1. **Re-grounding in Purpose.** The facilitators welcomed the participants back to the Common Ground program and provided a reminder of the purpose and guidelines. The facilitators also checked in on how participants were feeling and progressing, and noted the importance of self-care, particularly when engaging in deep conversations.
2. **Common Ground Leadership Team Share.** Liz Darger and Pat Griffin spoke to participants using the following prompts:
  - a. What it was like for you in the midst of Common Ground for the first time?
  - b. What have you learned about being part of this journey of Common Ground?
  - c. What was it like returning to your campus?
  - d. What did you find challenging?
  - e. What did you find hopeful?

Participants were then invited to self-reflect and set some action plans using the following prompts:

- a. How do you plan to talk about this experience when you return to campus?
  - b. How do you plan to connect with, listen to, and learn from students?
3. **Small Group Conversations.** Participants convened in small mixed groups to continue discussions about creating Common Ground on their campuses. The following prompts guided the discussions and participants were invited to share anonymous responses in writing to help inform the Common Ground Leadership Team’s post-program support:
    - a. What does support look for you once returning to your campus?
    - b. What would you need?
    - c. What would be helpful to you?
    - d. What do you think would be possible for your campus?
  4. **Appreciations and Closing.** Participants were asked to pick one item from their personal action plan to share with other participants over the course of several rounds. The participants then offered ideas/advice on each of their action plan items. The facilitators encouraged participants to seek out individuals with whom they had made meaningful connections during

Common Ground VI and express gratitude for the experience. To conclude Common Ground VI, the facilitator asked each participant to choose one word that they would use to describe their experiences. The facilitators also emphasized the leadership team’s commitment to ongoing engagement with participants and their institutions.

<b>Common Ground VI October 30-31, 2023, Meeting</b>
<b>Facilitators:</b>
becky martinez, Infinity Martinez Consulting; Facilitator.
Samuel Offer, Washington Consulting Group; Facilitator.
<b>Participants:</b>
Lauren Amy, Liberty University.
Khrystian Armor, Norfolk State University.
Schuyler Bailar, Pinkmantaray, LLC; Common Ground Leadership Team.
Jeannie Banter, Asbury University.
Cori Bolts, Baylor University.
Kevin J. Brown, Asbury University.
Dawnyale Bundy, Virginia Union University.
Helen Carroll, National Center for Lesbian Rights; Common Ground Leadership Team.
La Shonda Coleman, Pepperdine University; Common Ground Leadership Team.
Steve Conn, LeTourneau University.
Liz Darger, Brigham Young University; Common Ground Leadership Team.
Kelsey Davis, Christian Athlete Circles.
Clyde Doughty, Jr., Bowie State University; Common Ground Leadership Team.
Deidra Dryden, Southern Virginia University.
Alicia du’Monceaux, University of Northwestern – St. Paul.
Malcolm Foley, Baylor University.
James Gehrels, Pepperdine University.
LaMaria Glass, Georgetown University.
Jaye Goosby Smith, Pepperdine University.
Pat Griffin, University of Massachusetts, Amherst; Common Ground Leadership Team.
Matt Hill, University of Northwestern – St. Paul.
Elizabeth Hoge, Ashland University.
Corbin Hoornbeek, University of Northwestern – St. Paul.
Tiffany Horton, Asbury University.
Craig Hovey, Ashland University.
Brianna Jaeger, Marquette University.
Al King, Ashland University.
AG Kruger, Ashland University.

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AJ (Abigail) Kurtz, Athlete Ally.
Kari Lewis, Marquette University.
Brian Martin, Anderson University (IN).
Deborah Martin, Virginia Union University.
John Mauer, Baylor University.
Tony Mazurkiewicz, Georgetown University.
Myron McClure, Pepperdine University.
Zach Meerkreebs, Asbury University.
Suzanne Merritt, LeTourneau University.
Chad Miller, Biola University.
Mark Muha, Biola University.
Shon Muldrow, Liberty University.
Sarah Orozco, Biola University.
Kendall Patton, Pepperdine University.
Tiffane Pendleton, Southern Virginia University.
Keadrick Peters, Bowie State University.
Gary Pine, Azusa Pacific University; Common Ground Leadership Team.
John Pistole, Anderson University (IN).
PJ Preston, Liberty University.
Annie Ricafranca, Biola University.
Adrienne Ridgeway, Marquette University.
Nick Roberts, Southern Virginia University.
Christina Ruffin, Norfolk State University.
Tim Sceggel, LeTourneau University.
Callie Schrank, Baylor University.
Tim Selgo, Mammoth Sports Consulting.
Logan Sharpe, Ashland University.
Eddie Shepard, Biola University.
Juliana Smith, Baylor University.
Marcie Taylor, Anderson University (IN).
Melody Webb, Norfolk State University.
Taylor White, Virginia Union University.
Mark Whitworth, Asbury University.
Jim Wickman, Georgetown University.
Jonathan Wilcoxson, LeTourneau University.
<b>NCAA Staff in Attendance:</b>
Niya Blair Hackworth, Brandon Fisher, Felicia Martin, Jean Merrill, Shay Wallach, Susana Weir, Amy Wilson and Donovan Wilson.