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Contact: Hannah Dewey (hannah@lead1a.com)

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LEAD1 Survey Reveals Strong Majority of FBS Athletics Directors Believe Employment Status of College Athletes Would Impact Funding of Non-Revenue Sports

Survey reveals more than 90 percent of FBS athletics directors disagree with recent comment made by NLRB General Counsel, Jennifer Abruzzo, that the employment status of college athletes would not significantly impact non-revenue sports.

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The LEAD1 Association (“LEAD1”), which represents the athletics directors of the 130-member schools of the Football Bowl Subdivision (“FBS”), recently surveyed approximately 100 of its FBS athletics directors on whether the employment status of college athletes would impact funding of non-revenue sports.

Of the LEAD1 athletics directors surveyed, more than 90 percent disagreed with a recent comment made in a podcast interview by National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) General Counsel, Jennifer Abruzzo, that the employment status of college athletes would not significantly impact non-revenue sports, including these sports being cut.

In addition, approximately 85 percent of the LEAD1 athletics directors surveyed answered that they are highly concerned about college athletes being classified as employees whether via legislative, administrative, or judicial means with possible corresponding benefits and protections such as the rights to organize, strike, overtime pay, minimum wage, health and safety protections, and more.

In recent months, particularly following Abruzzo’s memorandum providing updated guidance that certain college athletes are employees under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), LEAD1 has continued to educate its members, as well as other college sports stakeholders, about the ramifications of college athletes being classified as employees.

“Our recent survey demonstrates that nearly all of the leading practitioners in athletics departments across FBS college sports believe that employment rights will impact broad-based opportunities for college athletes,” said President and CEO of LEAD1, Tom McMillen. “In fact, the financial model in college sports is unique given that football and basketball subsidize all of the other sports in our athletic departments. If more resources were directed towards football and basketball because college athletes have been classified as employees, other sports will inevitably suffer. If these other sports are cut, our U.S. Olympic effort will be damaged as the majority of U.S. Olympians were sourced from our colleges and universities. In the 2020 Summer Games, 75% of the U.S. national team competed in college before participating in the Olympic Games.”

About the LEAD1 Association: LEAD1 represents the athletics directors of the 130 member universities of the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS). Key to the LEAD1 mission are influencing how the rules of college sports are enacted and implemented, advocating for the future of college athletics, and providing various services to our member schools. For more information, please visit www.LEAD1Association.com.