

AMS NCAA Position Paper

UBC is considering a move to join the NCAA Division II for varsity athletics. Changes to UBC Athletics have the potential to impact students studying at UBC and the AMS believes that the following issues should be addressed. These issues should be addressed regardless of the option pursued, though in the instance of a move they are exceptionally pertinent.

Protection of Intramural Funds

Intramural activities allow non-varsity students to participate in various sports and recreational activities in a cost effective manner. As such, it is a very important service that UBC Athletics offers to students. Out of the existing athletic student fees, approximately 25% of funds are directed towards intramural activities. This compares poorly to other universities, such as the University of Calgary where the percentage is above 40%. Regardless of a move to NCAA or not, the AMS believes this should be addressed, though special care should be taken should a move to the NCAA occur, as there will be an increased financial burden due to accreditation costs.

Academic Integrity

There is concern that joining the NCAA could lead to special concessions for varsity athletes to maintain minimum NCAA academic requirements, especially when considering the data on other members of Division II. As UBC currently has a very high graduation rate of varsity athletes compared to other universities, care should be taken to ensure this culture continues. The AMS recommends that UBC continue to put an emphasis on hiring coaching and athletic staff that make graduation and academic success of varsity athletes a priority. Further, the AMS recommends that UBC investigate setting an internal target graduation rate for varsity athletes.

Place and Promise

The UBC Strategic Plan provides the framework to improve upon the learning experience for students at UBC, while also ensuring a strong level of research excellence and community engagement. While it has been expressed that the monetary requirements of the accreditation would be taken from the Athletics fees, the time and allocation of personnel within faculties to address the accreditation does raise concern. The AMS is concerned that joining the NCAA at this time could negatively impact the implementation of Place and Promise by drawing away these resources. The AMS recommends that UBC continue to seek an exemption from US accreditation should it move forward with joining the NCAA. Should this prove impossible, the AMS would like assurances that additional resources will be found to ensure the continued implementation of Place and Promise.

Fundraising

UBC Athletics has a goal to raise \$75 million in new donations for the purpose of athletic scholarships and varsity program improvements. While the feasibility of reaching these campaign goals is questionable, a more pertinent issue is whether fundraising efforts could be better applied to capital improvements. One such project is a new aquatic centre, which has already been expressed as needed. The AMS urges this project to be considered in the campaign regardless of a move, especially considering the previous idea of funding the project through market housing is no longer an option given the Student Housing Financing Endowment.

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Review of Varsity Sports

UBC Athletics has committed to undertaking a review of the collection of sports which are offered at the varsity level. The AMS recognizes that some student athletes currently represent UBC in sports that are not part of the varsity program. As part of the review of sports offered, UBC Athletics should welcome proposals for new varsity sports, and consider which sports UBC is best to focus on. These proposals should be given consideration equal to that given to existing sports, using a common set of criteria.

Advisory Committee Membership

The AMS considers the recommended Advisory Committee referenced in the 2011 NCAA Membership Review too large to effectively fulfil its terms of reference. It is suggested that some of the potential members could be removed while maintaining a balance of interests on the committee.

Additional Questions

In addition to the positions listed above, the AMS asks the university to also consider the following questions:

1. Given that UBC is historically more of an academic institution, is it appropriate to offer full ride athletic scholarships that are larger than academic scholarships?
2. Would joining the NCAA help retain Canadian athletes or would we instead see the majority of our scholarships go to international applicants given the frequently mention focus on increased international recruitment?
3. How important is it to create a Canadian sports identity for our athletes, and would a lack of the Canadian identity distance future alum?
4. Though the loss of certain varsity sports is a concern given NAIA's proposed merger with the NCAA, should UBC be focused on maintaining all of our current varsity programs, or should we focus more on where we can excel?