

UNIVERSITIES & SPORTS BETTING ALERT

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Addressing Integrity Issues By Training and Educating Administrators, Staff, Athletes, and Students

By Theresa E. Loscalzo

Intercollegiate athletic programs must be viewed as part of an institutional culture of integrity that prioritizes the academic mission and ensures that student-athletes are first and foremost students in programs of higher education. The legitimization of collegiate sports wagering imposes risks that have the potential to undermine the integrity of both the institution and the sports contests, as well as to jeopardize the welfare of student-athletes and the intercollegiate athletics community, if the risks are not adequately addressed by colleges and universities.

To protect the integrity of college athletics contests, the NCAA has in place regulations that prohibit student-athletes from betting money on any sporting event (college, professional or otherwise) in which the NCAA conducts collegiate championships. Violations of this regulation may result in a student-athlete losing his or her athletics eligibility, which has clear negative repercussions for the individual, the team, and the school. The NCAA Board of Governors recently issued a resolution reinforcing the NCAA's commitment to student-athlete well-being and protecting the integrity of college athletics from the influences of sports wagering.

The culture of integrity cannot be sustained by NCAA regulations alone. Higher education institutions should consider developing and strengthening policies and procedures, as well as training and education programs, designed to enhance institutional integrity. No school wants to be at the center of a cheating scandal, or to have its star athlete lose NCAA eligibil-

ity, or be found under the NCAA Rules to be lacking in institutional control.

Consequently, universities are advised to consider whether to put into place appropriate training and education programs to alert student-athletes and staff members to the risks that accompany the advent of collegiate sports wagering – risks that run the gamut from being approached by those soliciting inside information, to being bribed to participate in a cheating scheme, or to developing a gambling addiction and the attendant financial consequences. Athletics departmental personnel, including athletic trainers and coaches, as well as faculty members, are in a unique position to observe and interact with student-athletes on a daily basis and potentially influence behavior. Appropriate education and training sessions not only for the student-athletes and non-athlete students, but for administrators, faculty, and staff as well, may help to protect university communities.

Possible training topics may include:

- *For all:* The Policies and Procedures Implemented by the Higher Education Institution with Regard to Gambling Restrictions, Prohibitions, and Consequences.
- *For athletes, coaches, and those involved in sports related programs:* The NCAA Rules and Prohibitions on Gambling Related Activities.
- *For faculty and staff:* The Signs of Possible Gambling Problems in Students.
- *For students:* Help and Resources for Gambling Addiction.

- *For all:* A Hotline to Obtain Resource Information to Deal with Gambling Addiction or Resultant Financial Crisis.

Best practices for training often involve conducting programs on crucial topics at least once per year for all affected individuals, and also upon hiring new employees. Training can be conducted in person or through online or video modules. The nature and scope of each informational program may vary based on the role of those being trained. Training, educational seminars, or hotlines related to addiction or problem gambling should be offered in such a way that participants can remain anonymous. ♦

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