

August 9, 2005

VIA FACSIMILE [«Fax»]

«Title» «First» «Last»
«Org»
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«City», «FullState» «Zip»

Dear «Title» «Last»:

During their August 4, 2005, meeting, the presidents and chancellors who serve on the NCAA Executive Committee adopted a new policy to prohibit NCAA colleges and universities from displaying hostile or abusive racial/ethnic/national origin mascots, nicknames or imagery at any of the Association's national or regional championship competitions. This policy will be effective February 1, 2006. Prior to the effective date, member institutions impacted by the terms of this new NCAA policy may seek further review of the application of that policy to their schools through the NCAA governance structure.

As you may know, the issue of Native American mascots and images in college athletics has been the subject of discussion among NCAA members, its Minority Opportunities and Interests Committee (MOIC) and the NCAA Executive Committee Subcommittee on Gender and Diversity Issues for the past five years. Several years ago, the Executive Committee, through MOIC, solicited further information from institutions that possess Native American mascots, nicknames or imagery. A self-evaluation study completed by each of the 33 institutions (attachment) provided a detailed review of this issue on each campus. Based on this review, the Executive Committee determined that 18 institutions fall within the parameters of this new policy.

The NCAA, as a membership association, objects to member colleges and universities using hostile or abusive racial/ethnic/national origin references in their intercollegiate athletics programs. One of our core purposes is to govern competition in a fair, safe, equitable and sportsmanlike manner. Other core principles include promoting an atmosphere of respect for and sensitivity to the dignity of every person and integrating intercollegiate athletics into higher education so that the educational experience of the student-athlete is paramount.

Several colleges and universities have made changes that adhere to these core values of the NCAA Constitution pertaining to cultural diversity, ethical sportsmanship, an inclusive culture and respect for institutional autonomy and philosophical differences. We applaud those efforts, and we will continue to monitor those universities and others, according to the standard NCAA institutional self-study process. All NCAA colleges and universities are encouraged to promote these core values and take proactive steps at every NCAA event through institutional event management to enhance the integrity of intercollegiate athletics related to these issues.

Certainly, these issues are quite complex, and colleges and universities need to retain institutional autonomy to address these matters. Choosing a sports team mascot is inherently an institutional decision. However, while the NCAA supports institutional autonomy as a key component of the overall mission of the Association, we have a duty to address actions and behaviors that are inconsistent with core values and principles of the NCAA Constitution. It is the responsibility of everyone associated with an intercollegiate athletics program and event, including student-athletes, fans and coaches, to establish an environment of respect for and sensitivity to the dignity of every person. NCAA championship competition takes a national stage and has significant impact in the public forum. As such, we believe that mascots, nicknames or images deemed hostile or abusive in terms of race, ethnicity or national origin should not be visible at our events.

An institution may wish to challenge this policy. There are two avenues to do so. An institution may appeal the applicability of the policy to its particular situation. For example, it may argue that its use of Native American names, symbols or mascots does not create a hostile or abusive environment. Additionally, an institution may seek to amend or modify the policy itself. In that case, it would use a modified process of that normally used for amending legislation at the presidential level

In more detail, an institution that wishes to appeal its standing as an affected institution should submit a written appeal describing its unique circumstances, as well as the relevant grounds for appeal, to the Executive Committee Subcommittee on Gender and Diversity Issues prior to the policy's effective date of February 1, 2006. An adverse decision of this subcommittee may be appealed to the Executive Committee. Appeals received by the Executive Committee will first be referred to the appropriate divisional presidential body to ensure thorough feedback and consideration by the divisional structure. Specifically, the divisional presidential bodies will be asked to provide a recommendation to assist the Executive Committee in its consideration. In order to assist you in a timely resolution of such appeals, please note that the NCAA Executive Committee and the divisional presidential bodies are scheduled to meet in person October 27, 2005, and January 9, 2006.

Any institution, group of institutions or conference also may seek to amend or change the policy itself. Such a request should be submitted through the respective divisional presidential governing body for its consideration. These bodies will develop a recommendation for the Executive Committee's consideration. Such appeals shall set forth the terms and rationale for the suggested amendment or policy change.

We recognize that these issues are multifaceted and continue to be quite challenging. The rational office staff stands ready to assist you in this process.

Sincerely,

Myles Brand
President

MB:jw

Attachment

American Indian Self-Evaluations (Attachment)

