

## News Release (6/26/2014)

**Headline:** Changing the Game for the NCAA

**Summary:**

The overwhelming surge of issues and conflict in intercollegiate athletics threaten the core of the college sports model and call into question the value of the student-athlete experience. A number of cases highlight the costs - wins and dollars - for institutions, administrators, coaches, and the athletes. A new alliance between the Sports Conflict Institute (SCI) and Pacifica Human Communications (PHC) aims to implement cutting-edge, informal conflict management systems with college athletic departments to better manage risk and optimize performance.

**Body:**

There is no shortage of problems on and off the field of play. National headlines highlight concerns about recruiting, sexual abuse, off-field violence, academic fraud, bullying and other issues that undermine the NCAA's stated mission to "support learning through sports." In the past decade, over 44% of programs in NCAA's DI have committed major rules violations. According to a study on the NCAA website, 77% of male and 88% of female student-athletes agree with how the national media portrays college athletics.

The NCAA model of intercollegiate athletics faces challenges on a number of critical fronts. College sports are approaching \$11B in revenue annually. Lawsuits, such as the O'Bannon trial, question whether the system exploits student-athletes - 85% of whom who live below the poverty line. Rutgers, Oregon State University, and Boston University have received more national attention for allegations of coaches bullying student-athletes than for any academic or athletic accomplishments, all while costing these institutions millions of dollars in revenue.

"Athletic departments are unique on college campuses. They operate in a fishbowl with extreme pressures to perform competitively and financially. It's a perfect storm for stress and destructive conflict. Mismanaged sports conflicts have severe consequences for the stakeholders of a sports team, with negative impacts on competitive performance, reputation, and financial well-being necessary for success. Seasons are lost, careers are cut short, fans are betrayed, and millions of dollars are spent on investigations and crisis management," noted Joshua Gordon, Sports Conflict Institute founder.

In response to the growing need for effective ways to understand, limit and resolve destructive conflict on and off the field of play, the Sports Conflict Institute (SCI) is partnering with Pacifica Human Communications (PHC) to better serve intercollegiate athletic programs to cost-effectively manage issues and create benefit for the student-athletes, coaches, administrators, and their institutions.

"Organizational ombuds programs provide the opportunity to neutralize conflict. Frankly, the sports industry is decades behind other sectors in leveraging conflict management systems to reduce the high costs from ad hoc response to issues. Sports are cutting-edge in so many

ways that it makes sense to bring innovation to how they handle challenges,” commented Gordon.

This alliance brings together the leader in sports conflict management and key innovators in organizational ombuds systems. “The key is equanimity— to manage disturbance without greater disturbance,” commented John Zinsser, PHC co-founder.

“We are excited to partner with SCI and the opportunity to influence how teams manage conflict so headlines turn from scandal to the inspiring stories of sport,” said PHC co-founder Andrea Schenck. “SCI has done important work in the field, and we are thrilled to join their team. Sports have their own culture, hierarchy and power structure. Those structures are important for a successful team, but the downside is that individuals can’t easily bring forward issues in such a culture.”

"The insular nature of a team makes it tough for a coach or player to seek outside help or get another opinion, which is what makes an organizational ombuds program so well-suited to help manage the headline exploding issues in today's college sports," said Zinsser. According to the NCAA, student-athletes’ trust in coaches remains below 50% for most sports.

An ombuds' independence, neutrality, informality, and confidentiality enables them to create a safe place. Going to the ombuds is like ‘home base’ in tag - the ombuds program's independence means it stands alone and it's neutrality means the ombuds represents fair process. Being informal means many options and choices are available to the person with the concern, while confidentiality means the issue raised is off-the-record. "All benefit from an organizational ombuds because there is an easier path to needed help or answers; relationships and reputations are protected because concerns and problems get addressed earlier before the issue has become insurmountable; and with stress and conflict minimized, focus and energy can be channeled to winning," explained Schenck.

Conflicts stemming from athletics are tearing at the social fabric of campuses across America. The old models are failing and fading. The specialized, high stakes challenges of big time athletics need a different approach. A dedicated, to-code organizational ombuds who can quickly, safely and effectively support all involved to help themselves to better outcomes is working in other venues. It's time college athletics got in the game.

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#### **About Sports Conflict Institute, LLC:**

SCI supports competitive goals in athletics through understanding, preventing, and resolving destructive conflicts that occur both inside and outside the lines. SCI serves as a resource center and provides a range of services to help manage risk and optimize performance. Conflict is inevitable, but how we respond determines whether success follows or costs mount.

SCI supports organizational and individual goals through education, research, and service focusing on sports conflict. For more information, please visit [sportsconflict.org](https://sportsconflict.org)

**About Pacifica Human Communications, LLC:**

With international reach, PHC has helped Fortune 500 companies, U.S. government agencies, academic institutions and individuals overcome the challenges created by under-considered and under-managed conflict. Co-founders John Zinsser and Andrea Schenck deliver benefit from intentional and informal conflict management.

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