

MIAC Student Athletic Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

September 21, 2020 – 8:00 PM

Video Conference

Attendees:

Kayla Hanson, Natalee Lessert (AUG); Odera Onwualu, Mackenzie Novak (BU); Natalie Lafferty, Cayten Gardner, Talia Williams (CAR); Klara Beinhorn, Michael Kraimer (CON); Lawrence Hiquiana, Liz Kvebak (GAC); Maria Lewis, Jarick Rieffer (HU); Anya Lindell Paulson, Jack Sahargun (MAC); Maddie Schmitz, Zoe Culshaw-Klein (CSB); Molly McMahon (SCU); Chris Backes (SJU); Claire Patterson, Tara Nikolich (SMU); Abby Grismer, Doug Byers (STO); Jack Nasby, Kaia Porter, Liz Thull (UST); Dan McKane, BJ Pickard, Emily Carr (MIAC).

1. Introductions and Welcome (Emily Carr)

MIAC Assistant Director Emily Carr welcomed the group. Introductions were made.

2. MIAC SAAC Overview

The MIAC mission statement and goals for the 2020-21 academic year were reviewed. MIAC SAAC will work to continue supporting student-athletes around the Conference in addition to its partnership with Special Olympics, though interactions this year will likely be much different due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

3. MIAC SAAC Officers

The group approved Odera Onwualu (Bethel) and Molly McMahon (St. Catherine) to serve as MIAC SAAC Officers for 2020-21. McMahon will serve in the Chair role, while Onwualu will serve as Co-Chair.

4. MIAC Updates (Dan McKane, BJ Pickard)

McKane provided a verbal update on MIAC membership changes with The College of St. Scholastica joining the conference in 2021 and the University of St. Thomas departing for the Division I Summit League at the same time. The MIAC launched its new three-year strategic plan last October and continues to work on a variety of fronts including student-athlete health and well-being. McKane also provided a brief update on the status of competition due to COVID-19, noting that coaches and administrators have been working to put schedules together for a return to competition early in 2021. Pickard provided a brief review of this past year's Centennial celebration. More than 300 individuals were recognized throughout the campaign and several other Division III conferences have inquired about various elements of the celebration since its completion. The MIAC continues to house a resource page for student-athletes, which includes a variety of topics including scholarships and career development opportunities. The group also discussed options for a National Anthem statement in the wake of social injustice. The conference office will provide SAAC reps with the four potential statements drafted by the MIAC Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee so each campus SAAC can review and weigh in.

5. NCAA Updates (Talia Williams)

Talia Williams provided updates on a number of items from National SAAC. The NCAA-wide group has created a best practices document for developing campus SAAC constitutions and continues to discuss the issue of Name, Image, Likeness and how it may impact NCAA student-athletes at all levels of competition. During its July meeting, National SAAC had a dialogue on social justice and continued to work through other initiatives, including mental health and inclusion.

6. Special Olympics Partnership with NCAA DIII and MIAC (Emily Carr)

Carr provided an update on initiatives with Special Olympics Minnesota. The MIAC has a new primary contact in Laura Brunner (laura.brunner@somn.org) at Special Olympics Minnesota. Given the challenges of in-person events at this time, virtual volunteering is encouraged and could even provide a greater opportunity for participation. Special Olympics Minnesota has recommended pre-recorded videos of verbal support or student-athletes cheering on Special Olympians in place of physical participation this year.

7. Engagement Opportunities

The MIAC will join several conferences and campuses in participating in the ALL IN Democracy Challenge this year, encouraging student-athletes to vote in the upcoming election. The initiative is non-partisan and will serve to educate student-athletes on the importance of voting and encourage increased participation among college-aged voters. Several MIAC SAAC reps expressed a desire to play a larger part of the initiative by participating in an Instagram campaign in support of voter education and activism. The MIAC is also requesting feedback on what initiatives could be planned to better serve the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion for student-athletes in the conference. The MIAC will be co-hosting a "town hall" meeting with the Middle Atlantic Conference on Race and Social Justice on College Campuses on Tuesday, October 27 at 7 p.m. The MIAC would also like to launch a MIAC Journal feature series on its website that would allow student-athletes to write and share their own stories on MIACathletics.com. The conference will send out a link to SAAC reps and SIDs in the coming days.

8. Professional Development

The MIAC had planned its first-ever “Work in Sports” seminar this past March; however, the event had to be canceled due to COVID-19. The conference will look to make this event virtual in the coming year and will encourage any students looking at a career in athletics to join.

9. Staying Connected During COVID-19

The NCAA adjusted its bylaws to allow coaches to meet with current student-athletes during the spring and summer. MIAC SAAC reps shared that this experience was very positive and allowed them to connect with their coaches and teammates more during a time when that was particularly important for them.

10. Open Discussion

Due to time constraints, the group will move its open discussion segment to a Google Doc where reps can share their plans and best practices for the upcoming academic year. The MIAC office will create and share the document, providing contact information for all SAAC reps so student-athletes can connect with each other when needed.

8. Adjourned – 9:00 p.m.

Upcoming MIAC SAAC Meeting

The next MIAC SAAC meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 8, 2021 via video conference.