

In The SAAC

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The Voice of the D-I National Student-Athlete Advisory Committee

So Much At Stake

- Teli Ho, West Coast Conference

On October 28, 2003 I was given the opportunity to partake in the discussion of California Senate Bill 193. In January 2004, SB 193 will be presented to the Committee on Higher Education, where it will come to a vote. If the bill passes this group, it will only be a few steps away from reaching Governor Schwarzenegger. California Senator Murray and the Collegiate Athletes Coalition (CAC) are leading the bill that can cause detrimental consequences to Division I, II, and III schools in California. The CAC and Senator Murray's push for the bill are supported by inaccurate information, arguments based on emotion, and the sob stories of a few football players. Senate Bill 193 focuses on seven main topics: the term of a scholarship, scholarships equaling the "cost of attendance," student-athletes' ability to earn wages, student-athlete health insurance coverage during voluntary hours, gifts of necessities, transfer rules, and the role of agents. The NCAA has already addressed three of the seven proposals and two more should soon follow.

Legislative proposal 2002-83-A addresses the cost of attendance issue within SB 193. In basic terms, the proposal would allow student-athletes to earn non-athletics related financial aid,



Division I, II, III National SAACs always undertake a community service project when they travel for meetings. At the NCAA Convention in Nashville, TN, the SAACs gave four hours to Monroe Harding Childrens Home, a special home for underprivileged youth. After their efforts, they pose here.

like academic scholarships, beyond a current full scholarship – grant-in-aid, or tuition, room, board, books, and fees – to what is known as the cost of attendance – a full grant-in-aid plus some money for trips home etc. This proposal is essential to bridging the financial gap for student-athletes as it allows us the

same access to financial aid as our fellow students in the general student body. Simplistically speaking, proposal 2002-83-A will allow us to buy a new toothbrush and a pizza every now and then. Our committee has had two important opportunities

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Ian Gray, Big 12 Conference, and Mark DiPisa, Northeast Conference, work on redesigning an informational bulletin board for the Monroe Harding Childrens Home. The community service took place before the NCAA Convention.

The Chair, In The SAAC Why The SAAC?

- Dylan Malagrino, Big East Conference

As my fourth and final year as the Big East Conference representative to the Division I NCAA Student-Athlete Advisory Committee draws to a close, I am just beginning to realize how necessary it is to have active and informed student-athletes working within the NCAA governance structure to protect the welfare of all student-athletes. The welfare of student-athletes, especially Division I student-athletes, depends on the active and informed participation of all of us working with the NCAA because only student-athletes have our interest as the number-one priority. That is why the student-athlete advisory committees (SAACs) are the best way to protect student-athlete welfare, and your involvement as a student-athlete is a necessity.

To be the most involved and influential you need to be persuasive, which requires you to learn and challenge yourself to understand the way collegiate athletics works. The NCAA is a huge association. Its operation is run by institutional and conference representatives and NCAA staff. These individuals serve on various cabinets, committees, and subcommittees to debate, propose, resolve, and enact changes to collegiate athletics-- changes that will affect all NCAA student-athletes. Unfortunately, finances, institutional welfare, and competitive

inequities often shroud the most important issue when governing collegiate athletics, student-athlete welfare. Since 1989, the processes of the NCAA have included current and recent student-athletes serving on these various committees. We must utilize these opportunities to voice our concerns and actively participate in the governance of ourselves. Yet, it is also important to know we have miles to go before our student-athletes have attained the full representation required for an effective association, however, the opportunities we have must be grasped by all student-athletes' involvements in SAACs. The opportunities presented by such involvement are important, endless, and fruitful.

SAACs are the campus, conference, and national groups comprised of NCAA student-athletes assembled to provide insight on the student-athlete experience and offer input regarding the rules, regulations, and policies affecting student-athletes' lives. Presently, there are separate national SAACs for NCAA Divisions I, II, and III. Additionally, current NCAA legislation mandates that all member institutions have campus SAACs and all member conferences have conference SAACs.

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Q&A In The SAAC

- Hannah England,
Ivy League Conference

Q: Boosters keep inviting me to their house for dinner. Am I allowed to do this?

A: I will answer your question about food first, because providing meals to student-athletes is a different issue than recreational activities. NCAA bylaw 16.12.1.5 states that a student-athlete or the entire team may receive an occasional meal from a booster, as long as the meal is at the booster's home. Such an invitation must only be extended on infrequent or special occasions. Infrequent and special occasions are open to interpretation, so please consult with your compliance coordinator prior to any activity with a booster.

Q: I am a 5th year senior and am 6 hours away from graduation. My coach told me that he wasn't going to be able to pay for my remaining 6 hours in the summer. I also don't have enough money to pay for my GRE exam to get into grad school. Do you know how I can get money for this?

A: You ask a couple of good questions. Recently, the Division I membership has instituted the "Student-Athlete Opportunity Fund," a fund that is governed by the conference offices. The permissible uses for the fund include summer school tuition and graduate school entrance exam fees. Therefore, it would be a good idea to speak with your compliance coordinator or with your conference SAAC advisor and they should be able to help you.

In The SAAC Staff

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SAAC Spotlight

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SAAC Spotlight

Each issue we will feature a campus SAAC that is making waves in their athletic department, on campus, and or in the community. These are real students, real lives that are making a positive difference for others. If you have a great SAAC that you would like featured in the next issue or would like further information regarding the programs in this piece, please send an email to: 04_ksorensen@campus.fairfield.edu

- Kelly Sorensen, Metro Atlantic Conference

Competitiveness lies in the blood of every student-athlete. It is a part of us that will eternally encompass our personality. As student-athletes, we express this on the field, court, in the water, or perhaps when sitting in the classroom; we are constantly looking for competitive outlets. The University of New Hampshire Wildcats created another outlet for our competitiveness, challenging student-athletes in a unique and inspirational way. The Life Skills Competition, created by the Wildcats, entails competition in seven different integral life skills categories, including but not limited to Team Enhancement, Community Outreach, Highest Team GPA, Athletes Supporting Athletes, and SAAC Communication. Teams compete throughout the academic year and subsequently earn points for how well they perform. At the end of the year there are prizes, one of the endearing goals of any student-athlete. At New Hampshire, the Men's Basketball team won in 2000-2001 and donated their first place prize to a scholarship in honor of a member of the women's Gymnastics team who had a student-athlete that passed away earlier in the year.

Matt Drayton, the Director of

Life Skills for the Wildcats, created this program. His vision, however, did not end with his athletics department, as he has allowed for this program to be implemented at any institution. The only stipulation regarding this competition is that the University of New Hampshire is recognized for its superb originality. Mr. Drayton states in the brochure about this program, "It gives student athletes credit for things they were doing already. It shows which coaches are most vested in their student athletes' growth." This competition has inspired other athletics departments across the country to begin rewarding student-athletes for their involvement in categories such as those mentioned earlier, either through implementing the Life Skills Competition or through similar programs.

One particular institution that used a similar program to greatly improve their student-athlete involvement in the life-skills program is the Saints of Siena University. Stephen Dombroski, a Lacrosse student-athlete and SAAC Member at Siena said, "The S.A.I.N.T.S Cup is a competition created to encourage participation in the Champs/Life Skills components [such as academic excellence, career development, personal development, com-

munity service, and athletic excellence]." At Siena, the SAAC is responsible for organizing the S.A.I.N.T.S Cup events. Thanks to the leadership of UNH, schools such as Siena have been able to improve their Champs/Life Skills program, as well as their SAAC.

Because of the leadership of institutions such as UNH and Siena, each year more athletics departments are beginning programs to motivate student-athletes to invest themselves in the ideals of Champs/Life Skills programs. Matt Drayton provides further information on implementation of New Hampshire's Life Skills Competition for your institution.

To the reader, we challenge you to use these unique yet successful concepts in your athletics department. Before implementing such a program, first determine if such a program is viable at your institution and then decide in what ways your athletics department could tailor the program to make a positive influence on your student-athletes. Competitiveness runs in our blood and if we use it to make a difference in our community and for our future then we have found success.

Where's The Beef?

- Liz McCaslin, Southeastern Conference

- Kenan Smith, Big Sky Conference

Money, money, money! During competition, money should be the last thought running through our minds. As we prepare to serve, kick, throw, or hit the first ball, even as we toe the line, last night's meal shouldn't play host in the same mental space as the competition before us. However, as student-athletes we know this is not always the case. Maintaining proper nutrition before and during competition, at whatever the cost, is an important aspect of student-athlete welfare. And when it comes to this welfare, how come there never seems to be enough of it? As student-athletes we place our futures and our

welfare in the hands of coaches and administrators who are supposed to have our best interest in mind, yet at times it is hard to believe that this is true, especially with regard to meal money.

We must realize that institutional autonomy is critical in funding various athletics programs, as some institutions have the ability to fund each of their teams equally and others may not. However, as student-athletes we need to have open and honest conversations with our coaches and administrators regarding meal money for long weekend road trips, as well as pre- and post-game meals, regardless of whether they are associated with home or away competitions.

See **The Beef** page 6 →



Each year at the NCAA Convention an Honors Dinner is held, honoring the recipients of the Theodore Roosevelt award, Award of Valor, Inspiration award, Silver Anniversary honorees, and Today's Top VIII. Division-I National SAAC dressed their best for the banquet.

We Have The Greatest Influence On Sportsmanship
- Blake Boldon, Missouri Valley Conference

At the most recent meeting of the Committee on Sportsmanship and Ethical Conduct the committee challenged itself to explore ways that team leaders can use their influence to improve sportsmanship. In thinking about the team leader's effect on sportsmanship, several questions emerge. What effect do team leaders' actions have on the behavior of the remainder of the team? What is the best course of action for a team leader to help improve the "sideline" conduct of the coaching staff? And, is it possible for student-athletes to improve the sportsmanship of fans and spectators? The answers to these questions are not clear-cut. However, in addressing these questions we might augment incidents that give collegiate sports a black eye.

It is clear that attitudes of team members reflect the attitude of team leadership. Hence, team leaders have a sizeable impact on the behavior and mind-set of team members. A poignantly portrayed guide of action steps to improve sportsmanship is outlined in Jeff Janssen's book *The Team Captain's Leadership Manual*. Janssen makes five points that seem elementary. However, if every student-athlete abided by these guidelines, the ugly incidents that are constantly in the press would significantly decrease. The five principles

- are as follows:
- 1) Play aggressively but not dirty
 - 2) Respect officials
 - 3) Obey the rules of the game, conference, and association
 - 4) Watch your language
 - 5) Be a gracious winner and loser

If a team leader does not follow these simple standards, then we cannot expect the remainder of the team to maintain a superior level of sportsmanship. Another important role of a leader is to interject in a situation where a teammate is acting inappropriately and remind that person of their responsibilities to a code of higher conduct. Without a doubt, as demonstrated, a team captain can help improve the conduct of other student-athletes, but it will only happen if team leaders make sportsmanship a priority.

A more precarious issue is the role a team leader should play in improving a coach's sideline conduct. As Janssen points out in his text, one of the primary roles of a team leader is to act as a spokesperson for the team in conversations with the coaching staff. Many coaches welcome questions, comments, and concerns from student-athletes, but others may not be open to discussion concerning this topic. This situation should be handled as maturely as possible, and if the leader feels that the coach is unapproachable it may be best to contact an athletic administrator. I

would surmise many coaches would willingly strive to improve their conduct if they knew it embarrassed or offended their student-athletes, however, student-athletes might best affect coaches' behavior by modeling good sportsmanship when competing and practicing.

During competitions many of the problems that arise stem from inappropriate fan behavior. Many student-athletes underestimate their influence on spectators' attitudes and behavior. The use of gamesmanship often times incites inappropriate fan behavior. Questioning officials in front of a home crowd leads spectators to harass the officials in an inappropriate manner. Similarly, a visiting student-athlete taunting the audience may lead to major conflicts. If we compete in an unsportsmanlike manner, we only encourage spectators to engage in inappropriate activities.

It is important that as student-athletes, and especially as team leaders, we remember that in competition we are on a stage. As leaders we can positively affect the sportsmanship of those around us, but if we take our roles for granted, we will see no improvement in the current sporting environment. Even though good sportsmanship will not win a conference championship, it is something that we must strive to achieve. Whether it is dealing with teammates and coaches in practice or competing in front of a capacity crowd, we need to remember that sportsmanship begins with team leaders.

Why The SAAC

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As such, every student-athlete has the opportunity to be involved in these committees.

At the institutional level, members of a **campus SAAC** have the opportunity to address issues affecting student-athletes at their institution. These members have the opportunity to offer input on issues that directly affect their athletic environment. For example, as student-athletes, maybe you feel it necessary to have priority registration for classes to accommodate your unparalleled and demanding schedule. Or as student-athletes you disagree with your institution's policies regarding certain dietary supplements that are permissible under the NCAA rules, but the institution does not allow. These are the types of issues that student-athletes can tackle when we come together at our campus SAAC meetings.

Additionally, campus SAAC members may offer comments to their institutional representative to the conference SAAC that may impact changes to conference and national rules and regulations. The campus committee is meant to serve as a local student-athlete voice in addressing issues of student-athlete welfare at their respective institutions. Campus committees can facilitate better communication among student-athletes from various athletics teams to address issues common to all student-athletes on that campus. The campus SAAC is also a forum for communication among student-athletes, coaches, and administrators on issues to improve the student-athlete experience and promote growth and education through sports participation. Concerns can be voiced and solutions offered regarding any issue that may be relevant to NCAA student-athletes. Through the campus SAACs, student-athletes have the opportunity to change the face of intercollegiate athletics.

The functions of campus SAACs are varied. Here are some effective things campus SAACs do:

- **Promote communication** between athletics administration and student-athletes.
- **Disseminate information** to the sports teams.
- **Provide feedback** and insight into athletics department issues.
- Generate a student-athlete voice within the campus athletics department's formulation of policies.
- **Build a sense of community** within the athletics program involving all athletics teams
- **Solicit student-athlete responses** to proposed conference and NCAA legislation
- **Organize** community service efforts
- **Create** a vehicle for student-athlete representation on campus-wide committees
- **Promote** a positive student-athlete image on campus.

Together, student-athletes truly can make a difference on campus, learn the rules that govern athletics, gain valuable experience in athletics administration and compliance, and boost a resume with impressive leadership skills. Moreover, you may have the opportunity to become an influential change-agent at the conference and national levels.

NCAA member conferences have created conference SAACs to strengthen the communication between the campus and national committees. Through increased communication and networking, the conference SAACs represent the views of all student-athletes. At the conference SAAC, the institutional representatives can have open discussion regarding the problems they each have on the campuses and what changes should be made. Likewise, the conference SAACs afford the national SAAC representatives opportunity to gather information regarding proposed legislation, as well as inform campus representatives and ultimately all student-athletes of new NCAA

changes. For example, the conference SAACs have been a useful tool for informing student-athletes about the Student-Athlete Opportunity Fund, a source of money for the benefit of all student-athletes, and how to tap into those monies.

The Division I National SAAC consists of one student-athlete from each of the 31 Division I conferences. Members are selected from a pool of three nominees from each of the represented conferences. The Division I SAAC reports directly to the Division I Management Council and two SAAC members participate in each meeting of the Management Council as nonvoting members. It is through these two mechanisms that NCAA Division I student-athletes offer input in shaping the proposed legislation by which their division is governed. Specifically, the Division I National SAAC generates a unified student-athlete voice within the NCAA structure. We do this by soliciting from the campus and conference SAACs student-athlete responses to proposed NCAA legislation and debate the merits of the proposals. Also, we recommend and request sponsorship for potential NCAA legislation. Then, we review, react, and comment to the governance structure on legislation activities, actively participate in the administrative process, and promote a positive student-athlete image by speaking to the media.

Being the chair of the Division I SAAC has been an amazing experience and I have seen great progress toward empowering student-athletes. However, as discussed above, we're still progressing. Currently, student-athletes are fighting to have the same financial aid and scholarship opportunities as the general student body. Also, we are monitoring the drastic changes in the NCAA academic requirements to prevent student-athletes from losing opportunities to compete. To be effective we need all student-athletes involved. Let's start with SAAC.

The Beef

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In this manner, we as student-athletes can, at the very least, begin to understand the thought process behind testimonials such as one we heard at the NCAA Leadership Conference in May 2003. One particular student-athlete confessed that on his trips he and his teammates resorted to buying Top Ramen Noodles to eat because his coach did not give the team adequate meal money.

On road trips we as student-athletes don't always know how much money we are allowed to receive, so when our coach or advisor hands us a sum of money we trust that they are giving us the right or fair amount. We must know that thirty dollars a day is the maximum that a student-athlete is allowed to receive for meals, but many schools do not allot this, giving as little as twenty-five to forty dollars for an entire weekend road trip. Even at forty dollars for Friday morning through Sunday night – that's nine meals – you only have just over four dollars a meal and that can easily equate to Ramen Noodles. From this, it's a surprise that some coaches wonder why we don't perform at our best when fast food is all we can afford on the road. Any student-athlete knows that this particular food does nothing to enhance our performance. It is like putting sugar into the gas tank of a car.

In terms of pre- and post-game meals here is an important rule that many student-athletes might not know: NCAA bylaw 16.5.2 states that, "An institution, at its discretion, may provide cash, not to exceed ten-dollars, in lieu of either a pre- or post game meal to student-athletes associated with a contest." Every institution and every team has different methods of carrying out this rule, but the part that is the haziest to student-athletes is the ten-dollar limit. If your coach decides to give you this money rather than provide you with a meal, you must sign a piece of paper declaring the amount they gave you is actually the amount you received. If these amounts do not coincide, you must discuss this with your coach or with someone in your athletics department, you can



Members of the D-I, D-II, and D-III SAACs, paint a room at Monroe Harding Childrens Home. Kenan Smith, Big Sky Conference, and Ryan Morgan, Western Athletic Conference, balance on chairs above.

even contact your conference's Division I SAAC representative.

At home or away matches, many teams choose to cater meals for the student-athletes. Others teams eat out and coaches tell student-athletes to order what they want while, "keeping it reasonable." What is reasonable at McDonalds or Taco Bell? Either way the student-athlete does not see any of the \$10 allotment. Molly McLaughlin Big 10 National Student-Athlete representative asked her school about the issue of meal money. Molly states, "I got a range of different stories from players on different teams. I feel the main concern from all of them was that meal money should be regulated equally and distributed fairly across the board. But, I also realize that budgets are different and coaches try to manage with what they are given."

Like most issues, not all institutions handle them the way. As many of you realize, meal money is no exception. Finances play a large role in deciding how teams and programs are funded. However, this does not lend an excuse for our athletics departments to not explain why certain things are done the way they are, why money is given to some and not to others. We do so much for our institutions and as student-athletes we need someone to take a vested interest in our welfare. We implore you to talk to your administrators, including your coach, your faculty athletics representative (FAR), senior women's administrator (SWA), and athletics director (AD) about the issue of meal money. The further the discussion goes, the more that can change, especially in regard to our welfare.

The ladies of D-I National SAAC with NCAA President Myles Brand, center, at the Honors Dinner at the National Convention

At Stake

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to meet with Division I Management Council and the Board of Directors, as well as had the opportunity to speak on the floor of the NCAA convention during the legislative review session, as we strongly urged the passing of this proposal.

As California Senate Bill 193 addresses required health insurance coverage, NCAA legislative proposal 2003-139, permits member institutions to pay for medical treatment resulting from any injury or illness, even if the injury or illness is not athletically related. As this proposal will also be officially voted on in April, it is permissive in nature and will greatly enhance the welfare of student-athletes.

SB 193 also addresses the ability for student-athletes to earn wages, or the ability to work outside of sports. Legislative proposal 2002-21, which was adopted by the NCAA membership over a year ago, exempted the earnings of student-athletes from counting against team scholarship limits. One of the resounding reasons this proposal passed was due to strong comments by the National SAAC in support of this proposal.

Our committee is currently reviewing NCAA by-laws regarding the term of an athletics scholarship, as well as, transfer rules in our upcoming meetings. Each of these proposals, including others that directly effect student-athlete welfare, are addressed with great importance to the National SAAC, as the protection of such welfare is one of our highest priority.

As a student-athlete well involved in my education, sport, work, and extracurricular activities, the cries of football players are trivial. I attend an NCAA member institution, which places great emphasis on building a strong foundation in preparing us for the real world. As a competitor in the sport of rifle, I have yet to bombard myself with the idea of full scholarships, let alone a home range. The NCAA has given me the opportunity to compete on a fair and equal playing field. Although rules drafted by member institutions of the NCAA are not perfect, the NCAA overcomes this imperfection by listening to those who matter to them most, student-athletes, and they do so through Student-Athlete Advisory Committees (SAAC) at the campus, conference, and national levels.

The consequences associated with passing SB 193 will affect everyone. Student-athletes at California higher institutions will no longer be able to participate in NCAA sanctioned local, regional, and national championships. Sports fans will no longer be able to gather to cheer for their teams. There will no longer be the opportunity for student-athletes to participate among a team, striving for a common goal – that of success. There will be no chance for student-athletes to reap any benefits from the many hours they have invested in the sports they love. The longstanding and revered traditions of our athletic teams by the upcoming generations, those that have dreamt the opportunity of one



Doella Miller, Conference USA, sweeps the Monroe Harding Childrens Home stairs clean. At University of Alabama at Birmingham, Miller competed in Track & Field throughout her collegiate career.

day competing at a California university, will be shattered. Athletics directors, coaches and advisors will no longer be able to sacrifice a little bit of sleep, sweat, and time to help their student-athletes achieve excellence. Student-athletes will suffer too much if SB 193 is passed.

Senate Bill 193 definitely addresses important issues that can improve the lives of some student-athletes. However, there must be another approach to fulfill the demands of Senator Murray and the CAC; regardless of the arguments, we are still amateurs and we are not being oppressed. The answer lies in the hands of the system – the student-athletes. Change can be made without the drastic effects of SB 193. It is the voices of student athletes who will bring about the change. As of the 2004 National NCAA Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, the Division I, II, and III National SAACs have all signed a petition opposing the legislation of Senate Bill 193. I encourage all student-athletes at their campus and conference levels to do the same, forwarding such a petition to the California legislature. The NCAA always makes itself available to listen to the student athletes. We should not be used as a bargaining chip. So much is at stake. We must come together, build awareness, trample SB 193, and let our voices be heard so our dreams will not be taken away.