

## The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA): A Brief Introduction

COIA is a coalition of 63 faculty senates at NCAA FBS schools, first formed in 2002 as an alliance in support of reform ideas that were under discussion among college presidents at the time, a trend that subsequently led to the appointment of Myles Brand as President of the NCAA. The initial leadership of COIA was composed of its member senate chairs, and senates joined by votes of their entire membership, endorsing a “[Framework](#)” of policy positions that included five basic areas of concern: 1. Academic integrity; 2. Athlete welfare; 3. Athletics governance; 4. Fiscal responsibility; 5. Over-commercialization.

The specific content of these elements was expanded through detailed policy and best practice guides, including white papers on [Campus Athletics Governance](#) (2004) and [Academic Integrity](#) (2005). On the basis of these papers, a more detailed outline of policy positions was developed in 2007 under the title “[Framing the Future](#).” All these documents were endorsed by the Coalition through the full votes of its member senates. They form the framework within which COIA activities continue.

COIA strongly supports intercollegiate athletics as an activity that enriches the academic mission of colleges by creating campus community, strengthening alumni loyalty, enhancing the public visibility of higher education, and providing a valuable extracurricular opportunity for student athletes. However, these goods are increasingly undermined by the pressures of high-stakes institutional competition for reputation and public attention, and, above all, for the revenues necessary to meet the spiraling costs of programs capable of sustaining the interest of national media markets. In this environment, decision making in college sports must increasingly prioritize issues of money over interests of the academic mission of the NCAA and its member schools. These are COIA’s concerns.

Over its history, COIA, through its national Steering Committee, has adopted many specific policy positions, commented on developments in college sports, participated in NCAA initiatives, and worked with partner organizations, such as Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics and the AAUP. Although the focus of its efforts has necessarily varied with the changing context of college sports, the framework of its goals remains grounded in basic principles to which its member senates have subscribed.

1. [Academic integrity](#). College sports must be an enhancement of academics; conduct that undermines academic integrity is unacceptable. Practices that lead to the recruitment of academically unqualified students, substandard courses or degree programs, and all forms of athletics related academic dishonesty must be identified and eliminated. Transparency and an appropriate role for faculty oversight are essential.
2. [Athlete welfare](#). Student athletes must be treated as students first. Policies that isolate athletes from the general student body, that place undue demands upon their time, that threaten to end academic scholarship support if athletics are not prioritized, or that demand professional level training and performance for an extracurricular activity are inconsistent with the “collegiate model” of college sports.
3. [Governance](#). Campus athletics governance should be designed to permit the faculty, as the stewards of the academic mission, to play an appropriate due diligence oversight role efficiently and effectively.
4. [Fiscal responsibility](#). At all but a few schools, athletics operates in deficit, and significant – often substantial – costs are subsidized by the general fund or student fees, affecting the academic mission. Athletics financing must be transparent, and expenditure commitments must be maintained at levels consistent with campus policies on acceptable levels of athletics subsidies in which faculty have a voice.
5. [Over-commercialization](#). Dependence on extraordinary media revenues has eroded institutional control and led college sports to increasingly emulate pro sports performance standards and entertainment industry compensation, departing from academic priorities and campus norms. Pressures for athlete compensation and unionization grow from this context, within which the Collegiate Model cannot survive.

These are basic positions endorsed by COIA member senates, central to the agenda that guides the Coalition Steering Committee in its advocacy role. The role of Coalition member senates is to retain an institutional memory of this shared mission and help the COIA leadership adjust the mission to fit emerging circumstances.