Action Ideas for Making Collegiate Athletics Respectful and Safe for Students and Staff of All <u>Faiths, Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities</u>

Introduction

This document identifies action strategies for college athletics departments to create respectful and inclusive climates for students and staff of all sexual orientations, gender identities and faiths, with the recognition that many staff and students are both LGBTQ and people of faith.

These action strategies center on two broad school contexts: private faith-based institutions and public or private secular institutions.

Focus

For private faith-based institutions, this document focuses on respect and inclusion for LGBTQ students and staff. This list of actions does not assume that all faith-based schools are inclusive of all different religious perspectives.

The list of actions for public and private secular institutions focuses on respect and inclusion for students and staff of different faiths. This list of actions does not assume that all public and private secular schools are inclusive of LGBTQ people.

Action Strategies

The action strategies identified in this document provide a range of options. We, the leadership of Common Ground, present these strategies with the knowledge that each school will adopt action strategies that are consistent with its institutional mission and with regard to internal conversations about including students of faith and students of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

These suggested action strategies were developed from discussions during Common Ground meetings, which included people of faith and LGBTQ people in college athletics from private faith-based, public and private secular schools.

We recognize that the action recommendations included in this document are reflective of an ongoing conversation among people of faith and LGBTQ people and will need to be amended and refined as our conversation continues.

What are some ways that a private faith-based institution can create a respectful and inclusive climate for LGBTQ students and staff in athletics without compromising religious beliefs or institutional mission?

Individual Actions

- Acknowledge and accept the presence of LGBTQ students and staff in the school community.
- Communicate with athletics staff and student-athletes about respect and inclusion of LGBTQ people in the context of faith.
- Speak up to stop anti-LGBTQ bullying, slurs, jokes and stereotypes.
- Display resources that address LGBTQ issues from a faith-based perspective in your office where students and staff will see them.
- Initiate conversations with school administrators, boards of trustees, alumni or other school leaders about how to provide a safe and inclusive campus environment for LGBTQ people.
- Indicate your willingness to talk with LGBTQ students and staff about their experiences in athletics.

Departmental Actions

- Explicitly include LGBTQ students when communicating to athletics staff the importance of respect for all student-athletes (student and staff handbooks, orientation programs for new staff and students, for example).
- Write an athletics department statement of welcome that acknowledges all students and staff, including LGBTQ members of the school community, and post it on the department website.
- If school policy holds LGBTQ students or staff to a different standard of conduct than heterosexual or cisgender students, make that policy public on the athletics department website and in other institutional communications with prospective students and parents.
- Provide people who are exploring the relationship among their faith, sexual orientation or gender identity with resources and support to help them identify themselves in positive ways.
- Seek out conversations with constituents across campus to learn about efforts to respect diversity and to create inclusive environments.
- Connect the athletics department with campus and community LGBTQ organizations or groups and resources they provide.
- Provide families, friends and colleagues of LGBTQ people with resources that encourage respect and love.
- Provide student-athletes and athletics staff with education from a faith-based perspective on creating respectful climates for LGBTQ student-athletes.
- Examine department and institutional policy regarding LGBTQ students and staff to explore ways to increase LGBTQ inclusion.
- Examine departmental and institutional policies and their alignment with the institutional mission regarding different standards of conduct for LGBTQ students and their heterosexual and cisgender peers.

- Host a Common Ground conversation sponsored by your athletics department. (If interested, contact the NCAA office of inclusion and/or a member of the Common Ground leadership team.)
- Provide educational opportunities for members of the athletics community to explore LGBTQ issues in the context of faith.
- Provide ways for athletics staff and student-athletes to express acknowledgment of LGBTQ people on campus and their intention to create a climate of respect and safety for all people, including those who identify as LGBTQ (faith-based safe space programs/stickers or ally campaigns).
- Permit and support student or staff organizations for LGBTQ people and their allies.
- Engage your Student-Athlete Advisory Committee as peer leaders showing respect for LGBTQ students.
- Make a "You Can Play" video for the athletics department (youcanplayproject.org).
- Create policies and practices that treat LGBTQ students with respect and that specifically identify them (along with other minority or marginalized groups) as members of the school community.
- Examine departmental and institutional policies for transgender students and adopt the NCAA-recommended policy and best practices for including transgender student-athletes.
- As appropriate and with the student's consent, include statements about a student-athlete's sexual orientation and/or gender identity in videos or print about the student-athlete.
- Proactively plan how to accommodate LGBTQ student-athletes from visiting teams to ensure they have a safe and welcoming experience (refer to NCAA transgender inclusion guide and NCAA Champions of Respect LGBTQ inclusion guide).

What are some ways that a public or private secular school athletics department can provide a respectful and inclusive climate for students and staff of faith?

Individual Actions

- Acknowledge and accept the presence of students and staff of different faiths in the athletics community.
- Speak up to stop anti-religious bullying, slurs, jokes and stereotypes.
- Encourage respectful conversations regarding differences in religious perspectives among athletics staff and student-athletes.
- Initiate conversations with school administrators, boards of trustees, alumni or other school leaders about how to respect the rights of students and staff of faith in public or private secular schools.
- Indicate your willingness to talk with students and staff of faith about their experiences in athletics.
- Include different faith perspectives — Muslim, Christian (Protestant, Catholic, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), Jewish, Hindu, atheism and others — when you talk about respect for people of faith.

Departmental Actions

- Explicitly include students of different faiths when communicating to athletics staff the importance of respect for all student-athletes (student and staff handbooks, orientation programs for new staff and students, for example).
- Write an athletics department statement that acknowledges and welcomes students and staff of all different religions.
- Provide ways for athletics staff and student-athletes to express acknowledgment of religious people on campus and their intention to create a climate of respect and safety for all people, including those who identify as religious or as having no religion.
- Provide resources about religious expression in schools:
    - aclu.org/aclu-defense-religious-practice-and-expression-public-schools
    - religiousfreedomcenter.org/faq/
    - newseumed.org/religion
    - pewresearch.org
    - thefire.org/first-amendment-library/special-collections/fire-guides/fires-guide-to-religious-liberty-on-campus/
- Recognize and respect different religious practices regarding matters related to prayer, clothing and dietary needs, as consistent with federal guidelines (see above).
- Provide educational opportunities for members of the school community to explore issues of different faiths in the context of athletics.
- Support student or staff organizations for people of different faiths.
- Permit and support student or staff organizations for religious people and their allies.
- Educate coaches and other staff about the importance of knowing the different religious or spiritual perspectives represented on their teams.
- Post institutional religious nondiscrimination policies on the athletics department website.
- Provide student-athletes and athletics staff with education about creating respectful climates for student-athletes of multiple faiths (see federal guidelines on religious expression in public schools).
- Connect athletics departments with campus religious organizations or groups and resources they provide.
- Provide information about resources for student-athletes of faith (campus or community-based religious groups, for example).
- Develop a relationship with different campus-based offices of religious and spiritual life and create an awareness of the student resources they offer.
- Engage the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee as peer leaders showing respect for students of different faiths.
- Schedule athletics events with an awareness of different religious observances.

- Create policies and practices that treat religious students with respect and that specifically identify them (along with other minority or marginalized groups) as members of the school community.
- Host a Common Ground conversation on your campus. (If interested, contact the NCAA office of inclusion.)
- As appropriate and with the student's consent, include statements about a student-athlete's religion in videos or print about the student-athlete.
- Proactively plan how to accommodate religious student-athletes from visiting teams, or entire visiting teams from religious institutions, to ensure they have a safe and welcoming experience.

Additional Resources

For further resources for addressing LGBTQ inclusion, see the NCAA guide for LGBTQ inclusion, Champions of Respect.

Common Ground Leadership Team Assistance

We strongly encourage athletics leaders who are interested in implementing any of these recommended actions to reach out to the Common Ground leadership team for assistance, consultation, resources or programming that can assist your efforts to become more inclusive for LGBTQ people and people of faith.

- Nevin Caple, LGBT SportSafe — nevin@lgbtsportsafe.com
- Helen Carroll, National Center for Lesbian Rights — hcarroll@nclrights.org
- Liz Darger, Brigham Young University — liz_darger@byu.edu
- Clyde Doughty Jr., Bowie State University — cdoughty@bowiestate.edu
- Jess Duff, Massachusetts Institute of Technology — jduff@mit.edu
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- Jean Merrill, NCAA office of inclusion — jmerrill@ncaa.org
- Karen Morrison, University of Central Florida — karen.morrison@ucf.edu
- Chris Mosier, TransAthlete.com --- chris.mosier@gmail.comDonna Noonan, former staff, Fellowship of Christian Athletes — djnoon78@att.net
- Gary Pine, Azusa Pacific University — gpine@apu.edu
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