1. As a faculty senate coalition, COIA has generally focused on advocating for better alignment of athletics with academics. Its widely known proposals for policies and best practices on academic and governance issues have reflected its expertise as a faculty group. However, increasingly dominant commercial forces and rising calls for professionalization, particularly in revenue sports, are now the greatest challenges posed by the growth of intercollegiate athletics. Therefore COIA will strengthen its efforts to advocate for constructive responses to the growing financial and reputational risks that market-driven models of sports entertainment pose to US higher education and its traditional collegiate model of amateur sports.

2. Amateurism is essential to the compatibility of sports and academics and to the reputational benefits US higher education has long seen in its sports programs. It can only be sustained for revenue sports in the long term if the increasingly legitimate equity arguments about “pay for play” – the conversion of these sports to an expanding commercial entertainment enterprise – are addressed. Therefore COIA should hold to its position in favor of the collegiate model, and call for changes to reverse the growth of commercialism in college sports that has prompted pay-for-play proposals.

3. While the NCAA is demonstrating significant ability to regulate in the interests of higher education in the area of academic reform, it is prevented by antitrust laws from doing so in the area of economic regulation, and it has been amply demonstrated that schools are not able to do so themselves. Without modification of antitrust constraints, there is no mechanism to restrain the market forces driving rapid commercial expansion. Therefore COIA should endorse focused exploration of Congressional approval for an antitrust exemption concerning college sports.

4. Amateurism and the compatibility of sports and academics cannot be maintained without cooperative regulation. While the NCAA has historically had a number of problematic features, the trajectory of its activity in the past decade has been positive. It would be ineffective and wasteful to seek to replace it with an equivalent organization or to break it into multiple organizations serving school constituencies based on the economic scale of sports programs. Therefore COIA should maintain its policy of cooperation with the NCAA and support for the NCAA’s regulatory mission, while continuing to analyze and, where appropriate, criticize NCAA policies or implementation that prioritize the interests of sports programs over the academic mission of US higher education.

5. The most successful FBS revenue sports programs may be in a position, now or in the near future, to fund professionalized sports programs in the belief that they will be able to operate successfully in a sports market independent of NCAA membership. They may be motivated to do so by pressure from non-academic constituencies, the prospect of short-term economic benefits, or the prospect of new economic regulation that is likely to mitigate their elite status in athletics in the long-term. This would be a high-risk experiment for a critical sector of US higher education, financially, reputationally, and in terms of essential abandonment of the ideal of academically-based control over athletics. Such changes would likely involve separation of these schools from the NCAA regulatory structure, particularly an NCAA strengthened by
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antitrust regulation. Therefore COIA should advocate for policies that will maintain the membership of all current FBS football conferences within the NCAA, consistent with the collegiate model of college sports.