

Canada West Task Force on Future Competitive Arrangements for University Sport in Canada West and CIS

Preliminary Report January 30, 2012

Background

On April 26, 2011 a letter was sent from five Canada West Presidents via email to CIS President, Clint Hamilton and Canada West President, Sandy Slavin requesting that team competition in Canada West move to a two tiered structure beginning in the academic year 2012-13. The letter further suggested that the institutions represented by the five signatories, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, UBC (Vancouver) and Victoria would form the core of one tier.

On April 29, 2011, Canada West President Sandy Slavin responded to the Presidents of the five universities that signed the original letter and suggested on behalf of the Canada West Board of Directors the formation of a working group of Presidents and Athletic Directors. The letter further indicated there was an opportunity for Canada West to discuss and share information at the Canada West AGM in early May 2011.

Following the AGM terms of reference were developed for the Canada West Task Force on Future Competitive Arrangements. The purpose of the committee as stated in the TOR was, *"To discuss, review, investigate and create strategies for the implementation of new competitive structures for Canada West and CIS. This would include creation of new regional associations and tiering."*

The members of the committee were to include 5 Presidents and 5 Athletic Directors from Canada West full member institutions. Members were to represent 10 different Canada West institutions. An Athletic Director and a President would co-chair and a quorum would require a minimum of 3 Presidents and 3 Athletic Directors. Members of the committee were to be nominated by their respective colleagues.

Canada West Athletic Directors and Presidents were asked to express potential interest in membership on the committee. Subsequently the Canada West Board of Directors appointed Dick White (Regina) as co-chair and committee members Ken Olynyk (Thompson Rivers), Ian Reade (Alberta), Coleen Dufresne (Manitoba) and Clint Hamilton (Victoria). COWCUP appointed Stephen Toohey (UBC) as co-chair and committee members Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg), Mike Mahon (Lethbridge), Peter MacKinnon (Saskatchewan) and Jonathan Raymond (Trinity Western).

Timeline for the work of the committee was an initial meeting in June or July with a target for presentation to the Canada West members at their regular meeting in February 2012.

Process and Work Undertaken by the Task Force

The Canada West Task Force held its first meeting July 7, 2011 in Vancouver. The second meeting was held August 30, 2011 in Calgary. In light of the discussion at those meetings, a document of suggested Principles and Commitments was drafted and circulated to the CW Task Force members for their comment. A number of high-level Principles and Commitments to guide competitive restructuring in Canada West and CIS was agreed to by the Task Force members at their third meeting on January 5, 2012 in Vancouver, and additional issues were identified as relevant for further consideration. These include, among others, the relation of the Task Force's recommendations to the Own the Podium (OTP) proposal for a High Performance sport model, which was presented at the January 5, 2012 Task Force meeting by Phil Schlote and Ken Shields of the OTP Working Group on the Role of Canadian Universities in High Performance Sport. Their detailed discussion paper has been circulated to all CIS members, and the Task Force looks forward to further discussions to see if the two proposals could be harmonized.

Fulfilling its mandate to "To discuss, review, investigate and create strategies for the implementation of new competitive structures for Canada West and CIS," the Task Force hereby presents in this preliminary report a number of high-level Principles and Commitments for all Canada West members to consider to guide the restructuring of university athletics in Canada West and CIS. The Task Force asks each Canada West member to review the report and to consult with the relevant stakeholders within their universities as appropriate. Given that one of the report's recommended commitments is for Presidential leadership in university athletics, the Task Force asks that each member university's President be engaged in consideration of this report. An opportunity for preliminary feedback and discussion will be provided at the February 7, 2012 Canada West meeting where two members of the Task Force will present the preliminary report to the membership.

The next meeting of the CW Task Force will be April 5, 2012 in Vancouver. Accordingly, the Task Force asks each CW member to provide a single institutional response to the Report to its Co-Chairs no later than Monday March 19, 2012. In light of those responses, the Task Force will then consider at its April 5, 2012 meeting whether there is sufficient support among Canada West membership for restructuring principles and commitments to formulate motions to be considered for the May Canada West meeting. If such support is forthcoming, and if resulting motions are passed at the May Canada West meeting, the intent is for the Canada West membership to be able to propose motions for consideration by the CIS at the June CIS AGM. Until such time as any changed competitive arrangements are agreed to, the Task Force notes that Canada West might take into consideration the uncertainties of the current environment when considering any future applications to join Canada West.

Proposed Principles, Commitments, and Issues for Further Consideration

I) Commitment to Presidential leadership in university athletics governance

University Presidents are enjoined to provide leadership and communication in providing the vision, purpose and high-level operating principles of university sport, at the regional and national levels through formal bodies such as COWCUP and the CIS Presidential Advisory Board, and internally within their universities.

II) Commitment to retain more top Canadian student athletes

The level of competition in Canada West and CIS would be raised by retaining more top Canadian student athletes many of whom currently choose to go to the NCAA. The loss of these students means the loss of multi-talented contributors to our campuses, communities and society, as well as future leaders among our potential alumni whose contributions are lost to our universities and communities.

III) Commitment to provide “full-ride” athletic scholarships

Defined as the costs for the student at the university for full tuition and mandatory fees, accommodations and meals, required course materials such as books, and a living allowance suggested at \$200 per month.

IV) Principle that universities will have the choice of which sports to commit to compete at a high performance level on a sport-by-sport basis, and competitive structures will be organized accordingly

Rather than approaching restructuring in the first instance through tiering by institutions, the Task Force recommends that each university will have institutional choice of whether to commit to an enhanced competitive level in a high performance sport division. Just as universities make choices about where to make particular commitments of resources in academic programs, universities should be able to choose where to make high performance commitments in their athletic programs and compete at that level in those sports and/or continue at existing levels of competition in others as they choose. Competitive structures to be developed would depend upon the configuration of participants meeting high performance criteria in a given sport.

V) Principle that there should be minimal participation criteria to compete in high performance sports, determined on a sport-by-sport basis

The Task Force recommends CW and CIS work with the OTP/CIS working group to develop appropriate criteria to qualify for a high performance division in a given sport, to identify sports to proceed with a High Performance model, and discuss other features of the OTP proposal. OTP's suggestions in their discussion paper include a minimum of a full-time head and assistant

coach, facilities access, extended (10-month) training seasons, and integrated sports and medicine and sports science support including individual yearly training plans for each student athlete.

Members are asked to recommend in particular a minimum number of full-ride scholarships (or equivalents) that should be established to qualify for high-performance in their high performance sport(s) of choice.

VI) Commitment to an initial cap on allowable scholarship support, with capacity to grow

The Task Force asks members to forward proposals for a cap. This would include acceptability of the principle that all academic, athletic (including Academic All-Canadian financial awards), bursary and other financial awards from an institution could not exceed the full-ride maximum, and whether third party awards would be allowable and could be added to the maximum amount provided by the institution.

VII) Commitment to Institutional Integrity and Transparency for Compliance

The Task Force recommends in the first instance rigorous institutional controls for compliance with athletics regulations and academic standards, such as requiring Athletic Directors to verify to the President all financial support for student athletes.

The Task Force asks members to indicate if they have recommendations for additional regional or national compliance mechanisms including their scope and mandate.

VIII) Principle of a cap on non-Canadians as appropriate for each sport

Deploying enhanced financial awards to recruit non-Canadians for competitive advantage would run counter to a chief purpose of enhanced scholarships of retaining more top Canadian student athletes, yet the Task Force recognizes the value of international students to our campuses and that international students could enhance levels of athletics competition. Accordingly, to balance these goals the Task Force recommends that the current CIS and CW policy approach of placing a cap on non-Canadians in basketball be extended to other sports as appropriate given each sport's numbers of participants.

IX) Commitment to explore a national student athletic scholarship effort to address the student talent drain

Own the Podium has also expressed interest in such an initiative, comparable to how the Canada Research Chairs program addressed the 'brain drain' of faculty from our universities, to reverse the "talent drain" of students, to be pursued in collaboration with National Sports Organizations (NSOs), universities, and the private sector to form a coalition to approach the federal government.

X) Principle that if a student is eligible to play as a full-time student meeting CIS standards, the student should be eligible to receive an athletic financial award

Current CIS regulations prohibit an incoming student athlete from receiving financial assistance if their entering average is below 80%. This principle would remove that barrier to student recruitment and support which was identified as driving admissible and otherwise eligible Canadian student athletes to the NCAA.

If members have proposals for ensuring the commitment to the academic integrity of student athletes beyond current CIS criteria of 18 credits per academic year, they are asked to forward their suggestions to the Task Force.

XI) Commitment to providing appropriate supports for the academic success of student athletes including scheduling of competitions

Within institutions, this includes a commitment to work with Registrars, Financial Aid and Awards offices, Faculties and the like to provide supports such as priority registration and housing, and coordinated academic advising within and across Faculties for appropriate accommodations.

XII) Commitment of CW Task Force Presidents to identify key Presidential colleagues outside Canada West to initiate dialogue with regarding CW Task Force commitments and principles.

Presidential support is identified by Task Force members as essential for improving the competitive environment in Canadian university sport, and the Task Force enjoins the leadership of Canada West Presidents in engaging Presidential colleagues in Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic regarding the recommended commitments and principles.