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from THE COALITION ON INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS (COIA)

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COIA CALLS FOR COORDINATED RESPONSE BY UNIVERSITY LEADERS AS ASSISTANT COACH SALARY SURPASSES PRESIDENT'S

On October 15 the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported on an assistant basketball coach at Kansas State University who recently received a new contract that raises his annual salary to well over \$400,000 for the next four years, considerably in excess of the salary earned by the KSU President. The new contract was a reward for recruiting a player who spent one athletically successful year at KSU before leaving the university for the NBA.

The assistant coach commented, "This just shows it's a new day and age," and added that "for a long time Michael Jordan was paid just \$2-million a year." The Athletics Director noted that he had heard no negative responses from other schools.

The Coalition for Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA), which represents a membership of 56 Division IA faculty senates, worries that we have indeed come to a "new day" when an assistant coach is paid more than the university president for recruiting a one-and-done player. Higher education should quickly rethink the merits of this professional athletics model before it becomes a benchmark for the next round of athletic budget escalation and further separation of athletics from academics. While we believe this to be true irrespective of economic circumstances, it is a particularly compelling matter when state budgets are surely going to be adversely affected by the financial turmoil in the country (thus affecting public institutions) and when endowment returns are likely to be flat or declining (affecting both public and private institutions).

We call on the leaders of our schools to join COIA in a clear expression of concern about:

- The alarming and unsustainable rise in the salary structure of athletics personnel, no longer limited to head coaches;
- The premium placed on recruiting top athletes regardless of commitment to academic success, rather than on developing sports programs that enhance the educational experience of student-athletes;

Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics

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- The conscious blurring of the line between the amateur sports programs of universities and the professional athletics industry that is marketed as entertainment and has profit making as its primary goal.

COIA strongly supports the mission of intercollegiate athletics to provide educational enhancement, foster campus community, and sustain the engagement of alumni and the public with educational institutions. College sports is fun for us all. But the growing drive of Division IA schools to win at all costs replaces educational goals with the hope of profitable championships. For higher education, there is no way this can succeed. While all schools benefit when athletics enhances education, nothing can increase the number of winning teams. For the vast majority of schools, the costs of an unsustainable facilities arms race and revenue generation programs modeled after professional leagues drain millions of dollars desperately needed to maintain academic quality. We may see a better product on the field, but because of the lost opportunities in teaching and research, American higher education and the nation are the losers.

Six years ago, COIA was formed as a national faculty voice for measured reform. Its founding aim was to support university presidents who were speaking out on these issues, and to contribute ideas in a spirit of flexible cooperation. Since that time, the problems of college sports have only grown more severe and more complex. Coordinated action by the leaders of higher education is more critical than ever, and COIA remains ready to join in support.

This statement has been approved by the Steering Committee of the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (<http://www.neuro.uoregon.edu/~tublitz/COIA/SC.html>)

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