

# Minutes of Liberty League Spring Meeting May 29-30, 2024 – The Landing Hotel – Schenectady, N.Y.

**Present:** David Lindholm, Stefanie Carrington, Samantha Robbins (Bard); Laurel Kane, Ben Gaebel (Clarkson); Brian Miller, Liz Dennison (Hobart and William Smith); Susan Bassett, Sean Fitzmaurice, Tyler Heisey, Sarah Smith (Ithaca); Kristie Bowers, Katie Paradise, Sachi Vines (RPI); George VanderZwaag, Kristine Shanley, Morgan Stout (Rochester); Jackie Nicholson, Scott McVean, Bethany Marren (RIT); Randy LaBrake, Brian Atkins (St. Lawrence); Gail Cummings-Danson, Megan Buchanan, Peter Fisher (Skidmore); Jim McLaughlin, Beth Tiffany (Union); Michelle Walsh, Kaitlin Leach, Matt Brennie (Vassar); Tracy King, Katie Meline (Liberty League).

## I. Call to Order

Jackie Nicholson (Liberty League President) called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. Attendees introduced themselves.

## II. Review of Minutes

The minutes of the January 12, 2024, meeting at the NCAA Convention were reviewed. No changes or corrections were noted.

**Motion:** A motion (Walsh, Nicholson) to approve the minutes from the January 12, 2024, meeting was APPROVED 11-0-0.

## III. Financial Report

- A. FY24 Budget Update / FY25 Proposed Budget:** Tracy King reviewed the financial report. Current Liberty League checking account balance totals \$274,224.16. This does not include the league's certificate of deposit (CD), which totals approximately \$52,000. Revenues for FY24 totaled \$330,492.35 while current expenses total \$225,643.57. Outstanding expenses include NCAA conference grant expenditures and payroll expenses. A slight budget deficit of approximately \$6,000 is projected for FY24, which is consistent with the adopted budget.

For FY25, full-member dues – as voted on at the January 2023 league meeting – will increase from \$20,000 to \$21,500. Average Division III conference dues for FY24 were approximately \$30,000. The dues increase would result in a projected budget surplus of approximately \$1,500 for FY25. Given that the league has approximately \$215,000 in reserve funds between the checking account balance and CD, it was discussed whether a dues increase was needed.

A vote on the proposed FY25 budget and discussion of the dues increase was tabled for the Executive Session.

- B. Championship Entry Fees / Budgeting:** Expenditures for the Liberty League tennis championship held at Cornell were reviewed. Expenses totaled more than \$13,000 for the three-day event in 2024, which included a facility rental charge (\$6,740), officials (\$4,003.74) and athletic training coverage (\$1887.16). In most other single-site championships, the designated host institution covers the expenses for hosting the championship, which are generally comparable to the expenses (transportation, lodging, meals) of the other participating institutions. Since the league has served as the host for the tennis championship, expenses are paid through the league budget, including travel and NCAA grant funding. Tier 3 grant funds do not typically support funding for facility rentals. League championships for golf and swimming both charge an entry fee to participating teams to offset the cost of hosting. Tennis guidelines state that if the league is unable to fund the cost of court time, each competing institution will split the total cost of court time. An ad hoc committee consisting of Matt Brennie (Vassar), Stefanie Carrington (Bard), Liz Dennison (HWS), Tyler Heisey (Ithaca) and Scott McVean (RIT) was formed to review the current funding model for single-site championships. The committee will provide a report for the fall meeting.

#### **IV. Commissioner's Update**

- A. Recap of 2023-24 Champions / League Success:** Katie Meline reviewed a document highlighting the academic and athletic accomplishments of Liberty League student-athletes and teams during the past academic year. Three Liberty League teams – Ithaca (women's volleyball), RIT (men's lacrosse), William Smith (women's lacrosse) – reached at least the quarterfinals in NCAA competition. Four Liberty League student-athletes combined to win five NCAA individual championships. Seven different institutions captured Liberty League team championships. Additionally, a total of 2,229 student-athletes qualified for the Liberty League All-Academic Teams (3.30 cumulative GPA or higher) in their respective sports.
- B. Report on Hardship Waivers Granted:** King reported that a total of 38 hardship waivers have been granted thus far for the 2023-24 academic year – 27 in men's sports and 11 in women's sports. Women's soccer (four) was the sport with the most waivers granted. The 38 hardship waivers granted marks a 52 percent increase from the previous year and is also the largest number granted in a single year since the league's inception in 1995-96.
- C. NCAA Woman of the Year / Male Scholar-Athlete of the Year:** NCAA Woman of the Year nominees must be submitted via the NCAA online portal by Friday, June 21. King will conduct an email vote for the Liberty League Male and Female Scholar-Athletes of the Year. These awards are presented to graduating seniors

who have demonstrated excellence in academics, athletics, leadership and service. The individual selected as Liberty League Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year will be the league's nominee for the NCAA Woman of the Year award. Both honorees will also be the league's nominees for the Division III Commissioners Association Student-Athletes of the Year.

## V. Review of Sport & Committee Reports

- A. Single-Site Championship Dates and Host Rotation:** King reviewed the single-site championship dates and sites for 2024-25. The sites for men's golf (Turning Stone Resort – Shenendoah Course), women's golf (Guilderland, N.Y. – Pinehaven Country Club), rowing (Saratoga Lake), squash (St. Lawrence), swimming and diving (Ithaca) and tennis (Cornell) are expected to remain the same. Cross country (St. Lawrence), indoor track and field (Ithaca) and outdoor track and field (RIT) are established by a rotation. Rowing is scheduled for Friday, May 2, but the coaches have inquired about the possibility of moving the event to either Saturday or Sunday.
- B. Sport/Committee Liaison Assignments:** Sport and committee liaison assignments for the next four-year cycle (2024-25 through 2027-28) were discussed and confirmed. St. Lawrence had previously replaced Vassar as the liaison for squash (listed incorrectly). Bard will replace Rochester as baseball liaison. Hobart and William Smith will replace Skidmore as rowing liaison. RIT will replace RPI as athletic communications liaison. If the strength and conditioning coaches choose to meet formally, Vassar is willing to serve as the committee liaison.
- C. Liberty League Awards & Recognition Program:** With a number of sports proposing additional awards, King reviewed the league's current awards and recognition program, which included regular-season (weekly) awards, postseason awards (athletes of the year; all-league teams) and tournament awards (team trophies, t-shirts, most outstanding performer award). It was noted that the league previously had an ad hoc awards committee that reviewed the awards program and made recommendations. It was recommended that an awards committee be reconvened to review the various award proposals.
- D. Reports from Sport Groups:**
- 1. Field Hockey: Discussion items:** 1.) *Schedule* – with the current 4-year schedule concluding in the fall of 2024, the coaches discussed two possible scheduling models – the current model consisting of two single Saturdays, two *Friday-Sunday* weekends and a game against a close team or travel partner; an alternative model consisting of two single Saturdays, two *Friday-Saturday* weekends, and a game against a close team or travel partner. In a straw poll, the coaches originally preferred the Friday-Saturday model, but after reviewing the drafts of both models,

voted 5-3 in favor of the current Friday-Sunday model. When rotating the Friday-Saturday model every two years, teams would have to travel or host certain teams two years in a row. While the number of home and away contests balanced out over six years (three home, three away), not all would rotate annually. The coaches also expressed concerns with facility conflicts (football) and staffing for games held on Saturdays. 2.) *Awards discussion* – regarding the conference call to review award nominations, the coaches agreed to provide a brief recap on major award nominees and top players when discussing nominees. 3.) *Officiating fees* – assignor Julie Clark had proposed a \$20 game fee increase, noting that the officials had not received an increase in six years (although they have received IRS mileage increases). Clark agreed to split the increase over two years - \$10 each in 2024 and 2025. Action items: to adopt the proposed 4-year schedule for the seasons of 2025 through 2028.

2. **Football:** Discussion items: 1.) *Video / technology* – per NCAA rules, teams now have the option of using up to 18 tablets on the sideline to view in-game video. Each Liberty League team would need to supply its own power, cameras and operators to utilize the sideline tablets. Also, wearable technology (i.e., players wearing watches or other devices) continues to emerge and may be permissible in 2025. The Liberty League may have an opportunity to pilot wearable technology this fall at no charge as companies are looking for conferences to test products. 2.) *Scheduling* – the Empire 8 scheduling agreement and the Liberty League draft schedule for 2025 and 2026 were reviewed with the coaches. The administrators supported the Empire 8 proposal and concurred that a firm agreement was needed from both sides. In an effort to accommodate several institutional scheduling requests, the 2025 and 2026 draft league schedules resulted in teams with three straight games either home or away and other teams with either consecutive home or away games to end the season. King removed one of the scheduling requests and was able to draft a schedule (Draft #2) in which no team had three straight home or away games and all teams were home one of the final two weekends. Action items: 1. to adopt the proposed 2-year schedule (Draft #2) for the seasons 2025 and 2026. 2.) to adopt the football scheduling agreement as presented by the Empire 8.
3. **Soccer:** Discussion items: 1.) *NCAA Power Index* (i.e., PairWise) – the coaches expressed concerns with the potential implementation of the NCAA Power Index (NPI) for selection of at-large teams for Division III championships. The coaches drafted a letter to the Division III Championships Committee, expressing concerns with the lack of knowledge among the membership and the lack of transparency throughout the evaluation process, suggesting instead that the NPI could be piloted during the 2024 season to better determine its impact on scheduling, selections and tournament hosting. 2.) *Scheduling* – with the

current 4-year schedule concluding with the 2024 fall season, the coaches discussed alternatives to the current scheduling model, which included one Friday-Saturday back-to-back weekend. Alternatively, it was suggested that the back-to-back weekend could be separated and moved to a schedule of six Saturdays and three games scheduled by mutual agreement. In some cases, one of the three games scheduled by mutual agreement could involve a trip of more than three hours. When presented with a model of six Saturdays and three games scheduled by mutual agreement, 11 coaches expressed a preference for the new model while one had no preference. Eight did not respond to the initial request for feedback. Action item: 1.) To adopt the proposed Liberty League schedule for 2026 through 2029 based on a model of six single-Saturdays and three games scheduled by mutual agreement.

4. **Volleyball:** Discussion items: 1.) *Tournament review* – the coaches reviewed the tournament and the change in match times this past season. Due to another major sporting event on campus, Ithaca requested to move the championship match from the mandated time of 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. The coaches suggested that if changes need to be made to the predetermined times, participating teams should be notified at least one week prior to the tournament. It was also suggested that a pre-tournament virtual meeting be scheduled for the Wednesday prior to the semifinal matches to review tournament logistics. Coaches also requested that team practices conducted Friday prior to the semifinal matches are closed practices and should be free of interruptions or distractions. 2.) *Officiating* – feedback on conference assignor Mara Wager was generally positive. Previous issues with North Country schools have improved. 3.) *Match statistics* – when box scores are printed between sets, the coaches asked if it would be feasible to print both set and match stats. King will determine with SIDs how feasible this would be to do in the time allotted between sets. Action items: None.
5. **Cross Country:** Discussion items: 1.) *Meet entries* – the coaches proposed raising the entry limit for the Liberty League championship from 17 competitors to 18. Teams must still declare their 14 participants at check-in on Saturday prior to the race. Teams that have chosen to travel to the championship with their 17 entered competitors have had to contend with an odd number of individuals when assigning hotel rooms. An additional competitor would allow for an even number of rooms while the only additional expense would be meal money for the individual. 2.) *Course standards* – the coaches discussed establishing minimum standards for a league championship course. Developing minimum standards would help to ensure a consistent and safe experience for the competitors from year to year. Action item: 1.) To increase the number of entries permitted from 17 to 18 while maintaining 14 participants and adding a fourth alternate.

6. **Track & Field:** Discussion items: 1.) *Assignor* – finding an assignor to assign officials for the league’s indoor and outdoor championships is a priority. Tom Mooney, based in the Rochester area, has assigned officials for the SUNYAC championships in addition to meets hosted by the University of Rochester and RIT. The coaches would like to inquire if Mooney can also assign for the Liberty League championships. Securing officials when the championship is at RPI, St. Lawrence or Vassar is a challenge. 2.) *Bib numbers* – the coaches agreed they would no longer utilize bib numbers at future championships. They are not required by the timer and are an unnecessary expense. 3.) *Roster submission* – the track and field guidelines / technical manual requires that a roster of competitors be submitted two weeks prior to the championship. The coaches agreed that this is unnecessary and will be removed from the guidelines. 4.) *Live field results* – currently Leone Timing provides live results for track events for the league championships. For an additional fee of \$1,500, Leone can provide live results for field events that would be updated after each field athlete’s attempt. Action item: 1.) To implement the use of live results for field events at the Liberty League indoor and outdoor track and field championships.
7. **Basketball:** Discussion items: 1.) *Video review / replay* – the coaches supported the implementation of video replay at the scorer’s table during league play. Technology required is a tablet or laptop along with the ability to rewind the live stream to review the play in question. Replay might help address end-of-period situations (whether a shot got off in time) that could be corrected. 2.) *Technology on the bench* – coaches were supportive of allowing technology (i.e., iPads and tablets) to be utilized on the bench per NCAA rules. Teams would need to be able to access Wi-Fi to review the live stream. 3.) *Media timeouts* – coaches were unanimously in support of utilizing media timeouts in all league games, not just league tournament games. The primary question/concern among administrators was how much time the media timeouts would add to games. 4.) *Awards* – the coaches were supportive of adding a sixth member to the all-league first and second teams. Currently, all-league teams are equal to the number of starters in each sport. Some sports include additional players when there are positional specialists (e.g., faceoff specialist in men’s lacrosse). The coaches noted that the number of players named as honorable mention varies from year to year and can be different for men’s and women’s basketball. Action items: 1.) To utilize video review during all Liberty League regular season and championship games. 2.) To adopt the use of technology on the bench during Liberty League games as a teaching tool. 3.) To use media timeouts (1 minute in length) for all Liberty League regular-season games. 4.) To add a 6th member to the first and second team all-league recognition.

8. **Swimming & Diving:** Discussion items: 1.) *Championship exhibition entries* – while not stated in the swimming and diving championship guidelines, the host institution has been permitted to enter an unlimited number of athletes to swim in the prelim sessions. This has been a long-standing practice – an unwritten rule – that was intended to provide the host with a benefit to offset the work associated with hosting the four-day meet. These additional athletes do not compete in the finals sessions, do not score and there is no cost to the host for their participation. Other teams are limited to a total of 24 athletes with scoring rosters not to exceed 22 individual athletes. The practice should either be codified or the host should also be limited to 24 athletes. 2.) *Relay judging platforms (RJPs)* – the coaches were supportive of using the relay judging platform technology per the NCAA rule book to disqualify teams on relay starts, consistent with the NCAA championship. It was noted that a number of teams would have been disqualified had the technology been used this past season. Currently, the RJPs are only utilized at the championship to confirm disqualification rulings made by officials. 3.) *Meet committee* – the coaches proposed that a meet committee be formed in the fall each year to address issues that arise prior to the championship. Currently, a meet committee is formed to address issues that need to be resolved *during* the championship, but issues prior to the championship have typically been addressed by the host. Rather than creating two meet committees, the administrators recommended that the current language be revised so that the meet committee addresses all issues related to the championship, both prior to and during the championship. Action items: 1.) To permit the host institution to enter an unlimited number of exhibition athletes to swim in the prelim sessions. 2.) To utilize relay judging platforms per the NCAA rule book to disqualify teams on relay starts. 3.) To establish a meet committee to be formed in the fall each year to address matters related to the championship. The committee will consist of the meet manager, host coach and three other coaches established via a rotation.
9. **Squash:** Discussion items: 1.) *Membership* – Mount Holyoke, a Liberty League associate member in women’s squash, has informed the league that it will be reclassifying its squash program from varsity to club status. As a result, it will no longer be eligible to compete in the Liberty League championship, dropping the women’s squash membership from seven teams to six. 2.) *Championship review* – the coaches have been pleased with the growth and development of the league championship and St. Lawrence’s role in serving as tournament host. The addition of a professional referee was a positive enhancement to the championship and made highly competitive matches run more smoothly. 3.) *Seeding and lineup submissions* – the coaches agreed to seed the tournament on Friday, a week prior to the championship based on the latest CSA rankings. The seeding would not change even if the rankings are updated

during the week of the tournament. Also, the coaches agreed that lineups will be submitted the Monday prior to the tournament. Action items: None.

10. **Men's Lacrosse:** Discussion items: 1.) *Proposed schedule* – a proposed four-year schedule for the 2026 through 2029 seasons was reviewed. The draft follows the same format as the current schedule – six Saturdays and one game scheduled by mutual agreement. The coaches supported the proposed schedule. 2.) *Specialist of the Year award* – the coaches proposed the addition of a specialist of the year award. Currently, the league recognizes an offensive and defensive performer of the year. Faceoff specialists don't fit into either category and seldom receive consideration. The coaches view a specialist of the year award similar to the Special Teams Player of the Year in football. 3.) *NCAA Power Index* – the coaches discussed the NCAA Power Index, which is expected to be implemented across most team sports during the 2024-25 year. The Liberty League has typically received multiple NCAA tournament bids, but it is unclear how selections will be impacted. Action items: To adopt the proposed 4-year schedule for the seasons 2026 through 2029. 2.) To add a Specialist of the Year/Week to the Liberty League awards program.
11. **Women's Lacrosse:** Discussion items: 1.) *Postseason awards* – the coaches proposed several additions to the Liberty League postseason awards, which they felt should mirror the IWLCA national awards program. The coaches proposed adding a Midfielder of the Year, Goalie of the Year and an all-league draw specialist on both the first and second teams. The consensus was that if the Liberty League does not have these awards, it makes it more difficult for athletes at these positions to earn national recognition. Midfielders can often be overlooked in the voting for the league's offensive and defensive player of the year awards. 2.) *All-league conference call* – rather than having a conference call to review nominees prior to voting, it was proposed that notes (written by the coach) could be added to the ballot. 3.) *Proposed schedule* – King drafted a proposed schedule for the 2026 through 2029 seasons that followed the same format as the current schedule. Initial feedback from the coaches on the draft was that many teams had the same bye weeks as previous seasons. In the revised draft, bye weeks have been rotated. Action items: 1.) To add a Midfielder of the Year award to the league awards program; 2.) To add a Goalie of the Year to the league awards program; 3.) To add a Draw Specialist to the All-Liberty League first and second team. 4.) To adopt the proposed Liberty League women's lacrosse schedule for the 2026 through 2029 seasons.
12. **Rowing:** Discussion items: 1.) *Championship review* – while weather and water conditions at Fish Creek in Saratoga resulted in quality races at the Liberty League championship, the management of the event by the

Saratoga Rowing Association (SRA) continues to be an ongoing challenge. Coaches noted issues such as poor communication, a poorly run coaches and coxswains meeting and an inadequate number of referees as the main concerns. King will contact SRA to see what can be done to address the issues. 2.) *2025 Championship date* – the consensus among the coaches was to explore the possibility of holding the championship on either Saturday or Sunday. Since SRA does not appear to be hosting any other regattas that weekend, King will inquire if either of those days is a possibility. 3.) *Vassar participation* – the coaches were surveyed as to their interest in permitting Vassar’s club teams to participate in the championship. Clarkson and RPI also have club rowing programs. The consensus was that the championships should be limited to varsity teams. 4.) *IRA proposal* – Justin Stangel (Ithaca) discussed an IRA proposal requiring Division III men’s teams to follow the same 114-day model that Division III women’s programs follow. The coaches were supportive as Liberty League teams already follow the 114-day model. 5.) *Elimination of Novice 8 races* – the coaches proposed eliminating the Novice 8+ races from the league championship and replacing them with 3V8+ and 4V8+ races. The trend in rowing is moving away from novice-only events and the number of novice entries has declined in recent years. Eliminating the N8+ races may also eliminate the need for the Novice Crew of the Year award. An All-Novice team is a possible alternative. Action items: 1.) To conduct competition at the Liberty League championship in the 1V8+, 2V8+, 3V8+, 4V8+, V4+ and N4+ events for both men and women while eliminating the Novice 8. 2.) To replace the traditional Novice Crew of the Year award with an All-Novice Team, selected in a manner similar to the All-Liberty League teams.

13. **Men’s Golf:** Discussion items: 1.) *Championship review* – the format for the league championship continues to work well and Turning Stone has been very accommodating. Having a USGA official present to assist with rulings was very helpful. 2.) *Tournament checklist* – the coaches are planning to develop a tournament manual, host checklist, starter script and hard card, which will assist the host coach annually. 3.) *NCAA Regional format* – the NCAA Division III golf committee has proposed adding regionals to the NCAA men’s golf championship. A total of 24 teams from six regionals would advance to the finals site, allowing the championship to be conducted on a single top-tier course rather than two courses. The change might allow more than one Liberty League team to advance to postseason play. Travel to regionals would be funded by each institution. Action items: None.
14. **Women’s Golf:** Discussion items: 1.) *Championship review* – the coaches were pleased with the championship, which was held at Pinehaven Country Club in Guilderland, N.Y. The course was in good condition and was challenging, but fair. Pinehaven noted that some teams brought their

own food onto the course, which is not permitted per the course's contract with the caterer. If the league championship is to return to the course next year, the league may have to agree to some sort of meal provided by the course. 2.) *Championship planning* – the coaches were supportive of returning to Pinehaven, with championship dates of April 26-27, 2025. The coaches were supportive of using paperless scoring where each competitor enters scores on a mobile device throughout the round. Action items: 1.) None.

15. **Tennis:** Discussion items: 1.) *League schedule* – the coaches discussed the new league schedule. While most coaches felt the new schedule worked well, Curt Speerschneider (Skidmore women) felt the schedule was restrictive in terms of trying to schedule quality in-region opponents. 2.) *Tournament review* – the Liberty League tournament was played exclusively indoors at Cornell due to the poor condition of the outdoor courts, which are scheduled to be resurfaced this summer. Next year's championship will be held May 2-4, 2025. Action items: None.
16. **Softball:** Discussion items: 1.) *Default start time for weekday games* – the softball guidelines currently list a default start time for weekday league doubleheaders as 3:30 p.m., which was likely for makeup games since league doubleheaders had previously been scheduled for Saturday-Sunday. Coaches favored a 2 p.m. default time, which would allow sufficient time for games to be completed before darkness. 2.) *Tiebreaker rule* – the softball guidelines state that the NCAA tiebreaker rule is utilized in regular-season play, but the tournament guidelines do not state whether it will be utilized (it is not). The tournament guidelines will be updated accordingly. 3.) *All-tournament team* – the coaches supported the addition of an all-tournament team to the tournament awards. The league previously had an all-tournament team, but it had been discontinued following the 2018 season because of logistical challenges with selecting the teams. 4.) *Tournament play-in game* – the coaches proposed moving the #4 vs. #5 play-in game from Thursday morning to Wednesday afternoon. As it currently stands, the coaches felt the winning team is at a significant disadvantage since it has likely used its top pitcher. In January 2023, the administrators had previously voted to conduct the play-in game on Thursday as a Wednesday game would extend the tournament to four days and would result in additional expenses for the competing teams and tournament host. 5. *Proposed schedule* – a four-year draft schedule for the 2026 through 2029 seasons was reviewed and supported by the coaches. Additionally, corrections were made to the 2025 schedule to address the two Friday-Saturday weekends that had been separated. Action items: To establish 2 p.m. as the default time for weekday Liberty League doubleheaders. 2.) To reintroduce the all-tournament team to the Liberty League softball championship awards program. 3.) To conduct the Liberty League

softball championship play-in game on Wednesday at 4 p.m. at the #1 seed. 4.) To adopt the proposed Liberty League softball schedule for the 2026 through 2029 seasons.

17. **Baseball:** Discussion items: 1.) *Pitch clock implementation* – the coaches shared plans for installing pitch clocks, which will be required in Division III beginning with the 2025 baseball season. Umpires could potentially refuse to work games at sites where there is no visible pitch clock. 2.) *Regular-season crossover weekend* – the coaches discussed challenges with the regular-season crossover weekend in which teams in one division play doubleheaders against two teams from the opposing division. Five of the 10 crossover doubleheaders this past season were cancelled due to weather, which impacted tournament seeding. As an alternative, teams could potentially play a 3-game series against one team from the opposite division, consistent with in-division weekend play. The crossover weekend will be re-evaluated as part of a review of the league schedule. 3.) *Schedule development* – the coaches continue to explore scheduling formats and models that could improve or enhance the league schedule. Rob Grow (RIT) suggested using AI to assist in the development of models. King will work with Grow on determining scheduling priorities. Action items: None.
  
18. **Sports Medicine:** Discussion items: 1.) *NCAA postgraduate insurance program* - the athletic trainers discussed the implementation of the NCAA postgraduate insurance program and the impact that it would have on their offices. 2.) *Best practices* – the athletic trainers shared best practices, including the use of athletic injury support groups on each campus. 3.) *Meeting structure* – for future meetings, it was suggested that a regular meeting date could be established, such as the second Tuesday in January. This would allow a discussion of NCAA legislation potentially impacting athletic trainers. Either Rochester or Skidmore will be the committee chair for 2024-25. Action items: None.
  
19. **SAAC:** Discussion items: Megan Buchanan provided a recap of the in-person Liberty League SAAC meeting, held Oct. 22, 2023 in Utica. Vassar deputy athletic director Kaitlin Leach conducted a DiSC assessment program. The group also discussed NCAA legislation and key campus initiatives and issues. Ideas for potential future topics are welcome. Action items: None.

## VI. NCAA Update

- A. **Management Council Representation / Nominations:** With the new Division III policy ensuring that all conferences have representation on either the Presidents Council or Management Council, the Liberty League has been assigned a spot on the Management Council. Kristie Bowers expressed a

willingness to serve on the league's behalf and will work with King on submitting a nomination.

- B. NCAA National SAAC Representative / Nomination Process:** The Liberty League is scheduled to nominate a primary member to the Division III National SAAC effective with the 2025 NCAA Convention. Unlike the appointment process with the associate member, where the league can appoint the individual of its choosing, the full-member appointment requires the league to nominate a female, male and BIPOC nominee and the NCAA makes the appointment to ensure that it meets committee composition requirements. Brooke LaVallee, a Skidmore women's lacrosse student-athlete, who will be a junior in 2024-25, currently represents the Liberty League as associate member on the National SAAC and can be nominated as the primary member.
- C. RAC Representative Selection Process:** When selecting individuals to serve on NCAA Regional Advisory Committees (sport ranking committees), coaches groups are typically contacted to solicit interest in serving on the RAC. If multiple individuals express interest, coaches are asked to vote or rank their choices. Often, coaches are selected based on seniority – the longer tenured coach is generally selected. With the implementation of the NCAA Power Index (NPI), it is unclear what the purpose of the RACs might be. RAC members may be asked to serve as site representatives for NCAA tournament games. In addition to soliciting interest from coaches, it was agreed that administrators should also be provided with the opportunity to serve on RACs. Once interest is solicited, the Executive Committee will review nominees and appoint the league's RAC representatives.
- D. NCAA Power Index Implementation:** With the NCAA Power Index (i.e., PairWise) set to be adopted for most Division III team sports for 2024-25, the process for selecting at-large teams for NCAA championships will change. The NCAA is planning on conducting webinars to review how the NPI works and how teams will be ranked
- E. League/Sport Positions on NCAA/National Issues:** In March, the Liberty League soccer coaches drafted a letter expressing concerns with the potential implementation of the NCAA Power Index and requested that the commissioner forward it to the Division III Championships Committee. Few athletic directors appeared to be aware of the discussion or letter. It was agreed that if sport committees wish to take positions on NCAA issues in the future, the sport liaison and commissioner should be included in the discussions with any subsequent action items forwarded to the athletic directors for review and vote before they are shared with the appropriate NCAA committee(s).

*Meeting adjourned for the evening at 5:40 p.m.*

## **Thursday, May 30**

*Meeting reconvened at 8:33 a.m.*

### **VII. Vote on Sport Action Items**

- A. **FIELD HOCKEY: Motion** to adopt the proposed 4-year schedule for the seasons 2025 through 2028. *PASSED 8-0-3.*

- B. **FOOTBALL: Motion** to adopt the proposed 2-year schedule (Draft #2) for the seasons 2025 and 2026. *PASSED 8-0-5.*

**Motion** to adopt the football scheduling agreement as presented by the Empire 8. *PASSED 8-0-5.*

- C. **SOCCER: Motion** to adopt the proposed Liberty League soccer schedule for 2026-2029 based on a model of six single-Saturday games and three games scheduled by mutual agreement. *PASSED 8-2-1.*

- D. **CROSS COUNTRY / TRACK & FIELD: Motion**, in cross country, to increase the number of entries permitted from 17 to 18 while maintaining 14 participants and adding a fourth alternate. *PASSED 8-1-2.*

**Motion** to implement the use of live results for field events at the Liberty League indoor and outdoor track and field championships. *PASSED 7-0-4.*

- E. **BASKETBALL: Motion** to utilize video review during all Liberty League regular season and championship games. *FAILED 5-5-1.*

**Motion** to adopt the use of technology on the bench during games as a teaching tool. *No vote taken – bench technology may be utilized at the discretion of each institution.*

**Motion** to use media timeouts (1 minute in length) for all Liberty League regular season games. *FAILED 4-6-1.*

**Motion** to add a sixth member to the first and second team all-league recognition. *Tabled for review of Liberty League awards program.*

- F. **SWIMMING & DIVING: Motion** to permit the host institution to enter an unlimited number of exhibition athletes to swim in the prelim sessions. *PASSED 10-0-1.*

**Motion** to utilize relay judging platforms per the NCAA rule book to disqualify teams on relay starts. *PASSED 10-0-1.*

**Motion** to establish a meet committee to be formed in the fall each year to address matters related to the championship. The committee will consist of the meet manager, host coach and three other coaches established via a rotation. *No vote taken – current committee language will be updated to reflect the role of the committee prior to the championship.*

- G. MEN'S LACROSSE: Motion** to adopt the proposed 4-year schedule for the seasons 2026 through 2029. *PASSED 8-0-3.*

**Motion** to add a Specialist of the Year/Week to the Liberty League awards program. *Tabled for review of Liberty League awards program.*

- H. WOMEN'S LACROSSE: Motion** to add a Midfielder of the Year award to the Liberty League Women's Lacrosse awards program. *Tabled for review of Liberty League awards program.*

**Motion** to add a Goalie of the Year award to the Liberty League Women's Lacrosse awards program. *Tabled for review of Liberty League awards program.*

**Motion** to add a Draw Specialist to the All-Liberty League first and second team. *Tabled for review of Liberty League awards program.*

**Motion** to adopt the proposed Liberty League women's lacrosse schedule for the 2026-2029 seasons. *PASSED 11-0-0.*

- I. ROWING: Motion** to conduct competition at the Liberty League championship in the 1V8+, 2V8+, 3V8+, 4V8+, V4+ and N4+ events for both the men and women while eliminating the Novice 8 events. *PASSED 7-0-4.*

**Motion** to replace the traditional Novice Crew of the Year award with an All-Novice Team, selected in a manner similar to the All-Liberty League teams. *Tabled for review of Liberty League awards program.*

- J. SOFTBALL: Motion** to establish 2 p.m. as the default time for weekday Liberty League doubleheaders. *FAILED 0-8-3.*

**Motion** (Kane/Cummings-Danson) to establish 3 p.m. as the default time for weekday Liberty League doubleheaders *PASSED 7-1-3.*

**Motion** to reintroduce the all-tournament team to the Liberty League softball championship awards program. *Tabled for review of Liberty League awards program.*

**Motion** to conduct the Liberty League softball championship play-in game on Wednesday at 4 p.m. at the #1 seed. *FAILED 2-6-3.*

**Motion** to adopt the proposed Liberty League softball schedule for 2026-2029. *PASSED 8-0-3.*

## VIII. Other Business

- A. Sports Medicine Handbook Review – 3 Fold Group Proposal:** During the October 2023 meeting, the league approved the recommendations of the athletic trainers to the Liberty League’s Sports Medicine Handbook with the expectation that it would undergo an external review to assess potential liability issues. The 3 Fold Group has submitted a proposal to review the Sports Medicine Handbook and is willing to review other league policies and procedures as requested. The review of the Sports Medicine Handbook could be completed at an hourly rate (\$210). While there is interest in reviewing other documents, including the governance structure, it was agreed that the work on the Sports Medicine Handbook should be completed prior to other areas potentially being reviewed.

**Motion:** A motion (Walsh, Nicholson) to engage the 3 Fold Group to conduct an external review of the Liberty League Sports Medicine Handbook was APPROVED 11-0-0.

- B. Video Review Implementation:** As technology continues to evolve, the implementation of video on the sidelines and instant replay is becoming more prevalent in Division III. Video review and technology on the sideline is now permitted in a number of sports. It was agreed that an information session with a Hudl representative held in conjunction with the fall Zoom meeting would be beneficial to answer questions regarding department-wide packages and also to assess options for video review.
- C. NIL Collectives:** Given the recent news of an NIL collective that was formed to support the men’s basketball program at Division III Marietta College, the members were surveyed to determine what NIL marketplace opportunities institutions have engaged in. While no institutions reported having collectives, Clarkson reported utilizing Opendorse (opendorse.com), which is a leading athlete marketplace and NIL technology company that helps student-athletes and their supporters understand, build, protect, and monetize their brand value. Institutions pay an annual fee to Opendorse, which then allows their student-athletes to post opportunities to engage with the marketplace. A collective supporting athletics might take away from an athletic department’s fundraising abilities. If a donor chooses to donate to a collective rather than the athletic department, then the department may suffer as a result.
- D. Membership/Sport Sponsorship Opportunities:** The members were surveyed as to potential needs for conference affiliation for sports that the Liberty League does not sponsor (e.g., men’s volleyball). While there are

currently no unmet conference affiliation needs, the league will continue to monitor membership and sport sponsorship for potential opportunities. Hobart and William Smith anticipates adding varsity softball, but the timetable has not been finalized. This would give the league nine softball teams.

- E. Future Meeting Dates:** The fall meeting will be held via Zoom on Thursday, Sept. 19. An information session will be held with a representative from Hudl from 11 a.m. to noon. The regular meeting will be held from noon to 2 p.m. The winter meeting, held at the NCAA Convention will be held Thursday, Jan. 16, 2025. [Following the league meeting, the NCAA adjusted the dates for the convention to Tuesday-Friday, Jan. 14-17, 2025. As a result, the league meeting will be held on Thursday, Jan. 16, the day before the Division III Business Session.] The spring meeting will be held May 28-29, 2025. The Landing Hotel will be utilized if available.
- F. Benchmarking:** Benchmarking of head coach salaries was discussed. While the league had previously conducted staffing surveys, salaries were not included in the study. It may be feasible to compile salary information with publicly available data. King will solicit potential survey instruments to collect the benchmarking data.

## **IX. Executive Session**

The following actions were taken during the Executive Session:

- A. FY25 Proposed Budget:** The league budget and reserve funds were reviewed. The approved dues for FY25 (\$21,500) support the expenditures in the league budget. The league's current certificate of deposit (CD) has a very low interest rate – less than 1%. It was agreed that the league should explore options for the reserve funds, such as a high-yield savings account, that yield a higher rate of return.

**Motion:** A motion (McLaughlin, Kane) to approve the FY25 budget was APPROVED 11-0-0.

- B. Tennis Championship Funding:** Regarding the funding for the league tennis championship at Cornell, the options were to either fund the championship through a dues increase or to assess an entry fee to the competing teams. A dues increase would impact all institutions, including those that do not participate in Liberty League tennis. An entry fee would impact the teams qualifying for the championship.

**Motion:** A motion (Nicholson, Miller) to assess an entry fee of \$1,200 per team (12 total teams) qualifying for the Liberty League tennis championship was APPROVED 9-0-2.

- C. **Standing Committees:** The league will review its committee structure to assess whether the addition of standing committees would be beneficial to the governance process.
- D. **Review of Liberty League Staff:** The performance of the Liberty League staff was evaluated.

## **X. Adjournment**

*Meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.*