



STEPHEN NOWLAND / NCAA PHOTOS

Division I is asking members for feedback on the current governance process. The project is expected to continue through the 2013 calendar year.

## Division I reaches out to find solutions within

Earlier this year, the Division I Board of Directors engaged consultant Jean Frankel to gather input from the Division I membership and other key stakeholders about the state of Division I governance. Frankel, who in 2003-04 worked with members in all three divisions to develop the still-enacted NCAA Strategic Plan, was asked to collect information about the structure and processes in the division.

Frankel will provide consolidated information, observations and recommendations for moving forward. "But I will not provide the solutions – the membership will," she said.

"The work that the NCAA does is so important, and sometimes the volunteer element of it is under-emphasized," Frankel said. "Part of what makes the NCAA so special is that it is an organization where members are actively engaged as volunteers, working in partnership with NCAA staff. In many ways, the NCAA is an unusual organization, because it is not purely a trade association or a professional society. In some ways, it is a cause-related organization. It's about the mission of serving student-athletes and the betterment of the student-athlete experience. That's something everybody can unite behind."

Following is a Q&A with Frankel about the project.

**CHAMPION MAGAZINE:** Where are you in the process of gathering information?

**JEAN FRANKEL:** In the beginning, I was hearing base-level data regarding the key issues. After those initial meetings in January and February, the conversations have reached a deeper level, focusing on root causes, and I am beginning to hear the membership's ideas about pos-

sible solutions. I continue to gather input and feedback across Division I. In April, we sent an online survey to schools and conferences. The initial data gathering was about reaching out to everybody already currently engaged in the governance structure. The survey and other opportunities are now allowing me to reach beyond that to people who aren't currently involved in the process. That's just as important.



Jean Frankel

Anyone who takes the survey can follow up with me for an individual conversation. Many already have, and I encourage folks to reach out to me. These conversations are also taking place with NCAA staff, as

they are an important partner in the overall governance system.

**CM: What's the goal of the project?**

**JF:** The goal is for my work to continue to inform decisions about the future of Division I, including its structure and function. The NCAA intercollegiate athletics system affects the lives of 450,000 student-athletes and makes an important contribution to American culture. Division I is a key driver of this effort. It needs an effective governance system to fulfill this mission.

**CM: How has your previous experience with the NCAA helped you with this project?**

**JF:** In 2003, then-NCAA President Myles Brand engaged my firm to help develop an Association-wide strategic plan that is still being followed today. Although much has changed in 10 years, the experience I had in that project gave me a basic understanding of the unique system of intercollegiate athletics and how it works on multiple levels – national, conference and campus, and about the

key issues, many of which still exist. I also had the opportunity to work with many leaders throughout the system who are still engaged to this day in some manner.

**CM: How is the NCAA different from and similar to other organizations you've worked with?**

**JF:** Although it plays unique roles in regulating intercollegiate athletics, the NCAA is still a membership organization. In a membership organization, it's important for staff and members to have a partnership to make sure all the voices are heard. I hope that future NCAA Division I governance systems.

In membership organizations in many industries, it is not uncommon to have bifurcated memberships related to things like size. In any industry, there are large partners and small partners. One of the biggest challenges any association has is trying to find a way to meaningfully represent and serve the needs of members of all sizes. In that way, the NCAA is not unique. But the NCAA is unique because it operates in more of a media spotlight and everything is more visible.

Membership organizations succeed when members are bound together by shared values and vision. That will be important for the final solution in this organization, to make sure everybody is united around a common set of values.

**CM: What has surprised you so far?**

**JF:** There is a surprising level of agreement about what the basic issues are. Everybody is agreeing on a lot of the basic things. That is important.

**CM: What is your advice to the organization so far?**

**JF:** Division I cannot just be the organization of large, or even of small members – collaborative solutions are important. Each group must understand and respect the others' needs, wants and expectations. It is essential that sufficient time be spent airing ideas and testing solutions, without rushing to final decisions. Division I has had multiple governance structure changes over the years: In 1995, there was presidential rule; in 2008, they created the Leadership and Legislative Councils. The solution has to be realistic. It has to be the right balance of structure, process and culture; and everyone needs to feel engaged and enfranchised in the process.

**CM: What are the important questions left unanswered?**

**JF:** Nothing's been answered yet. All of them are left unanswered. And I'm looking forward to seeing what develops.

– Michelle Brutlag Hosick

To talk with Frankel or request a personal meeting with her, email [jsfrankel@comcast.net](mailto:jsfrankel@comcast.net).