

Minutes of Liberty League Fall Meeting September 25, 2025 – Zoom Video Conference

Present: Stefanie Carrington, Malik Walfall (Bard); Laurel Kane, Ben Gaebel (Clarkson); Brian Miller, Liz Dennison, Sean Cunningham (Hobart and William Smith); Aaron Bouyea, Tyler Heisey (Ithaca); Katie Paradise (RPI); George VanderZwaag, Kris Shanley, Morgan Stout (Rochester); Jackie Nicholson, Scott McVean, Bethany Marren (RIT); Franco Bari, Randy LaBrake, Fran Grembowicz (St. Lawrence); Gail Cummings-Danson, Megan Buchanan, Peter Fisher (Skidmore); Jim McLaughlin, Beth Tiffany, Wally Bzdell, Erin Zannella (Union); Michelle Walsh, Kaitlin Leach, Matt Brennie (Vassar); Tracy King, Katie Meline (Liberty League).

I. Call to Order

Gail Cummings-Danson (Liberty League President) called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

II. Review of Minutes

The minutes of the May 28-29, 2025, spring meeting in Schenectady, N.Y., were reviewed. No changes or corrections were noted.

Motion: A motion (Nicholson, Walsh) to approve the minutes from the May 28-29, 2025, meeting PASSED 11-0-0.

III. Financial Report

- A. Final revenues for FY25 totaled \$360,603.05 while final expenditures totaled \$351,053.92, resulting in a budget surplus of \$9,549. Checking account balance at the end of FY25 totaled \$104,533.32. The budget surplus was larger than projected based on two expenses that were not billed during the fiscal year. The annual financial review and NCAA grant review totaling \$5,425 conducted by Staff Ciampino & Company, P.C., wasn't billed until August, meaning it will now appear on FY26. Similarly, the league was not invoiced by RPI for rent during FY25. The rent invoice for FY25 was paid in May 2024 (FY24) while the rent invoice for FY26 hasn't been received yet and will also be paid in FY26.
- B. **FY26 Budget Update:** Full member dues have been collected from nine of 11 institutions while associate member dues have been collected from four of six institutions. The NCAA grant funding – in the amount of approximately \$107,000 – is anticipated to be received by October 1. A slight budget surplus is projected for FY26.

- C. **Liberty League Certificate of Deposit:** The Liberty League CD, in the amount of \$131,669.10 was renewed on August 28 for seven months at a rate of 4.00 percent. The previous seven-month CD generated \$3,039.19 in interest. The new CD matures on March 28, 2026.

IV. Commissioner's Report

- A. **Liberty League SAAC Fall Meeting – Oct. 19:** The Liberty League fall in-person SAAC meeting is scheduled for Sunday, October 19, at the Delta by Marriott in Utica – the same location as last year. The meeting will include a program facilitated by Dr. Jarrod Spencer focusing on Emotional Energy – Your Fuel for Better Health and Performance. Meeting RSVPs will be solicited in early October.
- B. **Liberty League Presidents Fall Meeting – Oct. 2:** A Liberty League presidents update has been scheduled for Thursday, October 2. A member of the Division III Governance staff has been invited to provide an NCAA update for the group.
- C. **NCAA Conference Grant Update / FY26 Usage:** Each institution received an NCAA grant reimbursement check between \$4,000 and \$5,000 this past year, which was the most that the league has returned to the schools. The league has been able to utilize remaining Tier 4 (DEI) funds to offset a portion of the associate commissioner's salary per grant policies. This is only permitted for a three-year period, so no portion of Tier 4 funding can be utilized for that purpose during the 2025-26 grant period. If the league doesn't utilize all of the \$24,000 in Tier 4 funding, then any unused portion will need to be returned.

V. League Governance / Issues

- A. **Instant Replay / Video Review:** Following a discussion at the spring meeting in which both the football and basketball coaches proposed utilizing video review (instant replay) during league play, a subcommittee consisting of Jim McLaughlin, Brian Miller, Kris Shanley and Michelle Walsh was formed to evaluate the feasibility of video review and provide a report. The subcommittee met twice to review current NCAA policies for video review and requirements in certain sports. Currently, men's and women's basketball are the only two sports that require video review to host NCAA tournament games. The subcommittee discussed challenges and limitations of conducting reviews, including both staffing and technology. The consensus among the administrators was that if the league was to consider implementing video review, it should be considered first in sports in which it is required to host NCAA tournament games. Also, among the options considered were requiring it of all schools in a particular sport, making it permissible (but not required) or precluding it in all games in a particular sport.

Motion: A motion (Walsh, VanderZwaag) to institute video review as a pilot for the upcoming season in sports in which the NCAA has a requirement to host postseason contests (i.e., men's and women's basketball) and preclude it in all other league sports and contests, PASSED 9-0-0.

An online form / chart will be developed to track video reviews for the pilot program so that it can be assessed after the season.

- B. Sports Medicine Handbook Review:** Based on the recommendations from the 3 Fold Group, a committee of athletic trainers reviewed the Liberty League Sports Medicine Handbook and made revisions while also removing unnecessary parts of the document. The athletic trainers voted in favor of the revisions to the document. The administrators requested clarification on language indicating that an athletic trainer needs to be on call at certain league championships, such as golf and rowing. King will follow up with the committee for clarification.
- C. Liberty League Salary / Staffing Survey:** Six institutions have submitted data for the Liberty League salary and staffing survey. An initial email soliciting data was sent on August 12. The data will be compiled once all school submissions have been received. The plan is to list schools anonymously as to not identify the submissions of individual schools.

VI. League Championships / Scheduling Sport Issues

- A. 2026 Women's Golf Championship Course:** The women's golf championship has been held at Pinehaven Country Club each of the last two years. The coaches desired a change of venue for 2026 and have identified Teugega Country Club in Rome, N.Y., as the site for the Liberty League championship next spring. The dates would be Friday, May 1, and Saturday, May 2. Friday's round would start at noon while tee times for Saturday's round could possibly begin at 8 a.m. The cost would be \$50 per player per round. There is no requirement to buy food at the course, which the teams were required to do at Pinehaven this past spring. The championship has typically been held on Saturday-Sunday, but the coaches felt that Sunday afternoon tee times have led to teams returning back to campus late. This would allow student-athletes to return to campus earlier during a busy time of year. The concern among the administrators with starting Friday is the potential for missed class time during the end of the semester. King will follow up Ithaca coach Keith Batson, who solicited the proposal from Teugega, to see if a Saturday-Sunday tournament schedule is an option.
- B. Video Exchange Compliance / Enforcement:** As a follow-up to the spring meeting, the enforcement policies of other conferences regarding video exchange compliance have been sought. A number of conferences have fine systems in place – of various ranges – but have rarely utilized them. Working

with athletic department administrators has typically ensured compliance with the conference's policies. The administrators preferred utilizing other enforcement methods instead of fines. For failed compliance with video exchange and other league policies, it was agreed that King will contact the athletic director of the offending institution for assistance in enforcing the league policy.

- C. **Liberty League Championship Branding / Enhancements:** As a follow-up to the spring meeting regarding branding and potential enhancements to the Liberty League championships, feedback from other conferences has been sought. Other conferences have typically provided signage to enhance conference championships. For the upcoming championships, the league will purchase and provide champion banners for each sport to be distributed in conjunction with championship trophy at the conclusion of the tournament.
- D. **Baseball Scheduling Update:** The baseball coaches held a two-hour in person meeting on September 3 at Turning Stone to discuss possibly scheduling formats for the league. As part of the discussion, the format of the Liberty League tournament was also discussed. The majority of coaches supported moving to a six-team tournament, possibly providing the top seed(s) with a bye in the Liberty League crossover series weekend. With regard to the schedule, the administrators agreed that an adopted league schedule is in place through the 2028 season. Proposals would be accepted beginning with the 2029 season. Regarding the league tournament, the administrators expressed concern with extending the tournament an additional day and the potential impact on budgets and exam schedules.

VII. NCAA / National Issues

- A. **Five-Conference Division III Presidents Meeting:** A meeting was held during the summer with presidents from five Division III conferences – Centennial, NCAC, NESCAC, NEWMAC and UAA. King shared that at last week's Division III commissioners meeting that there were concerns discussed about the "erosion of the Division III model." Commissioners were told that there was no discussion of a subset of schools or conferences seeking to create their own subdivision. Rather, discussions focused on the state of higher education, the state of the NCAA and legislative proposals that have been brought forward. Rochester will update the league on any further developments.
- B. **2026 NCAA Division III Legislative Proposals:** At the D3 commissioners meeting, 15 potential Division III legislative proposals were discussed. While some – establishing a D3 championship in women's wrestling; establishing women's flag football as an emerging sport – are less controversial, others – Empire 8's redshirting proposal and providing two Aqs for conferences with 12 or more members – will likely be strongly debated.

- C. **NCAA Division III Health & Safety Grants:** Division III is providing each institution with a health and safety grant in the amount of \$2,000. Every active NCAA Division III institution may be reimbursed up to \$2,000 to help offset health and safety expenses. Approved areas of spending for reimbursement include the following: 1.) Athletic Training Professional Development; 2.) Supporting Mental Health; 3.) Substance Misuse; 4.) Electronic Medical Records (EMR). The application is available on the NCAA Program Hub. A request for reimbursement should be made only once at any time between Sept. 2 and Aug. 15. Schools should wait until they have accrued \$2,000 in receipts before submitting for reimbursement.

- D. **NCAA Division III Mental Health First Aid Program:** The NCAA engaged the National Council for Mental Wellbeing to provide Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) for Higher Education training to NCAA Division III head coaches and athletic trainers. Up to 30 individuals at each NCAA Division III active member institution, with a specific focus on head coaches and athletic trainers, are eligible for this funded training opportunity. Upon completion, they will be certified in MHFA for Higher Education. Among Liberty League institutions, Hobart and William Smith, Skidmore and Union have signed up for training. Schools can request training through the MFHA web page on the NCAA website.

VIII. Other Business

- A. **Teamworks / Scheduling Systems and Software:** Skidmore is exploring options for scheduling systems and software, such as Teamworks. Several league institutions utilize Teamworks, including Hobart and William Smith, RPI and St. Lawrence (in negotiation) and have found it to be extremely useful, although somewhat pricey. Skidmore will circulate a Google sheet to gather additional information.

IX. 2025-2026 Meeting Dates:

- A. Winter Meeting: Thursday, Jan. 15, 2026;
NCAA Convention (Washington, D.C.), Jan. 13-16, 2026
- B. Spring Meeting: May 27-28, 2026 (Schenectady, N.Y.)

X. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:56 a.m.