

Minutes of Liberty League Winter Meeting January 13, 2023 – San Antonio, Texas (NCAA Convention)

Present: David Lindholm (Bard); Laurel Kane, Ben Gaebel (Clarkson); Brian Miller, Liz Dennison, Sean Cunningham (Hobart and William Smith); Erienne Roberts (Ithaca); Lee McElroy (RPI); Kristine Shanley (Rochester); Scott McVean, Jeff Siegel, Bethany Marren, Pat Sofia (RIT); Randy LaBrake, Fran Grembowicz (St. Lawrence); Gail Cummings-Danson, Megan Buchanan, Peter Fisher (Skidmore); Jim McLaughlin (Union); Michelle Walsh (Vassar); Tracy King (Liberty League).

Guests: Dr. Marc Conner (President, Skidmore); Josh Miles (NCAA Student Immersion Program Attendee, Ithaca); Lauren Zeglen (National SAAC Associate Member, RIT).

I. Call to Order

Tracy King called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. King welcomed Skidmore College president Dr. Marc Conner, who is representing the Liberty League on the NCAA Division III Presidents and Chancellors Advisory Group. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

II. Review of Minutes

The minutes of the September 22, 2022, regular meeting and the October 26, 2022, and November 30, 2022, special meetings were reviewed. No changes or corrections were noted.

Motion: A motion (McElroy, Lindholm) to approve the minutes from the September 22, 2022, regular meeting and the October 26, 2022, and November 30, 2022, special meetings PASSED 11-0-0.

III. Financial Report

- A. FY23 Budget Report:** Current bank balance totals \$349,321.12 with nearly all revenues received. The NCAA has provided each conference with an additional \$24,000 in Conference Grant, Tier 4 funding to be utilized to support diversity, equity and inclusion. Funds can be utilized for conference or institutional programming, or to support full-time, part-time or intern positions. It can be used to offset or enhance an existing position, such as the league's assistant commissioner position. Funding to offset or enhance an existing position with conference grant funds may not exceed more than three consecutive years (FY23 through FY25). Consensus is to utilize the funding to support DEI programming on campuses. Any remaining funds can be utilized to support the league's assistant commissioner position.

- B. FY24-FY27 Budget Projection:** King compiled a four-year budget projection for FY24-FY27. At the current dues level (\$20,000 for full members), the league would have a balanced budget in FY24 (a surplus of \$795). If no Tier 4 funding was utilized to offset salary in FY25, there would be a deficit of \$4,450. Raising dues to \$21,500 would result in a small surplus in FY26 (\$10,480) and FY27 (\$5,325). With the preference to utilize Tier 4 funding to support institutional programming, a dues increase to \$21,500 in FY25 would be implemented. Additionally, the dues for single-site championship associate members (i.e., golf, rowing, squash) would be increased from \$250 to \$500 in FY24.

Motion: A motion (McElroy, Cummings-Danson) to set full-member dues at \$21,500 effective in FY25 and single-site associate member dues at \$500 effective in FY24
PASSED 11-0-0.

IV. Commissioner's Report

- A. WeCOACH Program Update:** Since the league signed on with the WeCOACH Development Program in October, WeCOACH has created 178 membership accounts for the league. WeCOACH has reported that a number of participants still need to create logins to take advantage of membership benefits. According to WeCOACH, the league's event registration total engagement is 11; three individuals have participated in the development program and one has signed on to the mentor program. Five total institutions have engaged with Hobart and William Smith having the most participation. In order to increase participation, King will request a list of current participants from WeCOACH and will share with the schools.
- B. Championship Trophy Update:** King reported that the league received its order of championship trophies, which will replace the Liberty League perpetual plaques that are presented at championships. The bulk price of \$139 per trophy is comparable to what the league has spent on permanent glass trophies (\$100) and plates for the perpetual plaques (\$25). The league has also ordered trophies for regular-season championship teams. The consensus is that these trophies should continue to be provided for regular-season champions.

V. NCAA / National Issues

- A. Management Council Update:** Michelle Walsh provided an update on key Management Council issues.
- **Division III Philosophy Statement:** As discussed in the Division III Issues Forum, Division III is in the process of evaluating and revising its philosophy statement. The governance committees are seeking feedback

to determine whether the membership supports certain aspects of the statement. League members can email Walsh with additional feedback.

- **Congressional Engagement:** Congressional engagement has been a point of emphasis with the NCAA Board of Governors. The NCAA recently provided a video link to the membership regarding the issue, but a small number of individuals have viewed the video. There is concern that if the NCAA does not engage with Congress on federal legislation, then Congress may act on its own.
- **President-Elect Baker Outreach:** NCAA President-Elect Charlie Baker has reached out to leadership groups of all three NCAA divisions and has conducted a number of information-gathering sessions at the Convention. Walsh reported that Baker has been very engaging and has shown a genuine desire to work with all three divisions.

B. Discussion/Vote on 2023 NCAA Legislative Proposals: NCAA Legislative proposals were discussed and straw polls were taken to establish a league position for each proposal.

- **Resolution 1 - Composition of Councils Alternative Voting Process:** to determine which of the two competing proposals will be first in the order of voting (Liberty League voted to support this resolution, which passed at the Jan. 13 Special Business Session).
- **Resolution 2 - Playing and Practice Season Alternative Voting Process:** to determine which of the two competing proposals will be first in the order of voting (Liberty League voted to support this resolution, which passed at the Jan. 13 Special Business Session).
- **Resolution 3 - Mental Health Hardship Waiver:** to urge the governance structure to establish a hardship waiver process for mental health to be distinguished from a physical injury, including its own waiver criteria that recognizes the unique circumstances related to mental health conditions (11-0-0, Support).
- **Proposal 4 - Legislative Voting Authority - National SAAC Vote at NCAA Convention:** to provide the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee one vote at the Division III Business Session of the NCAA Convention (11-0-0, Support).
- **Proposal 5 - Division III Committees - Amend Committee Composition and Representation:** to adjust the composition of six designated governance committees to provide the following: (1) consistency in size and regional representation on the designated committees; and (2) a student-athlete voice on governance committees where such representation is not currently present (11-0-0, Support).
- **Proposal 6 - Division III Committees - Amend Nominating Committee Composition:** to amend the composition of the Nominating Committee to include at least one member from each of the 10 sport regions (0-11-0, Oppose).

- **Proposal 7 – Presidents & Management Councils – Conference Representation:** to ensure that each Division III multi-sport conference will have one representative on either the Presidents or Management Council and that the conference’s slot on either will rotate accordingly (7-4-0, Support).
- **Proposal 8 – Presidents & Management Councils – Geographical Representation:** to adjust the composition of the NCAA Division III Presidents Council and Management Council to provide representation from each active multi-sport conference on either Presidents or Management Council (11-0-0, Support).
- **Proposal 8-1 – Presidents & Management Councils – Amend Proposal No. 8:** to amend Proposal No. 8 to establish that student-athletes on the councils do not satisfy the conference representation requirements (11-0-0, Support).
- **Proposal 9 – Division III Membership – Require Conference Membership:** to require an institution to have a bona fide invitation from an active Division III conference before applying for Division III membership and maintain a conference affiliation during the Division III membership process (11-0-0, Support).
- **Proposal 10 – Playing & Practice Season – New Playing Season Structure:** to be more permissible and flexible to enhance the overall student-athlete experience by allowing for a total of 114/144 days of athletically-related contact with their coaching staff (2-9-0, Oppose).
- **Proposal 11 – Playing & Practice Season – New Playing Season Structure:** to restructure the playing and practice seasons for all sports (except football) as follows: (1) eliminate using “weeks” as a measure for defining the seasons; (2) establish the fall and spring traditional segments by a start and end date; (3) increase the nontraditional segment interaction for fall and spring sports from 16 to 24 days; (4) measure the winter sports season by 114 days, with the flexibility to use eight of those days before or after the season; (5) measure period sports (golf, rowing, tennis) seasons by 114 days (8-2-1, Support).
- **Proposal 12 – Playing & Practice Season – Fall Sport Acclimatization:** to amend the preseason legislation for all sports, except football and men’s water polo as follows: (1) to calculate the first permissible start date by counting back 18 days; (2) require an acclimatization period during the first seven days of preseason practice; (3) require one day off of physical activity per defined week of the preseason; and (4) require all student-athletes to undergo the seven-day acclimatization period (1-10-0, Oppose).
- **Proposal 13 – Membership – Stunt as an Emerging Sport:** to add stunt as an emerging sport for women and establish legislation related to playing and practice seasons and membership (no league position established as proposal is expected to be referred back to the Committee on Women’s Athletics).

- **Proposal 14 - Recruiting - Social Media Communication in Senior Year:** to change the date when institutions may have public communications via social media with prospective student-athletes that have deposited, from May 1 to January 1 of their senior year in high school (10-1-0, Support).
- **Proposal 15 - Division Membership - Elimination of Self-Study Guide Requirements:** to eliminate the requirement for active member institutions and multisport conferences to submit a comprehensive self-study guide at least once every five years (11-0-0, Support).

VI. League Championships / Scheduling / Sport Issues

- A. League Tennis Schedule:** King reported that a committee of three coaches – Brian Bowman (Union), Tina McDermott (Vassar men) and Tim Riskie (Hobart and William Smith) – has worked on developing a scheduling model for Liberty League tennis since last spring. Presently, there is no league schedule – coaches at each of the nine tennis-playing institutions work with each other on scheduling dates for their matches. In addition to being a time-consuming process, it also results in team schedules that are unbalanced and inefficient. Coaches at six institutions (Bard, HWS, Ithaca, RIT, St. Lawrence, Union) coach both the men’s and women’s teams while three institutions (RPI, Skidmore, Vassar) have separate coaches for the men’s and women’s teams. Individuals who coach both the men’s and women’s programs have sought a league schedule that provides more structure and efficiency while the single-gender coaches have sought flexibility in building a schedule. The full group of coaches met Dec. 14 and voted 7-2 in favor of the proposed draft. The schedule is a six-week schedule in which each team has two Saturday-Sunday weekends (one home, one away), two single-Saturday matches (one home, one away) and two matches scheduled by mutual agreement (one home, one away). To provide the flexibility that some coaches are seeking, the coaches voted that if two schools mutually agree, then they can move a single-Saturday match or a Sunday match played as part of a back-to-back weekend. Each school also has two bye weekends in which it can use to schedule non-league matches.

Motion: A motion (McLaughlin, McElroy) to adopt the proposed schedule for Liberty League men’s and women’s tennis PASSED 8-1-2.

- B. Officials for League Tennis Matches:** At the Sept. 24, 2019, league meeting, the league voted to require an ITA official at all *league* tennis matches (non-league matches are at the discretion of the institution). Some institutions utilized them previously while others did not – some coaches did not feel they were necessary for all league matches. Securing an ITA official can be challenging – the pool of available officials is small, particularly in certain geographic areas like the Capital District and North Country. Lindholm

suggested that rather than requiring an official for all league matches, an official could be scheduled if requested by one of the teams. If two schools mutually agreed that an official wasn't necessary, then one wouldn't be scheduled. The issue will be discussed with the coaches and possibly revisited at the spring meeting.

- C. Softball Championship Schedule:** With the softball tournament expanding from four to five teams beginning this spring, the coaches discussed options to include the fifth team. Rather than play a five-team double-elimination tournament, the coaches preferred a single-elimination play-in game similar to what was utilized in baseball prior to the current crossover weekend. Options for the 4 v. 5 play-in game included playing it at the higher-seeded team Tuesday; playing it Wednesday afternoon at the site of the championship; or playing Thursday prior to the first game of the tournament. Regarding the Tuesday option at the site of the higher-seeded team (the fourth seed), the concern was what would happen if rain resulted in the game getting pushed to Wednesday. The winning team would then have to travel directly to the tournament site to start the tournament the next day. Playing the 4 v. 5 game on Thursday would result in three tournament games needing to be played the first day. Not only would the winner of the 4 v. 5 game have to play twice that day— while the other teams would play once – if the Thursday schedule were to be impacted by weather, there would be limited flexibility in terms of adjusting the schedule. The coaches favored playing the 4 v. 5 game on Wednesday afternoon at the tournament site. Given that teams have typically traveled to the tournament Wednesday, the coaches felt the cost for the participating teams would not be significantly impacted. If weather impacted the game Wednesday, there would be the flexibility to move the game to Thursday if needed. The consensus among the administrators was that starting Wednesday would add an extra day to the tournament, extending it from a three-day to a four-day championship and would also result in additional costs for both the competing teams and the host institution, which would have to provide staffing and secure umpire for a single game. The baseball play-in/wild-card game was also played Thursday prior to the start of the double-elimination tournament. While the 4 v. 5 winner would have to play a second game Thursday, the top seed earned an advantage by winning the regular-season title.

Motion: A motion (Grembowicz, Cummings-Danson) to play the 4 v. 5 play-in game on Thursday at the site of the top seed prior to the first game of the double-elimination tournament PASSED 7-1-3.

- D. Proposed Track & Field Guidelines:** King shared that a coaches committee consisting of Sam Albert (Rochester), James McCowan (Vassar) and Billy Poole-Harris (Bard) met three times this past fall to work on reviewing and revising the guidelines for the Liberty League's indoor and outdoor track and field championships. The main purpose of the review was to clarify and more

clearly define the entry process and championship operations, addressing ambiguity that has existed with the current guidelines. The revised document contains most of what was in the existing document. In addition, the committee has recommended conducting pre-championship meetings on Tuesday prior to the championship to address any issues that may arise. These meetings have previously been held hastily the morning of the championship. The coaches also recommended a minimum number of officials to be assigned by a league assigner. The assigning process has typically been handled by the host institution working with a local assigner. With the Empire 8 and SUNYAC having championships the same weekend – and the same individual (Tom Mooney) assigning for both conferences – there was concern that the other conferences will utilize the regional pool of officials, leaving the Liberty League scrambling to cover the championship, which occurred in the spring. Both hosts this year - RIT for the indoor championship and Rochester for the outdoor championship – have already contacted Mooney about assigning for the championships. The coaches reported that Mooney would be welcome to assigning officials for the Liberty League championships in the future. The host institution would be responsible for paying a nominal assigning fee.

Motion: A motion (McElroy, Shanley) to approve the revised Liberty League track and field guidelines while utilizing Tom Mooney for the assignment of officials for both championships PASSED 8-0-3.

E. Squash Membership Update: King provided an update on discussions with potential squash associate members. Regarding Western University (Ontario), King has been in contact with Christine Stapleton, the institution’s athletic director, and is hoping to connect in the coming weeks to gauge the school’s interest. King also spoke with Mount Holyoke AD Jodi Canfield at the Convention. Canfield indicated that the institution has an interest in participating in Liberty League squash and will make a decision this spring.

VII. Future Meeting Dates

A. Spring Meeting: The spring meeting is scheduled for May 31-June 1 at the Turning Stone resort in Verona, N.Y. As discussed at the 2022 spring meeting, the location of the spring meeting will rotate between eastern and western sites.

VIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 3:41 p.m.