

Subject: Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics and the University of Pittsburgh University Senate

From: "Bowen, Mike" <mbowen@usf.edu>

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To: "spring@pitt.edu" <spring@pitt.edu>

Dear Professor Spring,

I'm contacting you on behalf of the leadership of the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA). The Coalition is an alliance of faculty senates and councils at schools in the NCAA's Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS, formerly Division 1A), devoted to addressing major problems in college sports through faculty engagement at local and national levels. COIA was founded in 2002 and has grown to 61 member senates, half of the total number of FBS school senates, with faculty representatives from all conferences serving on its national Steering Committee.

Over the past year, COIA has been responding to an NCAA request to offer a blueprint to increase engagement of FBS faculty senates in athletics governance. Although the Pittsburgh University Senate has not yet voted to join the Coalition, we are anxious that all FBS senates be aware of COIA's work and have a chance to provide input. We understand that you will be serving as your senate president, and the purpose of this letter is to provide you with information about our current proposals and to invite you and your senate to let us know your thoughts.

I'm attaching COIA's 2012-13 annual report, sent to our membership by the Coalition Steering Committee in March. It provides context for our proposal to the NCAA for engaging faculty governance more effectively in oversight of intercollegiate sports on campus (the complete proposal appears as Appendix 3). At the heart of our vision is the creation of an NCAA-recognized Senate Athletics Representative at each school, appointed by and reporting to the Senate, who would join the current presidentially appointed Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) in coordinating faculty oversight. With the NCAA's encouragement, we will be pursuing these ideas through discussions with the national association of Division 1A FARs in September.

While COIA is a national-level alliance of faculty senates, we recognize that every campus is unique in its history and culture. We don't seek a unity of opinion on intercollegiate athletics, but we do believe that faculties, as independent stewards of the academic missions of their schools, are in a unique position to play a constructive role in addressing the challenges that athletics governance presents for individual campuses and as a national enterprise that American universities have undertaken. We believe that well regulated athletics programs can offer wonderful opportunities to students and strengthen campus cultures, but that the current state of college sports falls far short of this ideal, and may be undermining the primary mission of our universities. Our objective is to raise the engagement and capabilities of faculty governance in this area to better mobilize the constructive role that faculties can play on campuses and as a national voice in ensuring that the role athletics plays is a positive one.

Earlier this summer, the leadership of COIA asked its member senates, in consultation with their campus FARs, to comment on the current engagement of faculty in athletics governance on their campuses and their readiness as senates to undertake the type of role our proposal to the NCAA envisions. While COIA does not pretend to represent senates that have not voted to join the Coalition, it does try its best to consider and act in light of the interests of all FBS schools, and we are always anxious to hear the views of senates that are not Coalition members and learn more about the situations on their campuses.

If you and your senate or senate executive committee would be willing to convey to me your perspective on COIA's proposals for increased faculty engagement, or information about your specific campus situation, your views would be very welcome. They will help ensure that our interactions with the NCAA and the national FBS FAR association are constructive and informed by as broad an understanding of the views and roles of faculty as possible. As we have recommended to our member senates, we would encourage you to consult with your campus FAR, Professor Matz.

We don't believe that faculty have perfect vision or all the answers to the problems of intercollegiate athletics, but we do feel that the perspective of faculty can provide a unique contribution, and that we as faculty bear a responsibility for learning more and conveying our perspective more effectively.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. For more information about COIA, I hope you will consider looking over our website at: <http://blogs.comm.psu.edu/thecoia/>. Apart from information about our membership and current activities, you may find some of the Coalition's white papers and best practice guides on campus athletics governance of use. I might add that if your senate did wish to consider becoming a member, I'd be glad to provide more information – membership involves no fee or other obligation. In addition, I'd like to let you know that we are planning to hold our 2014 Annual Meeting at the University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida, February 28 - March 2, 2014. If you or a representative of the Pitt Senate were interested in joining our meeting to share your views with us, you would be most welcome.

With best wishes,

Mike Bowen

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— Attachments: —

2013 COIA Steering Committee Report to the Membership.docx

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