



**REPORT OF THE
NCAA COMMON GROUND IV MEETING
OCTOBER 31 – NOVEMBER 1, 2018
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY (PROVO, UTAH)**

GOALS

The Common Ground initiative was established in 2014 to provide LGBTQ individuals and individuals at public and private NCAA member institutions and faith-based organizations an opportunity to discuss commonalities and differences and learn how to work more cohesively within athletics. The main goal of the Common Ground initiative is to foster athletics environments that respect and support the dignity and well-being of student-athletes and those who teach and lead them. For Common Ground IV specifically, participants agreed to the following goals:

1. To identify strategies and best practices for institutions, athletics departments and athletics conferences to ensure that individuals may participate in an athletics climate of respect and inclusion, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or faith perspective.
2. To identify individual and institutional factors for establishing common ground.
3. To learn about various perspectives, experiences and beliefs and to break down stereotypes.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

The following questions framed the entirety of Common Ground IV:

1. Is it possible to protect and respect the rights of a private faith-based school to set policy in accordance with its faith tenets and ensure that people of faith and LGBTQ students, staff and faculty on campus are treated with respect, compassion and fairness? What actions can be taken toward this goal?
2. Is it possible to protect and respect the beliefs and rights of people of faith in public schools and protect the rights of people of faith and LGBTQ students and staff on such campuses? What actions can be taken toward this goal?
3. What personal actions toward the goal of creating respectful and inclusive school athletic climates for LGBTQ people and people of faith can we establish?
4. What are the next steps toward identifying institutional policy and best practice recommendations for creating inclusive and respectful climates for LGBTQ people and people of faith?

OVERVIEW OF MEETING ACTIVITIES – DAY 1

1. Introductions. Brigham Young University President Kevin Worthen offered opening remarks and welcomed Common Ground IV participants to campus. Worthen emphasized that Common Ground can serve as a model for what effective collaboration can look like in a time that is marked by stark polarization. He stressed the importance of holding one another accountable and concluded that Common Ground transcended athletics and college campuses. Katrice Albert, NCAA executive vice president for inclusion and human resources, welcomed Common Ground IV participants on behalf of the NCAA and praised the Common Ground initiative for being aligned with inclusion and human resources' strategic priorities. Albert also noted the NCAA's commitment to pursue common ground among LGBTQ people, people of faith, private faith-based institutions, private secular institutions and public institutions. Amy Wilson, NCAA managing director of inclusion, introduced the Common Ground leadership team and unveiled a Common Ground video. Liz Darger, senior associate athletics director and senior woman administrator at BYU, shared the personal impact Common Ground had on her and encouraged participants to use the experience as a time to reflect and to learn from one another.

2. Program.

a. Icebreaker. Participants engaged in a rock, paper, scissors tournament.

b. 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:

(1) Talk about a time you felt like you mattered. Talk about a time when you felt like you were marginalized.

(2) What's hard about discussing LGBTQ issues in athletics? What's easy about discussing LGBTQ issues in athletics?

(3) What's hard about discussing faith issues? What's easy about discussing faith issues?

(4) What is the common ground that you seek from your perspective during this session?

Participants reflected on the activity and shared their thoughts. Many participants pointed out the importance of treating all individuals with dignity and respect regardless of their differences. Participants also expressed a need to practice vulnerability and to identify practical ways to show respect toward both LGBTQ individuals and individuals of faith.

- c. Rules of engagement.** The facilitator guided the group to identify rules of engagement. These guidelines aimed to establish a safe space and build a community of trust in which all participants felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences. Participants committed to rules of engagement, which included but were not limited to the following:
- (1) Practice respect for participants and their lived experiences.
 - (2) Be open to the learning that can occur as experiences and ideas are shared.
 - (3) Treat the experiences of participants confidentially.
 - (4) Practice active listening, in which participants listen to understand rather than to respond.
 - (5) Practice risk-taking, openness and compassion.
 - (6) Embrace literacy moments by asking questions about the experiences of LGBTQ individuals and individuals of faith.
 - (7) Assume everyone's best intentions. Participants noted there would be mistakes, and those mistakes should be addressed, unpacked and overcome.
- d. Join me on common ground if.** Participants stood in a circle and remained silent while the facilitator read out specific statements beginning with "join me on common ground if." When participants identified with the statement and were comfortable expressing that to the group, they stepped forward into the circle. After the facilitator 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.
- e. Pair share.** After the "join me on common ground if" activity, participants discussed in pairs the following prompts:
- (1) What impact did the "join me on common ground if" activity have for you?
 - (2) What are you thinking about now? Participants first partnered with someone with whom they perceived to share a lot of common ground.

Participants then partnered with someone with whom they did not perceive to share much common ground. Lastly, the entire group of participants reconvened to reflect on the pair share activity. Individuals noted the activity prompted a reflection on their own life

experiences and privileges. Participants also stressed the importance of showing empathy in the interactions.

f. Table conversations. Participants engaged in table conversations regarding the following prompts:

(1) What is one hope you have about participating in Common Ground IV and the conversations that will ensue?

(2) What is one fear you have about participating in Common Ground IV and the conversations that will ensue?

After those discussions, participants were asked to share parts of their table conversations with the larger group.

g. Dinner spotlights. During dinner, six BYU student-athletes shared their experiences promoting inclusion at the institution. The student-athletes explained why inclusion was important to them, shared personal stories underlying the importance of inclusive environments, and gave insights into the student-athlete experiences as it relates to diversity and inclusion. The session concluded with several questions from Common Ground participants to the student-athletes.

h. Terminology activity. The facilitator handed out pre-printed cards, with half the cards listing a word and the other half listing a definition pertaining to LGBTQ or faith-based communities (for example, gender identity, Muslim, religion, sacred, sexual orientation or transgender). Participants then matched the correct words and definitions. The group reviewed each word and definition and amended definitions based on varied interpretations and personal experiences. The goal of the activity was to discuss, explain and understand LGBTQ- and faith-related terminology.

i. Adjournment. Darger closed the first programming day with general announcements about the next day.

OVERVIEW OF MEETING ACTIVITIES – DAY 2

1. Introductions. Tom Holmoe, BYU director of athletics, offered opening remarks and introduced the BYU athletics department senior leadership team. Holmoe stated that Common Ground provides participants and athletics administrators with an opportunity to develop as leaders who can serve as champions for all student-athletes regardless of their background. Additionally, three members of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee shared their experiences with diversity and inclusion leadership at BYU. The student-athletes stressed the importance of connecting with every teammate regardless of identity. The introductory remarks concluded with a video produced by BYU athletics titled, “Be You.”

2. Program.

- a. **Question mingle.** As follow-up to the previous day's terminology activity, participants wrote down a series of questions that had emerged and discussed those questions with others. The activity included several rounds of pair shares, as well as sharing questions with the larger group. The facilitator then encouraged participants to remember their questions and seek answers throughout the Common Ground experience.
- b. **Getting clear about intentions.** The facilitator showed a video titled, "The Power of Why Over What," featuring comedian Michael Jr. After the video, participants engaged in table conversations about the following questions:
 - (1) Why did you want to attend Common Ground IV?
 - (2) What is your why?
 - (3) What is your intention for today?
- c. **A common ground conversation.** Four members of the Common Ground leadership team sat on a panel to model a common ground conversation. The panelists included LGBTQ people, people of faith and LGBTQ people of faith. They explained how Common Ground helped build relationships with people who were different in many fundamental ways, yet who had become close friends and mentors. They stressed the strong sense of community, collaboration and allyship that has characterized the Common Ground leadership team.
- d. **Debrief on a common ground conversation.** Participants were given the opportunity to reflect on the common ground conversation at their tables. The discussion questions included the following:
 - (1) What did you hear that intrigued you?
 - (2) What did you notice about the conversation?
 - (3) What questions came up for you when listening to the panel?

The facilitator asked participants to share reactions to the common ground conversation. Participants praised the authenticity of the panelists, their genuine ability to love and respect one another despite their differences and their efforts to promote environments built on mutual respect and acceptance. Participants also commended the leadership team for modeling what allyship can look like in everyday interactions.

After the debriefing, participants traveled to Sundance Mountain Resort for the remainder of Common Ground IV. On arrival at Sundance, the group was welcomed by Chad Linebaugh, general manager of the resort, and Shauna Redford, daughter of Sundance founder Robert Redford, both of whom offered opening remarks outlining the history of the resort and the role diversity and inclusion have played in that history.

- e. **Trigger list activity.** The facilitator prompted participants to write down LGBTQ- and faith-related trigger words, phrases and actions they have encountered in their lives. The facilitator then asked participants to discuss the triggers at their respective tables. The facilitator defined a trigger as any stimulus, either external or internal to a person, that causes an emotional reaction. Emotional reactions may include, but are not limited to, feelings of unexpectedness, disorientation or general intensity.

Members of the leadership team shared the process of developing their own trigger list, which was distributed to participants. Upon reviewing the leadership team's trigger list, participants documented any triggers not included on the list and pointed out the need to be introspective when thinking about triggers and to remain in continued dialogue. The facilitator concluded the activity by reviewing the "Triggering Event Cycle" and "Triggering Event Traffic Circle," both of which were developed by Kathy Obear.

- f. **Caucus group conversations.** Participants formed groups based on their identities. Groups included people of faith, LGBTQ people, LGBTQ people of faith and people with no LGBTQ or faith affiliations. Each group was given 50 minutes to caucus and to engage in dialogue based on the following guiding questions:

- (1) How is it possible to protect and respect the right of private faith-based schools and/or public and private secular schools in accordance with faith tenants and ensure that LGBTQ students and staff on such campuses are treated with respect, compassion and fairness?
- (2) What makes it easier to do? What are the challenges?
- (3) What are the benefits of a common ground space? What are the drawbacks if a common ground space is not created?
- (4) What would a common ground vision look like at a faith-based school? In public and private secular institutions?
- (5) What is the current reality?
- (6) What are institutional hurdles? What are institutional sources of support or allies?

g. Fishbowl activity. All participants formed a circle. Each of the four caucuses sat in the middle of the circle (that is, in a “fishbowl”) for 10 minutes to re-create their discussions for all other participants to witness. Participants on the outside of the fishbowl listened to the caucus discussion in silence. After the members of each caucus finished their discussion in the fishbowl, participants outside the circle were invited to reflect on poignant moments witnessed.

(1) **LGBTQ people.** The group discussed the struggles faced by LGBTQ individuals, particularly when one’s LGBTQ identity intersects with religious identity. Citing a 41 percent suicide rate among transgender youth, the group emphasized the need to provide enough support for LGBTQ individuals. The group shared that at times it is hard to accept views rooted in religious beliefs that condemn a core aspect of their identity — such as sexual orientation or gender.

The group noted engagement around LGBTQ issues often focuses on individual narratives; however, the group called for more empirical studies that showed the negative impact of LGBTQ discrimination, as well as the positive impact of sports participation on LGBTQ youth. The group cited a 2018 study by the Human Rights Campaign that found 4 out of 5 LGBTQ athletes surveyed are not out to their coaches. The group urged administrators and coaches to take concrete steps toward making athletics spaces more welcoming to and accepting of members of the LGBTQ community by showing respect rather than a vaguely defined concept of “love.”

(2) **People of faith.** The group discussed ways in which safe spaces can be created on campus for all students, including those who identify as LGBTQ. The group called for more honest conversations about engagement around inclusion and diversity issues, and to move toward love and respect of LGBTQ individuals. Lastly, the group acknowledged that a student-athlete’s choice of institution is dependent on a variety of factors beyond LGBTQ and/or faith identities.

Group participants noted that actions to support LGBTQ student-athletes may pose unintended challenges for athletics administrators. Specifically, such support may upset other students at the university, thus underlining the need to continue to seek common ground between groups holding different ideological beliefs. The group advocated for a more proactive approach to finding common ground through sustained, in-depth conversations on LGBTQ inclusion, religion, and related diversity and inclusion topics.

(3) **People who are neither LGBTQ nor of faith.** Group participants pointed out that it is important to embrace the full diversity of faith identities, underscoring that they sometimes feel like they are not included in discussion about faith because they do not hold one of the dominant religious affiliations in the United States. The group called

for Common Ground participants to consider and, more importantly, empower the voices that are not heard in their everyday lives and may be easily overlooked. Group participants emphasized that individuals or institutions with different faith affiliations and opinions should not be ignored but should be engaged in dialogue.

(4) **LGBTQ people of faith.** The group discussed the importance of protecting the safety of all individuals, regardless of identity. Group participants noted that while inclusive policies are important, it is more important to change institutional culture. The group underscored the need to empower all student-athletes to be their authentic selves without repercussions. Participants emphasized that it is important for coaches and administrators to create cultures that embrace differences, allow all individuals to flourish, and condemn all forms of discrimination. Participants agreed inclusive language is of utmost importance in creating inclusive environments. The group emphasized the need for administrators to put student-athletes — and their safety — at the center of their work. Lastly, group participants criticized that LGBTQ people of faith are often asked to choose either their LGBTQ identity over their faith identity or vice versa. Instead, the group advocated for embracing everyone’s story and accepting people’s holistic identities.

h. Reflection. Participants were given time to reflect on what they learned and what the Common Ground experience had meant to them.

i. Moving forward on Common Ground (Part 1). The facilitator encouraged participants to think about their respective contexts and environments when considering how they would move forward with meaningful actions in their organizations, their campuses, their communities and their personal lives. Participants developed a personal action plan toward inclusion by writing responses to a series of prompts, including but not limited to the following:

(1) One thing I want to do differently as a result of the information I’ve gained today.

(2) Relationships I want to develop to keep learning about the information I’ve gained today.

(3) Changes I want to make in my leadership role.

(4) Ways that I want to practice self-care as I continue my learning.

j. Bringing it to your campus. Two members of the Common Ground leadership team shared their experiences and action steps at their respective faith-based institutions after Common Ground II and III. Each answered the following questions:

- (1) What were your initial steps after leaving the Common Ground sessions?
- (2) How did you get people with institutional power to engage with the conversation?
- (3) What has been the timeline of having things happen on your campuses?
- (4) What is your vision for the impact of the work on your campuses?

In answering these questions, the leadership team members encouraged participants to document their experience and develop an “elevator pitch” when talking about their experience. They also prompted participants to identify allies at their respective institutions (both within and outside the athletics department) that may help them to fulfill their inclusion action plan.

k. Moving forward on Common Ground (Part 2). Participants used the following guiding questions as they considered next steps after Common Ground IV:

- (1) What are your first steps that you will do upon returning to your institution?
- (2) What is your final vision for what is possible in your institution?
- (3) What contacts need to be made on campus and beyond campus?

Participants were asked to divide into “like-context” groups (for example, administrators from faith-based institutions, student-athletes, private secular institutions, public institutions, inclusion organizations) to have a conversation using the following questions:

- (1) How can a common ground conversation be re-created on campuses or at organizations?
- (2) What resources may you need to re-create those conversations or move forward with personal actions items?

l. Final thoughts, appreciations and evaluations. Participants were asked to pick one item from their personal action plan to share with other participants over the course of several rounds. The facilitator encouraged participants to seek out individuals with whom they have made meaningful connections throughout Common Ground IV and express gratitude for the experience. To conclude Common Ground IV, the facilitator asked each participant to choose one word to describe the experience. The words participants chose reflected participants’ ability to be inspired by the experience, share (com)passion with others, be energized to do more work, grow through vulnerability, and appreciate newly formed and renewed relationships during the two days.

PROGRAMMING SURROUNDING COMMON GROUND IV

1. **BYU campus engagement.** In addition to the Common Ground IV program, the Common Ground leadership team participated in the following activities to engage with the BYU campus community, the Provo community and religious leaders in the Salt Lake City area:
 - a. **Coaches meeting.** The leadership team met with BYU coaches and administrators and facilitated an educational session focused on inclusive language, LGBTQ identity and inclusive team cultures.
 - b. **Meet and greet with President's Council.** President Worthen and the President's Council welcomed members of the leadership team to learn more about the Common Ground initiative.
 - c. **Dinner with campus LGBTQ/SSA^[MP1] Working Group and student leaders.** The leadership team had dinner with members of the LGBTQ/SSA working group at BYU to learn more about its strategic efforts to promote LGBTQ inclusion at the university.
 - d. **Reception with student leaders and faculty.** Student leaders and faculty doing LGBTQ advocacy work on campus welcomed the leadership team during a dessert reception to network and learn from one another.
 - e. **Campus event.** In an event open to the BYU campus community, leadership team members facilitated a panel discussion that outlined their experiences with Common Ground, the history of the initiative, as well as defining moments.
 - f. **Student-athlete event.** Members of the leadership team conducted a workshop with BYU student-athletes, many of whom served on the university's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee. The workshop covered topics such as student-athlete identity and inclusive language.
 - g. **Presentation at the Utah University and College Counseling Center Conference.** Members of the leadership team served as keynote presenters at the Utah University and College Counseling Center Conference. Their presentation covered the history, motives and milestones of Common Ground and concluded with a Q&A session with the audience.
 - h. **Meeting with leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.** Leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints welcomed the leadership team to their headquarters in Salt Lake City, a visit that included a welcome lunch, a tour of Temple Square and a Bishop's Storehouse Tour.

**Common Ground IV
October 31-November 1, 2018, Meeting**

Facilitator:

Tanya Williams, Authentic Coaching and Consulting

Participants:

Sahar Abdur-Rashid, NCAA

Katrice A. Albert, NCAA

Tiffany Alford, NCAA

Chloe Anderson^[MP2]

Andre Apodaca, Texas Christian University

Schuyler Bailar, Harvard University

David Ball, Brigham Young University

Mark Becker, California Institute of Technology

David Berger^[MP3], California Institute of Technology

Nevin Caple, LGBT SportSafe Inclusion Program

Helen Carroll, National Center for Lesbian Rights Sports Project

Paul Chelsen, Wheaton College (Illinois)

La Shonda Coleman, Pepperdine University

Xavier Colvin, Butler University

Chad Cooper, Widener University

Debbie P. Corum, Southern Utah University

Mika Costello, Willamette University

Liz Darger, Brigham Young University

Clyde Doughty Jr., Bowie State University

Jess Duff, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Jeremy Faulk, Tennessee State University

Blake Fisher, Brigham Young University

Emma Gee, Brigham Young University

Jimmy Gehrels, University of Arizona

Pat Griffin, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Greta Hays, Council for Christian Colleges & Universities

Amy Huchthausen, America East Conference

Ashland Johnson, Civil Rights Lawyer and Sports Inclusion Policy Expert

Brad Jones, Academy of Art University

Kate Kendell, National Center for Lesbian Rights

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Kevin Mannoia, Azusa Pacific University
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Jared Sumsion, Utah Valley University
Jonathan Tymann, Gordon College
Brian Wall, Colorado Christian University
Chris Williams, Southern Wesleyan University
Amy Wilson, NCAA
Shane Windmeyer, Campus Pride
Dan Wood, National Christian College Athletic Association
Brad Zarges, Eastern Nazarene College
Other Staff in Attendance:
Yannick Kluch, NCAA
Emma Munguia, Brigham Young University
Rachel Stark-Mason, NCAA