

# **Canada West Task Force on Future Competitive Arrangements for University Sport in Canada West and CIS**

## **Final Report for Submission to Canada West**

**April 17, 2012**

### **Background**

On April 29, 2011, in response to suggestions by some Canada West members to reconsider competitive structures, Canada West President Sandy Slavin, on behalf of the Canada West Board of Directors, suggested the formation of a working group of five CW Presidents and five CW Athletic Directors. Following the Canada West AGM in May 2011 terms of reference were developed for a Canada West Task Force on Future Competitive Arrangements for University Sport in Canada West and CIS. The purpose of the committee as stated in the TOR included the mandate *“To discuss, review, investigate and create strategies for the implementation of new competitive structures for Canada West and CIS.”*

Members were to represent 10 different Canada West institutions. An Athletic Director and a President would co-chair and a quorum would require a minimum of 3 Presidents and 3 Athletic Directors. Members of the committee were to be nominated by their respective colleagues.

Canada West Athletic Directors and Presidents were asked to express potential interest in membership on the committee. Subsequently the Canada West Board of Directors appointed Dick White (Regina) as co-chair and committee members Ken Olynyk (Thompson Rivers), Ian Reade (Alberta), Coleen Dufresne (Manitoba) and Clint Hamilton (Victoria). COWCUP appointed Stephen Toope (UBC) as co-chair and committee members Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg), Mike Mahon (Lethbridge), Peter MacKinnon (Saskatchewan) and Jonathan Raymond (Trinity Western).

Timeline for the work of the committee was an initial meeting in June or July with a target for presentation to the Canada West members at their regular meeting in February 2012.

### **Process and Work Undertaken by the Task Force**

The Canada West Task Force held its first meeting July 7, 2011 in Vancouver. The second meeting was held August 30, 2011 in Calgary. In light of the discussion at those meetings, a document of suggested principles and commitments was drafted and circulated to the CW Task Force members for their comment. High-level principles and commitments to guide competitive restructuring in Canada West and Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) were agreed to by the Task Force members at their third meeting on January 5, 2012 in Vancouver, and additional issues were identified as relevant for further consideration. These include, among others, the relationship of the Task Force’s principles and commitments to those in the High Performance Program Concept Discussion Paper by Own the Podium (OTP), which has been circulated to CIS members. The OTP paper was presented at the January 5, 2012 Task Force meeting by Phil Schlote and Ken Shields, members of the OTP Working Group on the Role of Canadian Universities in High Performance Sport, a group that includes members of OTP, CIS,

and National Sports Organization (NSOs). While OTP and National Sports Organizations clearly have distinct mandates and purposes from universities regarding athletics, the Task Force has identified that there are some key common objectives regarding the pursuit of excellence in sport and the value of attracting and retaining the best Canadian university athletes in Canada. Accordingly, the Task Force regards the outreach efforts of OTP to explore with universities a High Performance Program Concept as a welcome and exciting potential opportunity to continue working together where it makes sense for the mutual objectives of furthering the development of university athletes, so long as that pursuit is fully compatible with the university mission.

In light of the discussion at the January 5, 2012 meeting, the Task Force presented a Preliminary Report of a number of high-level Principles and Commitments for all Canada West members to consider to guide restructuring of university athletics in Canada West and CIS. The Task Force asked each Canada West member to review the report and to consult with the relevant stakeholders within their universities as appropriate, and provide a single institutional response. Given that one of the report's recommended commitments is for Presidential leadership in university athletics, the Task Force asked that each member university's President be engaged in consideration of this report. An opportunity for preliminary feedback and discussion was provided at the February 7, 2012 Canada West meeting where Task Force Co-Chairs Stephen Toope and Dick White presented the preliminary report to the CW membership. Subsequently, the Presidential members of the Task Force engaged with some of their Presidential colleagues across CIS as an initial phase of consultation, to hear their preliminary reactions for the Task Force's consideration.

At the final meeting of the CW Task Force on April 5, 2012 in Vancouver, members considered the proposed principles and commitments in light of the initial reactions of CW members – which in the main were strongly supportive of the suggested principles and commitments if not always unanimously or without reservation - and initial conversations among CIS university presidents in response to the Preliminary Report. The Task Force members determined that it would be appropriate to discuss in some detail in this Final Report the vision behind its proposed principles and commitments to guide interuniversity sport in CW and CIS. The Task Force hopes that this discussion will dispel any potential misconceptions regarding the objectives of the Task Force principles and commitments, and provide CIS members with a more complete background understanding of the reasons underlying the recommendations. The Task Force wants to make particularly clear its members' unwavering and deep commitment to academic excellence and integrity, and their commitment to fostering a student-first approach which is explicitly designed *not* to replicate the NCAA model, but rather to promote overall student development, including athletic development, and to better attract and serve Canadian university students who are talented athletes as well as scholars.

## **Task Force Vision of Interuniversity Athletics**

The starting point for the Task Force's deliberations is a shared conviction that universities in Canada who choose to do so could do better in developing genuine excellence among their students who have the talent and commitment to compete at the elite level of interuniversity sport competition, and for some at levels beyond, including in national and international competition. Universities must provide a wide range of health and wellness opportunities for all of their members, faculty, staff and students. Interuniversity athletics is but one of those important undertakings which range from intramurals to clubs, and provision of facilities and programs for our surrounding communities.

Universities in Canada overwhelmingly agree that interuniversity sport has an important place in Canadian universities as part of their mission, as demonstrated by the fact that fifty-two CIS member universities support interuniversity sport (with more likely to do so in the future). But Task Force members are unanimous in their assessment that to date Canadian interuniversity sport is failing by an unacceptable margin in achieving CIS's own stated mission of being the destination of choice for Canadian university students who are top level athletes. In combination with the entrance into CIS of more universities, the level of competition is less attractive to those seeking the best competitive opportunities. The continuing exodus of Canadian students who are elite level athletes to universities in the United States is not an acceptable state of affairs for our universities, and we do not accept that we should not or cannot address it in ways fully compatible with maintaining the academic integrity and high standards of our universities.

This talent drain is a concern shared by OTP, whose assessment is that this exodus of Canadian students too often harms the development of Canadian athletes in reaching their ultimate potential, and is detrimental to Canada's international performance in many sports. In their assessment, the NCAA often does not provide the best environment for the individual development of the Canadian student who is an elite level athlete. While the mandates of Canadian universities and OTP and NSOs are of course distinct, and thus any collaboration can only go so far as the mission of the university will allow, these dovetailing interests in developing an alternative to the NCAA and keeping Canadian students who are elite level athletes in our universities presents opportunities for developing an alternative sports model worth exploring.

CIS is not providing as high a level of student support, development and excellence in competition as we believe those Canadian universities who would choose to do so could accomplish within a context that maintains a resolute primary focus on the academic development of students. The Task Force recognizes and respects that some adopt the philosophical position that their university should not engage in higher performance athletics; our position is that those who are of this view should be able to pursue that vision of sport, and do so with the current frame and structure of CIS. At the same time, we think it only fair that those who think otherwise should also be permitted to pursue higher levels of student athletic excellence; in the range of athletic and health and wellness activities engaged in by universities, higher performance is a dimension that is currently underdeveloped.

It is the Task Force members' strong conviction that higher levels of excellence in development and competition for our university students who are also talented athletes is not only compatible with the university mission, but is the kind of choice of focus that is squarely within the proper realm of institutional autonomy. As splendid as so many of our athletes and competitions are, our assessment is that interuniversity athletics has been an area relatively neglected to date in comparison with the way that universities seek genuine excellence – including truly world-class faculty, teaching, research, and scholars - in everything else that they do, which involves choices of where to focus and invest. The Task Force therefore asks CIS members to consider the stark question: If we are going to have interuniversity sport, why should universities that choose to strive for genuine excellence, as we are able to do in everything else we embrace as part of our university missions, be denied that choice?

The Task Force believes that for positive change to occur in CW and CIS sport, it is incumbent upon proponents to articulate a compelling alternative vision, and accordingly it hopes to inspire a workable vision of student excellence in the pursuit of athletics at our universities. In doing so, we want to be absolutely clear that we regard reactions to these proposals as amounting to 'going down the NCAA route' as unfounded, and insufficiently appreciative of the intent and content of the proposals which are to design a student-first alternative model for interuniversity athletics. We are fundamentally committed to providing a new vision for CIS that avoids the kinds of abuses that too often plague the NCAA and compromise the academic mission of its members. We go further to note that we could not realistically replicate some features of the NCAA model of student athletics even if we wanted to, but the main point is that we do not want to do so.

Historical arguments over athletic scholarship support in the CIS, and some recent initial responses to proposals in the Preliminary Report, have raised the concern that Task Force recommendations to remove barriers to students from receiving financial assistance (see Principles #1 and #4 below) mean going down the NCAA path, with all its well-documented negatives such as compromises of academic standards, paying coaches more than leading academics and recruiting scandals. This critique, however, entirely glosses over the fact that some institutions such as Stanford marry the highest academic standards with top flight student athletics without scandal. More importantly for our purposes, invoking such fears to forestall positive change glosses over the fact that NCAA academic standards for eligibility to compete are actually significantly *stronger* than CIS standards – the point being that maintaining the CIS status quo against change is an inadequate response to the raising of such fears.

Would pressures to compromise academic standards increase with the adoption of some of the proposed elements of a more highly competitive sport model within the university context? To the extent that they may, we are fortunate not to be in a situation that university presidents believe has got far beyond their ability to control, as is a frequent lament by presidents in the NCAA. Quite the contrary, Canadian universities can seize the tremendous and timely opportunity to develop an alternative student-first model, designed by university leadership, to ensure appropriate safeguards for academic integrity. Accordingly, the Task Force invites CIS members to propose constructive protections for academic integrity that do not unfairly

discriminate against students for also being highly talented athletes. We explain other differences with the NCAA model as the various principles and commitments are discussed in what follows below.

The CW Task Force invites university presidents and all other stakeholders to consider seriously, and without pre-conception, the vision articulated in this report, which seeks to respond in an earnest way to concerns expressed during preliminary Canada-wide consultations. Task Force members remain strongly and unanimously committed to the eventual implementation of these proposals, which had very broad support among CW universities in consultations on the Preliminary Report.

The Task Force will seek formal endorsement by CW members of this report and its recommendations at the May 2012 membership meeting.

### **Commitment #1: Presidential leadership in university athletics governance**

University presidents are enjoined to provide leadership and open communication in providing the vision, purpose and high-level operating principles of university sport in Canada. The Task Force is convinced that transformation towards the pursuit of higher levels of excellence in interuniversity sport in Canada cannot happen without the active engagement of university presidents. They will need to rise above concerns over relative competitive advantage that have all-too-often derailed attempts at reform - "those schools will have a recruiting advantage because they have more resources," say some; "those schools will have an advantage because they have lower academic entrance standards," say others. And so the level of support for interuniversity athletics for all has been kept at modest levels by the fears of too many. Task Force members respect those who want to maintain traditional levels of support, but equally expect that appropriate university autonomy mandates reciprocal respect for those who want to build a system that is more attractive to our desirable *students* who are also elite level athletes, by providing better development opportunities and levels of competition for some of our highest achievers.

Continued Presidential engagement and consultation may occur at the regional and national levels through formal bodies such as COWCUP and the Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) Presidential Advisory Board as well as through regional associations. The direction advocated by the Task Force is premised on a stronger role for university autonomy in making decisions relating to student standards, performance and needs, which is the mandate given to universities by their Boards of Governors or Governing Councils. Accordingly, Presidents will also naturally engage with issues affecting interuniversity athletics within their own institutions through the appropriate reporting structures, such as the relevant Provosts, Deans and Athletic Directors.

## **Commitment #2: To attract and retain more Canadian university students who are also outstanding athletes**

The Task Force members are united in their view that the current treatment of university students who are athletes in CIS is not consonant with how universities otherwise maintain their institutional autonomy regarding such student matters as academic standards, scholarships and other support, participation and eligibility. No other student group is held to higher standards of performance by an outside non-academic regulatory body in order to be eligible to receive financial support from their own university for their talents. Nor are there any other instances of externally imposed caps being placed on those supports, set in such a way as to prevent universities from attracting many of the most talented students. In the Task Force's view, the current system unfairly discriminates against university students who also happen to be talented athletes. We compete with each other, and often with other universities around the world, for top physics students or opera singers and all the rest, often offering substantial financial and other supports. Yet if an admissible student also happens to be a talented athlete, we are restricted from being able to compete for them at a world class level even though we say we support the concept of having interuniversity athletics as part of our missions. A top priority of the Task Force is to transform the attractiveness of Canadian universities for our admissible students who are also high level athletes.

A chief driver of the Task Force initiative is the continuing exodus of Canadian students who are elite-level athletes to the NCAA. As documented in the OTP Discussion Paper, in 2008-2009, Canadian National Sport Organizations (NSOs) reported over 2,000 Canadian athletes enrolled in NCAA programs in sports offered by CIS. At the same time as fewer top level Canadian students who are athletes stay home to compete in CIS, more universities have been admitted to CIS. This combination makes CIS less attractive for those students who are elite athletes seeking the best levels of competition.

The result has been that while we include inter-university athletics as part of the broad mission of universities, and thus an important part of many students' educational experience and personal development, the level of that experience and support is not attractive enough for some of our most talented potential students who are also athletes to choose to attend our universities. Athletes are one among numerous other kinds of such high achieving students who will be the shapers of tomorrow, yet we consistently lose out on a significant subset of this highly desirable pool of students who would be admitted to our universities, and who in many cases perform at the very top academic ranks.

When we lose out on these talented high achievers, we lose out on multi-talented contributors to the richness of our campuses. We also lose future engaged and successful alumni for our campuses, communities and society (many such students stay in the U.S.). As one means to address this objective, the Task Force recommends the following principle:

**Principle #1: If a student is eligible to compete as a full-time student meeting CIS and their own university's standards as a student in good standing, the student should be eligible to receive an athletic financial award.**

Current CIS regulations prohibit an incoming student athlete from receiving financial assistance if their entering average is below 80%. This principle would remove that barrier to student recruitment and support which was identified as a key factor driving to the NCAA many admissible and otherwise eligible Canadian university students who are top athletes.

The Task Force appreciates the history of this regulation, and recognizes that some will perceive the lowering or removal of this threshold as a lowering of academic standards and somehow a step towards undesirable features of the NCAA model. Task Force members, however, want to be frank in expressing their view that the primary effect of this rule is not to protect academic integrity, since it does not affect the CIS academic threshold to be eligible to compete which is set at 60% for entering students. Instead, the effect of the rule is to unfairly discriminate against, and financially penalize, desired students who are welcome to attend our universities but who happen to be highly talented athletes. These are among the students most likely to need financial support in order to prosper given the high demands on their time that inter-university sport makes, yet such support is denied. This restriction is contrary to a student-first approach to interuniversity athletics, and constitutes an unfair infringement upon the autonomy of a university to provide the appropriate supports that some of our most ambitious university students may need if they are to prosper.

Many Canadian universities welcome students who achieve below 80% in high school and provide them with opportunities to achieve their potential in their chosen fields. But we do not single out any students and actually deny them financial support to pursue an additional talent other than those who happen also to be elite level athletes. That Canadian universities cannot offer athletic financial assistance to a dedicated student who does well and receives a 78% average in high school while attaining the highest levels of his or her chosen sport means that many hard working students simply turn elsewhere to universities who will provide support for their multiple endeavors, principally to the NCAA. Alternatively, this rule puts such students who do stay in Canada in a situation of having to try to succeed in the multiple and extreme demands of the classroom and high level athletic training and competition *despite*, not because of, the support their own university is able to provide. Task Force members encourage CIS members to consider additional and higher in-course academic requirements to ensure the integrity and even raising of academic standards from current CIS standards (such as, for example, ensuring student attendance in class and meeting course requirements to date to avoid problems of last-term students competing while not completing their studies in good standing). We have the opportunity to develop such requirements in conjunction with creatively designing support systems so students may have the best opportunity to flourish in their pursuit of academic excellence while pursuing athletic excellence, as provided for by the next principle below.

The Task Force's view is that interuniversity athletes constitute a category of students deserving of appropriate supports to facilitate their success and attainment of their potential, just as universities provide appropriate supports to ensure the success of other types of students such as international students, students with disabilities, aboriginal students, and so on. We welcome such students to our campuses so that the talents they possess may blossom when

provided with the appropriate supports in the university context. Without such supports we recognize that they may fail to succeed or to realize their potential.

**Principle #2: Universities must provide appropriate supports for the academic and athletic excellence of students who are interuniversity athletes**

Within institutions, this principle includes the need to work with Registrars, Financial Aid and Awards offices, Faculties and the like to provide appropriate supports. These might include priority registration and housing, academic advising, and scheduling and program requirement coordination. It is not setting students up for success to bring them to a university and encourage them to participate in the demands of interuniversity athletics, but then have their academic program needs designed without consideration of and coordination with the extreme demands of training and competition schedules, such that students are left scrambling to meet program and course requirements.

Our model to support elite level student athletics is an ambitious one. Most other countries apart from the United States operate their sports programs chiefly through various kinds of club systems, such that academically capable and gifted students who also happen to be talented athletes typically must choose one path over the other. In Canada the highest levels of some sports are arranged this way, yet in others the highest levels of competition for the age group of university students occur in interuniversity sport. The Task Force members believe that the model of pursuing athletic excellence in a university setting is a laudable one in attempting to foster the flourishing of multi-talented high achievers - namely, those who also happen to have the ability and commitment to pursue the highest levels of sport while pursuing a university education. We believe it is an appropriate role of universities to foster the most-well rounded citizens and leaders for our communities and society. But we have to recognize that it is very challenging ambition, and be frank about what is needed if we are to meet that challenge and attain real levels of excellence in the development of our students.

Consideration could be given as well to efforts to broaden the pool of potential university students by supporting community programs for athlete development and supporting transition initiatives into university and into interuniversity sport; not only do many Canadian high school students leave for NCAA universities, but increasing numbers are leaving Canada even earlier than that to attend US preparatory schools. A commitment to development initiatives in the community would help ensure that youth with potential but from low income or facing certain barriers (lack of facilities) would have the same choices as those from more privileged backgrounds. University athletics provides a prominent and productive avenue of community engagement for our universities. Our university students in turn benefit from their engagements with local communities and their broader experiences across the country and globally. This is yet another reason why Presidents ought to be involved in integrating interuniversity athletics into the missions of their universities.

**Commitment #3: Explore a national student athletic scholarship effort to address the student talent drain**



Own the Podium has expressed interest in an initiative to reverse the “talent drain” of students, comparable to how the Canada Research Chairs program successfully addressed the ‘brain drain’ of faculty from our universities. Our commitment could therefore be pursued in collaboration with OTP and NSOs, like-minded universities, and perhaps members of the private sector to form a coalition to approach the federal government. We believe that a compelling case can be made for such a program. To cite but one example, is Canada really to accept that when its most talented women hockey players want to attain a university education while pursuing the highest levels of their sport, they are told “we don’t do hockey and education that well here in Canada, you should go to the United States”? That is the current shocking and unacceptable situation, with 432 women reported to be in NCAA programs in 2008-09 and the overwhelming majority of Canada’s Olympic Hockey program members playing there.

As detailed in the OTP Discussion Paper, the full long-term investment in supporting students for the pursuit of high-performance excellence cannot be expected to be borne by universities alone. The Task Force deeply appreciates the fiscal constraints on initiatives to transform interuniversity sport to higher levels of excellence, particularly in the current climate of government levels of financial support for universities. Its own members face these very same pressures no less than other universities who may simply conclude they are not in a financial position to consider any further investments in interuniversity sport. But to the extent that the objection to such initiatives is financial, the Task Force’s proposals can still be attractive, both as a matter of principle as a long term vision to build towards for those who want to, but also in the short term as some of its elements are designed to permit greater flexibility for a dedicated focus and deployment of resources. This includes greater flexibility in the allocation of student support to attract and retain students who are also top athletes (Principle #4 below), and institutional choice to determine which sports a given university may choose to particularly excel in at the highest levels (as provided for in Commitment #4 below), rather than having to make an economically infeasible commitment to higher divisions for all of a university’s sports programs as in the NCAA model.

**Commitment #4: CW members commit to exploring the development of competitive structures based upon the principle that universities will have the choice on a sport-by-sport basis of which sports to commit to compete in at a higher performance level. Like-minded CIS members are enjoined to identify their interest in and to participate in the development of such structures.**

Rather than approaching restructuring in the first instance through tiering by institutions – the NCAA approach of an upper division of schools whose sports programs all have to be in that upper division - the Task Force recommends that each university will have institutional choice of whether to commit to an enhanced competitive level in a high performance (HP) sport division on a sport-by-sport basis. This is an alternative approach to competitive structures from the NCAA model which divides schools based upon a broad-base sport minimum (16 sports for Division 1 Football Bowl Subdivision). Just as universities make choices about where to make particular commitments of resources in academic programs, universities should be able to choose where to make high performance commitments in their athletic programs and compete at that level in those sports, and/or continue at existing levels of CIS competition in

others as they choose. Competitive structures to be developed would depend upon the configuration of participants meeting high performance criteria in a given sport.

Universities competing in an HP division would be committed to doing so on the basis of gender equity. Thus, if a university competed in HP in men's basketball it must also compete in HP in a women's team sport, typically basketball also, though if not, then a women's sport of comparable roster size. If choosing a sport where there is only men's or women's competition, such as football, gender equity might mean also competing in HP in, e.g., women's rugby, and so on. The Task Force recommends that CW and like-minded CIS members begin work to identify to Canada West which sports they would want to commit to compete in at a HP level (in qualifying criteria for HP, see Principle #3 below).

Where numbers of participants in a given sport are sufficient for only one division, the participants in that sport would determine whether they would seek to participate as a high performance division. For example, if it was decided that a requirement to qualify as participating in a high performance division was permitting cost of living support to students who compete in HP divisions, that sport would need to determine whether it would accept that criteria or not.

The Task Force is open to the wishes of members on the question of championship structure – i.e., whether those who choose to compete in divisions at existing CIS levels would be able to participate in a common national playoff structure with those competing at an HP level if they wished to do so, or whether schools competing at existing CIS levels would prefer to compete in a distinct national championship track. One interesting suggestion in our consultations was that the winners of non-HP divisions could qualify to compete in the national championships of an HP divisional structure.

This approach to competitive structure offers a more economically sustainable alternative to the broad-base minimum NCAA model which is driven by having to support a high number of sports at the top level. NCAA Division One (Football Bowl Subdivision) schools face tremendous economic pressures in having to support 16 sports in the top division, which in turn places great pressure to win in the sports that generate high revenue for success – football and men's basketball. These pressures underlie the scandals in recruiting and academic standards in the NCAA that a sport-by-sport structure would help deflect. At this same time, to ensure the appropriate level of contribution towards sustaining a viable interuniversity sport *system* (and not just a commitment to one or two sports) and to respect the tradition and long-time investment by many CIS universities in a variety of sports programs, we recommend that universities wishing to compete in a High Performance division for any sport would have to participate in a minimum number of sports. For individual sports (as opposed to team sports) to qualify, they would require an appropriate number of athletes to be determined for that sport (e.g., sending one track athlete or swimmer to a meet would not constitute an adequate commitment to that CIS sport to qualify).

**Principle #3: There should be minimal participation criteria to compete in high performance sports, determined on a sport-by-sport basis**

The Task Force recommends CW and CIS continue to work with the OTP/CIS working group to develop appropriate criteria to qualify for a high performance division in a given sport. The Task Force recommends adoption of the OTP suggestions in their discussion paper of a minimum of a full-time head and assistant coach to facilitate a focus on the student's development, facilities access, extended training and competition seasons (e.g., 10-11 months, though this will vary by sport), integrated sports and medicine and sports science support, individual yearly training plans for each student, and the availability of sufficient student cost of living support, since such students cannot be expected to hold jobs sufficient to support themselves.

Extended seasons of dedicated training and competition are regarded as critical for development of a student's athletic talents. This would offer a student-centred alternative for Canadian students to the NCAA model, with its limited contact hours and pressures for winning to generate revenue at the expense of the best long-term individual development of the student. By working with OTP and NSOs, training and competitive schedules for some HP sports could be designed to synchronize with Canadian national team and international sports calendars as applicable, facilitating a pathway for elite level athletes to be integrated with national team development streams. The pattern already set in interuniversity swimming competition is a useful model in this regard. This approach would offer an attractive alternative to the NCAA for Canadian students who are elite level athletes, as top-level Canadian students are often unable to gain release from their NCAA programs to participate in Canadian national team programs. In contrast to the NCAA focus on using athletes for their programs to win, the priority focus in a HP sport structure would be on the development of the student to their full potential, just as we seek to develop our opera singers and engineers and economists to position them to reach their ultimate potential. Accordingly, coaches and athletic directors should have firm confidence in the backing of their Presidents, Provosts and/or Deans that their success is to be assessed in good measure by their progress in student development, just as professors' teaching success is evaluated according to student learning.

**Principle #4: Universities should have the autonomy, within a framework of fairness among like-minded institutions, to be able to choose to make a commitment to student excellence in interuniversity sports by being able to provide adequate cost of living support for students competing at high performance levels**

The Task Force defines such support as the costs for the student at their university (as determined by their university financial awards office) for full tuition and mandatory fees, accommodations and meals, required course materials such as books, and a living allowance suggested at \$200 per month. This framework is designed to provide a reasonable standard of living for students who cannot be expected to work to support themselves in university given the dual demands of academic work and an extended training and competition schedule in athletics.

The Task Force recognizes that allowing more adequate support for the cost of students going to university is not by itself a panacea that will reverse the talent drain of students who are elite-level athletes to American universities. But any initiative to address the talent drain from our universities will remain decisively ineffective without it. The Task Force welcomes the

preliminary data communicated to it in research undertaken at Ryerson University, which identifies athlete development and level of competition as two other primary reasons why many Canadian students go to the NCAA. While the validity of generalizations derived from that study remain to be assessed upon full assessment of the methodology and data base released with the study, the findings appear to reinforce the Task Force's proposals which are designed to address all three of these key factors that drive Canadian students who are also elite level athletes away from our universities.

It is worth pointing out that the Task Force does not see the success of these proposals as hinging on the ability to attract and retain all of the very top of the athletic elite among our potential students who go to the most glamorous NCAA athletic programs - any more than the only acceptable measure of success for our faculties is the ability to attract the very top faculty and students who receive offers of a prestigious chair or scholarship at the very top universities in the world. But the reality is that if we want to attract an admissible student who also happens to be a top level athlete seeking superior levels of competition and development, we are constrained from being able to offer supports competitive even with the likes of far less prestigious universities with inferior academic programs – Canadian universities lose, and our potential students lose.

**Commitment #5: A cap on allowable financial support for students competing in interuniversity athletics, with commitment to grow**

Allowing for scholarships that provide appropriate cost of living support for students who pursue elite level athletics does not necessarily entail spending more money overall on athletics. It would be up to universities to decide how they divide and allocate any funds, within a cap that the Task Force supports to prevent the excesses of a competition that our universities can ill afford. The Task Force advocates the principle of moving towards the provision of full cost of living supports to students competing in HP sport within an expanded cap, such as the current CIS 70% formula but based on the value of such cost of living support rather than tuition and fees. For the time being, however, the Task Force recommends proceeding with a phased-in approach that in the first phase would keep the cap on athletic financial assistance at the current CIS level. This would simply allow flexibility within that existing cap as to how assistance is allocated, and thus would not entail any increases in overall levels of student athletic financial awards. Whether this approach was to be applied to all CIS sports or only to HP divisions would be up to participating members to determine.

In calculating the cap, all financial benefits (not including employment) provided to a student by a university and third parties could not exceed the maximum allowable cost of living support as defined in Principle 4, with two exceptions. First, ) Sport Canada assistance for carded athletes should not count against the cap to ensure the costs of such students' national team involvement, such as travel, are adequately covered; it is to be noted that carding provides tuition support, which can thus be provided in place of university funds for such carded students. Second, a student competing as a CIS athlete who receives purely academic awards is permitted to accept such awards to reward scholarly excellence.

These proposals will give universities greater flexibility to attract and properly support students, including those who would otherwise leave for better supported athletic programs. Such flexibility would remove the barriers that currently prevent Canadian universities from being able to adequately and competitively support students who are also high-achieving athletes. Canadian universities routinely compete with each other and other universities globally for top level students. The Task Force finds that undue constraints on the ability to attract students who also happen to be athletes is no more a justifiable encroachment on their autonomy in striving for excellence than would their being constrained to offer graduate students competitive scholarships because some schools do not make a similar level of commitment to graduate study in a chosen field. The Task Force respects that some universities may choose not to make such commitments; the proposals in this report are designed to respect that choice. However, Task Force members want to make plain that they and Canada West membership do not accept the principle that those who choose to not make such commitments to excellence should be able to prevent those who wish to move to higher levels of excellence from doing so.

#### **Commitment #6: Institutional Integrity and Transparency to Ensure Compliance and Academic Integrity**

Worries have been expressed in the past, and in recent consultations, that permitting athletic financial awards that would actually cover the costs of living for students who compete in interuniversity sport invites abuses, namely the provision of undeclared sources of assistance to recruit and retain students who are prized athletes for competitive advantage, and the compromising of academic standards for the same ends. The Task Force wants to be frank in recognizing that it is widely perceived that regulatory abuses have long if sporadically occurred in the current CIS system, as programs allegedly seek ways around current limits on financial support which are unreasonably low to attract many students. Accordingly, associating the Task Force proposals with the specter of NCAA scandals as if that is an argument in favour of the merits of the status quo is not compelling. After all, NCAA academic standards are in key respects higher than CIS regulations. Providing more reasonable levels of cost of living support about which all schools can be transparent and remain competitive across a level playing field could constitute a fair system akin to how we compete in the support we offer to our most highly valued undergraduate or graduate students.

Task Force presidents want to be clear that they reject suggestions that efforts to provide appropriate support for the flourishing of students who happen to be elite level athletes are indicative of any willingness to compromise the core commitment to the academic excellence and integrity of their institutions. On the contrary, Task Force presidents believe it within the proper scope of autonomy of universities to define what the pursuit of excellence for their students means to them, and to be allowed to invest in chosen areas of focus and excellence in athletics just as universities make decisions about which academic programs to focus upon.

In support of this commitment, then, in addition to a commitment to compliance with existing CIS compliance mechanisms, the Task Force invites CIS members to propose any additional constructive and fair proposals to provide appropriate guarantees of academic integrity that would address any concerns. Rather than proposing NCAA style investigatory mechanisms that

are widely criticized as being far too intrusive, the Task Force proposals commit CW members - and invite all CIS members - to move towards implementing a more simple and collegial commitment to the implementation of rigorous institutional controls for compliance with athletics regulations and academic standards. Universities and their Senates and Board of Governors are the best positioned to decide what the integrity of their academic missions means to them. Institutional autonomy within a framework of fairness is the most student-centered approach rather than a centralized regulatory approach. Appropriate fairness standards could mean that registrars and financial awards offices must remain independent of athletic departments and uphold university standards even as they cooperate closely with athletics. In support of this commitment, the Task Force recommends that CW and like-minded universities in interuniversity sport move to require athletic directors to verify to the president all sources of financial support provided to students who compete in interuniversity sport. Students engaged in interuniversity sport should also be required to declare any financial benefit provided to them. Any misrepresentation from students, coaches, or athletic directors must be held appropriately accountable by the University.

**Principle #5: A cap on non-Canadians as appropriate for each sport**

Deploying cost of living support to recruit non-Canadians for competitive advantage would run counter to a key purpose of these proposals – namely, attracting and retaining more top Canadian students to our universities who also happen to be high level athletes. Yet the Task Force recognizes and fully embraces the value of international students to our campuses; in addition, international students can enhance levels of athletics competition just as they can enhance the classroom and campus environment. Accordingly, and in order to balance these conflicting goals, the Task Force recommends that the current CIS policy approach of placing a cap on non-Canadians in basketball be extended to other sports divisions that move to permit full cost of living support for students. The recommended level is one international student per every six roster spots for Canadian citizens / permanent residents, which reflects the current ratio permitted in Canada West basketball (2 per roster; the CIS limit is three). This threshold is also a reasonable approximation of the ratio of international students to domestic students at many of our universities, though of course that does vary, so a slightly higher threshold could be considered.