

2-15-2006 Prep School Teleconference with Erik Christianson, Kevin Lennon

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2 THE OPERATOR: Go ahead, sir.

3 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Thank you for joining
4 us today.

5 As you are probably aware, the initial
6 Eligibility Trends Working Group has met for the past two
7 days here in Newport Beach, California, to examine trends
8 in secondary education.

9 And joining us today for this call, to give
10 you an update of what transpired over the past two days,
11 is Kevin Lennon. Kevin is the vice president for
12 membership services with the NCAA, and he is chair of the
13 working group.

14 I'd like to now turn the call over to Kevin
15 for some opening remarks, and then we will go ahead and
16 take questions today.

17 Kevin.

18 MR. LENNON: Thank you, Erik. And good
19 afternoon to you all.

20 As Erik pointed out, we just culminated two
21 days of meetings involving the blue-ribbon panel that was
22 assembled at the request of Myles Brand to deal with
23 issues related to initial eligibility trends, with a
24 particular focus on issues related to the quality of high
25 school education, in some instances, across the country.

1 I'm pleased to provide an update for you
2 today.

3 As a reminder, the panel that I referred to
4 is comprised of college and university presidents and
5 other higher education administrators, faculty members,
6 athletic directors, conference officials, and high school
7 officials as well. It really is a diverse group, but I
8 think that reflects the complexities and the challenges of
9 some of the issues that we're going to talk about today.

10 It was clear through the course of our
11 discussion that the vast majority of our high schools and
12 preparatory schools do a good job in preparing our young
13 people for not only higher education, but the ability to
14 contribute to society. And the vast majority obviously
15 have a great deal of integrity.

16 Our focus in coming together today was to
17 deal with certain institutions in secondary education
18 where perhaps that integrity is lacking. And that was the
19 primary focus of the majority of our discussion today --
20 how the NCAA can go about addressing this issue.

21 I would also emphasize that the group
22 focused on the fact that this really isn't a concern as
23 much about how coursework is delivered -- the method, if
24 you will -- recognizing that technology and other
25 enhancements have provided our students with great

1 opportunities to learn in very diverse ways that perhaps
2 not available in the past. But the focus is largely on
3 the integrity of those courses and the integrity of the
4 coursework. And again, that was the primary focus of the
5 blue-ribbon panel and the discussions the past two days.

6 Underscoring all of this -- and I think
7 this is extremely important to note -- is that this is an
8 issue that we all need to be concerned about -- everyone
9 who cares about the quality of secondary education;
10 everyone who cares about our young people being prepared
11 to contribute to society and to -- for those who want to
12 pursue higher education, to do so with a level of
13 preparedness that will allow them to be successful. This
14 is not just an athletics issue.

15 It's clear from the data that the vast
16 majority of individuals who attend some of the schools
17 that have come under our scrutiny are, in fact, not
18 student athletes. They are going on to take on different
19 jobs, different roles in society. And the broader concern
20 that we have is: Are they ready to meet those challenges?

21 So I continue to stress again, and the
22 panel certainly did, that this is not an athletic's issue,
23 but it is one where we can play an important role. And
24 I'd like to outline for you some of the thoughts of the
25 group that are going to be pursued over the course of the

1 next several months.

2 The goal is to identify specific
3 recommendations that we can put forward to President Brand
4 and ultimately our board of directors and president's
5 council by June 1st. So it is an ambitious timeline. But
6 it's one, certainly at the end of the two days of
7 discussion, that we feel we can meet and that the
8 recommendations that will ultimately come forward will
9 help address some of the concerns that have been raised
10 related to academic fraud that have been posed by some
11 prep schools and other diploma mills.

12 The recommendations can be broken down in a
13 couple of larger headings. The first is to really begin a
14 process of identifying those high schools or prep schools
15 that fall outside any type of state oversight or
16 jurisdiction related to the quality of -- and monitoring
17 of their curriculum.

18 As I mentioned in my opening comments, many
19 and most of the nontraditional high schools do have
20 integrity and do provide a quality education. But it is
21 clear that some do not. And the NCAA is committed to
22 providing for a process that will increase the evaluation
23 criteria of those schools to make sure that they, in fact,
24 are credible and are delivering a quality education. So
25 there will be a great focus on the source, on the high

1 school, if you will, in better assuring that they, in
2 fact, are doing what they are charged to do, and that's
3 providing a quality education.

4 A subcommittee has been formed that will
5 work hard over the next couple of months to identify the
6 criteria that will be used, the questions that will be
7 asked of these high schools, the evaluation criteria for
8 how schools will either be -- continue to be on the
9 acceptable list or criteria that would require them to be
10 removed from the list and the fact that they are not
11 providing a quality education.

12 Issues related to potential audits and
13 perhaps even on-site visits are something the group will
14 consider, again, with the aim of making sure that we are
15 able to sort out those high schools that are doing their
16 job and doing it well, as opposed to those that are really
17 diploma mills and not providing a quality education.

18 The second area relates to the specific
19 students and their core course taking behavior, if you
20 will. And a great deal of focus there, in particular on
21 course patterns, particularly in their senior year or in a
22 prep school year, if you will. An identification perhaps
23 of a minimum number of hours -- or I'm sorry -- a maximum
24 number of hours that would be allowed to be used during
25 the senior year or a prep school year, for purposes of

1 meeting initial eligibility requirements.

2 The group was presented with academic
3 profiles of some students that I think were of great
4 concern to the panel quite candidly -- individuals who
5 have showed little preparation for the college experience
6 in grades 9 through 11; and in grades 12 or prep school
7 had really made some miraculous recoveries that I think
8 are going to come under greater scrutiny, if you will.

9 So the second area, which really deals with core
10 course taking patterns, again, particularly in senior year
11 or prep school, will be another subcommittee's charge, and
12 they will be looking at over the next couple of months to
13 perhaps come up with specific legislative proposals to
14 address those particular issues.

15 The third area related to test-taking
16 patterns involving the SAT and the ACT -- policy charges,
17 some years back, provided grater liberalization, if you
18 will, of how test scores are being reported to the
19 clearinghouse and to our campuses.

20 The committee is concerned about some of
21 the integrity of the reporting in that regard and is going
22 to be examining certain policy changes that potentially
23 would require more official reporting of test scores to
24 the testing agencies. That group will also be considering
25 which students should be required to provide these

1 official test scores. And again, that's something that
2 the staff and the committee will be looking at over the
3 course of the next couple of months.

4 The final issue that I would note here,
5 before we turn it over to the Q and A, is the committee
6 recognizes that these are real problems. And we believe
7 that we have the resources and certainly the commitment of
8 the association to address these issues in a very timely
9 manner.

10 We know that the abuses are going on, as we
11 speak, and I think there is a great sense of urgency among
12 all of the members of the committee to take on these
13 issues as quickly as possible.

14 They were very comfortable that we ought to
15 be making statements -- and I appreciate all of your help
16 in getting this word out -- that any student who is
17 contemplating leaving their high school right now, here in
18 February, simply to pick up additional courses for
19 eligibility purposes, they need to be aware that the NCAA
20 will be implementing policies in the very near future to
21 address these abuses. Students need to make sure they are
22 taking real courses, academic courses, and are not simply
23 trying to buy eligibility.

24 And so for the readers and those who would
25 be attentive to this issue here over the next couple of

1 weeks, we want them to know that changes are on the way.
2 I think the panel and certainly our membership are
3 committed to addressing these abuses to make sure that our
4 students are, in fact, receiving a quality education and
5 are prepared to come to our campuses to meet the increased
6 academic requirements that have been established.

7 So with that, Erik, I think we'll take
8 questions.

9 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Kevin.

10 Operator, can you explain how persons on
11 the line can ask questions today.

12 THE OPERATOR: Yes, Mr. Christianson.

13 The question-and-answer session will be
14 conducted electronically. If you would like to ask a
15 question, please do so by pressing the star key, followed
16 by the digit 1 on your touch-tone telephone. If you're
17 using a speakerphone, please make sure your mute function
18 is turned off to allow your signal to reach our equipment.

19 We will proceed in the order you signal us,
20 and we'll take as many questions as time permits. Once
21 again, please press star 1 on your touch-tone telephone,
22 and we'll pause a moment to assemble our queue.

23 And we'll take our first question from Mark
24 Schlabach at the Washington Post.

25 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Hi, Mark, go ahead.

1 Mark, are you there?

2 MARK SCHLABACH: Yes, sir. Can you hear
3 me?

4 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Yes, we're here.

5 MARK SCHLABACH: Okay, okay. Sorry. As
6 far as what's being done right now before these new
7 policies and measures are put in place, in terms of a
8 private school, a private preparatory school,
9 postgraduate, that doesn't fall under the state statutes
10 that would allow a state board of education to monitor
11 their curriculum and classes, what can the NCAA do to
12 monitor what kids -- what grades and scores kids are
13 receiving at those schools right now?

14 KEVIN LENNON: Well, this is Kevin.

15 In terms of the evaluation of the high
16 school, the current practice is to pose a series of
17 questions to any high school that wants the clearinghouse
18 to use those courses for purposes of students meeting
19 eligibility. They have to respond to a series of
20 questions that relate to the academic rigor and the type
21 of instruction they provide to the students.

22 We have, in some instances, had fraudulent
23 information that came back from high schools that are
24 (indiscernible), and the NCAA has already taken some
25 action to remove those particular schools from our

1 acceptable list.

2 It's our thought that we're going to move
3 pretty quickly with the recommendations that I outlined,
4 that we will begin providing greater scrutiny
5 (indiscernible) questions in a way where we can address
6 some of the problems that have occurred.

7 So I would think that by this summer, we'll
8 be in a position to have criteria outlined. And I think
9 we'll do a better job of fleshing out those institutions
10 that are not of significant rigor. And obviously at that
11 point in time, those schools would no longer be on the
12 approved list.

13 MARK SCHLABACH: At this point, are there
14 any on-site visits done at all? I mean, it's just
15 surprising that a school that is basically a storefront,
16 without teachers, without classrooms, could get on the
17 clearinghouse list.

18 KEVIN LENNON: Well, the group talked about
19 the potential of providing on-site visits based on
20 responses that we're going to get back from high schools.

21 At this point in time, that is not a role
22 that the NCAA has played. We have had some instances
23 where our enforcement staff has made a visit to a campus
24 or two, but it is not a systemic visitation program if you
25 will.

1 We've relied more on the integrity and
2 information from the high school principal. But I think
3 it has become clear, over, you know, our review of this
4 particular issue that additional scrutiny is going to be
5 necessary. And we're going to begin with that by
6 basically asking more questions of those high schools that
7 we have identified where we need more information. And
8 it's possible at the end of the day that those visits
9 could become just a routine part of the evaluation
10 process.

11 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Next question, please.

12 THE OPERATOR: We'll go next to Jack Carey
13 of USA Today.

14 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Jack, go ahead.

15 JACK CAREY: Kevin, can you specifically
16 outline some of these questions you're going to be asking
17 these people? What specifically were you looking at in
18 the meetings? And are these are a written list of
19 questions or procedures they're going to have to answer
20 to? What exactly are you looking for?

21 KEVIN LENNON: Yeah. I think the concept
22 here is to identify those institutions that are really
23 outside of any kind of state oversight.

24 You know, we recognize that public schools,
25 by their very nature, have a level of accreditation or

1 certification or oversight by other agencies. And we're
2 going to rely upon those agencies to continue to do what
3 they've done, and that's monitor the quality of the
4 program.

5 We did talk a little bit about instances in
6 which the clearinghouse or the NCAA may actually flag
7 certain issues for the state agencies when we believe
8 there's some potential abuses. But again, in their
9 structure, they have an oversight body.

10 So once we separate those who already are within
11 a structure with those that don't have any regulatory
12 oversight, that particular group is the one that we're
13 going to focus on. And the list of questions that will be
14 asked of them are really expanding some of the basic
15 things that we have already asked them, but getting much
16 more detailed, increased documentation to again ensure an
17 appropriate level of academic rigor.

18 You know, the group did look at some
19 specific questions. That's one of the things that the
20 subcommittee is going to look at. How do you go about
21 identifying, you know, these type of schools? And some of
22 it's as basic as just those high schools that simply
23 charge a flat fee to get a diploma. You know, there are
24 things that are outside the norm of any secondary
25 education structure that we believe we can identify at a

1 first-cut criteria and pull those institutions out for
2 greater scrutiny.

3 I would imagine that by our April meeting
4 we will have the very specific set of criteria with which
5 we will be asking schools, as well as how we're going to
6 evaluate those responses to end up pulling schools off the
7 list.

8 JACK CAREY: How do you -- since I imagine
9 that the crux of this is to essentially let students know
10 that they shouldn't go to these schools if they want to be
11 passed by the clearinghouse. How do you get this word out
12 to people in the short term, at least, if you're looking
13 at, you know, the sense of urgency you're talking about?

14 KEVIN LENNON: Yeah. I do think at the end
15 of the day that sunshine is going to help in this regard.
16 And I think that there's a commitment from the panel that
17 once an institution has been removed from the list, that
18 is no longer acceptable based on their responses and based
19 on our review, that we will be very public about that, so
20 that the students will know that attending that particular
21 high school is not going to help you from an academic
22 eligibility perspective.

23 But also, as I mentioned at the very end of
24 my comments, you know, I think it's important that
25 students themselves evaluate the quality of the courses.

1 And they know, in fact, if they're not taking courses of
2 any academic rigor.

3 And what we're suggesting to them is that
4 that practice is no longer going to be acceptable. We are
5 a couple of months away from putting the specifics to
6 that. But my encouragement to anyone, whether it be a
7 coach or a third party or the student themselves that is
8 planning on making a move out of their high school right
9 now, solely for eligibility purposes, I think they need to
10 look long and hard at the academic rigor, and know that at
11 the end of the day, we may simply say, no, we're not
12 accepting those courses.

13 JACK CAREY: Even for next fall, you mean?

14 KEVIN LENNON: Absolutely.

15 JACK CAREY: Okay.

16 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Next question, please.

17 THE OPERATOR: We'll go next to Duff Wilson
18 of the New York Times.

19 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Duff, go ahead.

20 DUFF WILSON: Hi. Kevin, what information
21 has been given to the Miami-Dade state's attorney on
22 university high schools by the NCAA?

23 KEVIN LENNON: I'm going to ask Diane
24 Dickman, our managing director of membership services to
25 respond to that, Duff.

1 DUFF WILSON: Thanks.

2 DIANE DICKMAN: Sure. This is Diane. That
3 state attorney that's handling the case actually called
4 our office a couple of weeks ago and was looking for some
5 basic background information. So we provided some basic
6 background information. It's similar information that we
7 had provided to the working group.

8 It wasn't specific to any particular high
9 school. It wasn't specific to University High School,
10 which I believe he's looking into. It's just general
11 information, helping educate him about the NCAA processes
12 and those type of things.

13 DUFF WILSON: Okay. And do you have -- has
14 University High School been removed from the NCAA
15 clearinghouse list?

16 DIANE DICKMAN: This is Diane again. Yes,
17 they have. As a result of your good investigative
18 reporting at the New York Times, some issues came to light
19 to us that are inconsistent with our NCAA academic
20 legislation. And so we sent a letter to University High
21 School seeking clarification on some responses that they
22 had provide to us previously to through the process. And
23 through that, gave them a window of opportunity to clarify
24 their answers. And as a result of those interactions,
25 they are no longer -- courses from University High School

1 no longer can be used for NCAA initial eligibility
2 purposes.

3 DUFF WILSON: Do you think the University
4 High School answered questions falsely on their
5 questionnaire?

6 DIANE DICKMAN: I think that what became
7 clear through that process is that their courses do not
8 meet our NCAA legislation.

9 DUFF WILSON: And how many high schools
10 have been so removed from the clearinghouse since
11 December?

12 DIANE DICKMAN: Three.

13 DUFF WILSON: Three of them? Which other
14 ones, Diane? Can you say?

15 DIANE DICKMAN: I don't have that list with
16 me.

17 DUFF WILSON: Were they the other ones that
18 were so-called accredited by the National Association of
19 Legal Support For Alternative Schools?

20 DIANE DICKMAN: I'm not sure what the other
21 two accreditation status was.

22 DUFF WILSON: Okay. But were they other
23 Florida schools, do you know?

24 DIANE DICKMAN: I do not believe that they
25 were Florida.

1 DUFF WILSON: Okay. And let me just ask
2 one more question about Florida, again, since specific --
3 because you -- you said that you'd like to, as one of the
4 priorities, identify schools with no regulatory oversight
5 and focus on them.

6 The Florida state law specifically says
7 there's no regulatory oversight on its private schools.
8 So do I take that to mean that you would identify all the
9 private schools in Florida?

10 KEVIN LENNON: Well, this is Kevin. Diane
11 can certainly jump in.

12 You know, I think the way to think about
13 this, Duff, is it really is a sorting process. And at the
14 first level of sort, I think that that is what -- that is
15 a group that you identify, those that are high schools
16 that fall outside of any kind of regulatory or oversight
17 body.

18 After you've identified and had that first
19 sort, there's a series of other questions that will be
20 posed to really, again, begin separating out those
21 secondary schools where they have integrity and those that
22 are really just a diploma mill. And I think the group
23 envisions that being a series of levels of questions of
24 sorting that gets you down to the ones that you're most
25 concerned with.

1 Because again, keep in mind, we're not
2 trying to indict all nontraditional schools. We know that
3 the vast majority have integrity and do a good job. Our
4 job is to try to separate out those that don't. And that
5 would apply for all states, not just in the state of
6 Florida.

7 DUFF WILSON: Okay. Great. Thank you.

8 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Next question, please.

9 THE OPERATOR: We'll go next to Brad
10 Wolverton at the Chronicle of Higher Education.

11 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Hi, Brad. Go ahead.

12 BRAD WOLVERTON: Hi, Erik. The question
13 was did the panel look at or do you have any idea of how
14 many prep schools we're talking about that are outside of
15 state oversight?

16 KEVIN LENNON: You know, we weren't able to
17 come up with that specific number. We've gone back and
18 asked and charged our clearinghouse with identifying and
19 telling us kind of what the volume will be.

20 I did hear just recently that, you know,
21 and one of the things I think that surprised the committee
22 is that every week, you know, you're seeing new
23 nontraditional high schools entering the clearinghouse and
24 applying for application to have their courses approved.
25 This is a dynamic process, one that is increasing, like I

1 said, on a weekly basis.

2 So it's a little tough right now to see
3 exactly what the size of the population is, but I would
4 imagine that by April we'll have a pretty good idea.

5 BRAD WOLVERTON: I mean, are you -- do you
6 have the sense that you're talking like dozens, hundreds,
7 something like that? Or any idea at all?

8 KEVIN LENNON: I think you're way more than
9 the hundreds. That's my sense.

10 BRAD WOLVERTON: And did I hear you right
11 that you expect to have some new rules in place by the
12 next school year?

13 KEVIN LENNON: Yeah. The group spent some
14 time talking about how ambitious they could be in terms of
15 implementation. Some things would be policy changes that
16 are easier to implement; others would require legislative
17 action. This group had three university presidents on the
18 panel.

19 And I think there's a general agreement
20 that we need to move sooner rather than later. If that
21 requires the presidential bodies to adopting changes in
22 this April or this August, I think the group was very
23 willing to recommend that, so that, you know, we could put
24 some of these measures in place before the next academic
25 year begins.

1 BRAD WOLVERTON: What about -- this will be
2 the last question -- sorry. Beyond June, since this is
3 sort of an issue that goes beyond athletics, you say, do
4 you have bigger goals for what you might do?

5 KEVIN LENNON: Yeah. That's something that
6 the group just began talking a little bit about -- what
7 type of partnership opportunities are available with other
8 communities who, as I mentioned, need to be interested in
9 this issue beyond athletics? I would imagine that we'll
10 have more thoughts on that coming out of April.

11 Whether this group remains past June I
12 think is an issue for Myles to discuss. It's very
13 possible that that kind of ownership of some of these
14 issues, from an NCAA perspective, could be put into our
15 bodies in our governing structure. We'll just have to
16 wait to see how that plays out, Brad.

17 BRAD WOLVERTON: Thanks.

18 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Thanks. Next question,
19 please.

20 THE OPERATOR: And we'll take our next
21 questionnaire from David Epstein of Inside Higher Ed.

22 DAVID EPSTEIN: Hi, Kevin.

23 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: David, go ahead.

24 DAVID EPSTEIN: I was wondering if you
25 could tell us a little bit about the questions or the

1 nature of questions that you saw fraudulent responses on.
2 I mean, are these questions about course material? Or
3 institutional accreditation? Or what kind of questions
4 we're getting?

5 DIANE DICKMAN: This is Diane. One
6 question that we've seen to be problematic has to do with
7 a line of questioning regarding the teaching of students
8 and whether teaching is actually occurring, whether there
9 are actually teachers at the high school, and what -- and
10 sort of how that interaction between the student and the
11 teacher or the high school, how that transpires.

12 Our requirements require, as part of NCAA
13 legislation, that there be instructional components and
14 interaction between teachers and students. And in some
15 cases, as we have seen over the last few months, that is
16 not occurring.

17 DAVID EPSTEIN: Gotcha. Also, for students
18 who are taking courses in these institutions, say, right
19 now, if their high school is removed from the
20 clearinghouse this summer, would that affect them for this
21 coming fall?

22 MS. ANTHONY: This is Kevin. Yes, it
23 would.

24 As we have looked at this, you know, the
25 fact that we have some students who are not taking courses

1 of academic rigor, they are not legitimate courses. I
2 think the NCAA staff, legal counsel, and I think certainly
3 the task force here believes that in no way should those
4 students be rewarded.

5 They're not prepared for the college
6 experience. The courses that they took are not going to
7 be used for eligibility purposes. And they would have to
8 find other means of completing either their high school
9 degree or becoming eligible, perhaps attending a junior
10 college or whatever they would choose.

11 But there was a sense that if you find out
12 that the courses are of no rigor, there's no reason to
13 grandfather those students in. You take action
14 immediately.

15 DAVID EPSTEIN: Gotcha. And the last
16 question, since there were problems, I guess there's a
17 requirement to be some teacher/student interaction, are
18 there going to kind of also be rules reworked for what
19 kind of correspondence courses are going to be allowable?
20 I mean, are some correspondence courses still going to be
21 allowable?

22 DIANE DICKMAN: As Kevin talked about at
23 the beginning, there are many nontraditional programs that
24 are very legitimate and give students a very high quality
25 education, and the intent is certainly not to disrupt that

1 flow of education.

2 I think the issue that we see is when -- as
3 we've seen in some of the newspaper articles of the, you
4 know, buy a diploma, if you will -- in the diploma mill
5 world where there really is no teaching occurring; there's
6 no instruction -- that doesn't meet our current
7 legislation.

8 So I don't see that -- I don't think the
9 group sees that we need to change that legislation. We
10 simply need to ensure that students really are having a
11 quality educational experience, regardless of the delivery
12 method.

13 We don't specify that it has to be in a
14 classroom in a traditional setting. And we recognize
15 there's much good that can come via courses over the
16 Internet, but we need to ensure that that learning and
17 teaching is really occurring.

18 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. Next
19 question, please.

20 THE OPERATOR: Once again, if you'd like to
21 ask a question, it's star 1. Star 1 at this time.

22 And we'll take a follow-up questions from
23 Mark Schlabach of Washington Post.

24 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Mark, go ahead.

25 MARK SCHLABACH: Two questions. You said

1 that the kids that are enrolled now in these schools
2 wouldn't be grandfathered in.

3 What about in regards to students who are
4 enrolled at NCAA institutions? Would they face
5 eligibility issues? Will the school face any -- the
6 possibility of sanctions?

7 And B, second question, Lutheran Christian
8 Academy in Philadelphia has been removed from the list.

9 KEVIN LENNON: This is Kevin. Let me -- I
10 guess I'll address both the questions.

11 The policy at this point in time is that
12 once a student has enrolled, we're not going to go back
13 and make a change in that additional eligibility decision.
14 And that's kind of the clear line of demarcation. Once
15 they're in school, they're now subject to other progress
16 towards the degree requirements at those institutions, and
17 that's the standards that they would need to meet to
18 remain eligible. So there won't be any going back and
19 changing their status.

20 I am not aware -- as Diane mentioned, at
21 this point in time, we've had three schools that have been
22 removed. I'm not aware of the other two institutions,
23 Mark. But obviously as the group works and once we have
24 the list, as I mentioned before, we'll be able to provide
25 some sunshine and let folks know what those -- who those

1 institutions are.

2 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. Next
3 question, please.

4 THE OPERATOR: We'll go next to Emily
5 Badger of the Orlando Sentinel.

6 EMILY BADGER: Have some of the students
7 that we were just talking about who are already enrolled
8 in schools and who have in the past attended some of these
9 diploma mills, have they been involved in any sense in the
10 NCAA's review of this issue? And discussing with them,
11 now that they're at college, whether or not they've been
12 sufficiently prepared in having gone through this
13 experience?

14 KEVIN LENNON: Emily, this is Kevin. The
15 answer is direct communication back with the students, no.
16 I'm not aware that we have had any. Some have been
17 reported. And Duff, his article obviously outlines some
18 responses in terms of the preparedness.

19 But the NCAA has not gone out and asked in
20 a qualitative way on how these young people felt about,
21 you know, picking up 8, 9, 10 classes in a, you know,
22 three-, four-week period of time.

23 We are, as we always are, with our academic
24 issues, interested in gathering data in terms of academic
25 performance of these students. And we are going to

1 continue to look at how well these students who attended
2 these type of high schools do in college.

3 Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of data
4 beyond freshman year for the groups that we're talking
5 about. Over time, I think that data will be instructive.
6 If students are not prepared adequately to come into
7 college, it's likely that as they move further along in
8 their degree, they're going to have more problems.

9 But we're going to gather that data, study
10 it. And again, I think it's a piece of the puzzle, the
11 evaluation, but I think there's other issues here that I
12 think are also help kind of driving why we need to do it.

13 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. Next
14 question, please.

15 THE OPERATOR: And as a final reminder, if
16 you'd like to ask a question, that's star 1. Star 1 at
17 this time.

18 And we'll take our next question from Matt
19 Rennie of the Washington Post.

20 MATT RENNIE: Kevin, you had mentioned in
21 your initial comments the committee looking over some
22 individual data that we saw what you'd call miraculous
23 recoveries in the senior year or a postgraduate year,
24 among certain individuals.

25 If that raised eyebrows on the committee,

1 how do you feel -- was there anything incumbent upon your
2 member institutions to have raised the same eyebrows
3 before admitting these students?

4 KEVIN LENNON: You know, that's -- that is
5 a very good point. And a couple of things that I would
6 note in that regard.

7 You know, the certification by our
8 clearinghouse should be one of just many factors
9 considered by an institution when they decide to admit
10 student athletes. It is an important factor; I will give
11 you that. But it is also, I think even more important
12 that the admissions process on the campus make its own
13 evaluation of that student's readiness for the academic
14 rigor on that campus.

15 Campuses vary in terms of their rigor.
16 They have different missions. So to say that an
17 individual is simply certified by the clearinghouse and
18 therefore is likely to be successful on your campus is an
19 inaccurate statement, and I think sets some students up
20 for failure.

21 So, you know, we're going to examine it
22 from a clearinghouse perspective. How can we go about
23 tightening this up and doing the best we can to make sure
24 that when the clearinghouse makes the final certification
25 it is one that reflects the integrity of the process? But

1 that is not in any way to usurp the responsibility of a
2 campus in making its own examination.

3 And I think we're going to see an increased
4 emphasis on that as a result of the work of this panel to
5 remind institutions of their responsibilities to look at
6 the veracity of the academic profile of these students
7 before they admit them.

8 MATT RENNIE: And finally, when you talk
9 about the additional scrutiny, increased level of scrutiny
10 on the part of the clearinghouse, was there a committee
11 sense that this was going to require a substantial
12 increase in resources to be able to try to verify the
13 information that you're getting from these schools?

14 KEVIN LENNON: You know, I think that's one
15 of the things that's going to happen at the subcommittee
16 level over the next two months is, as we put the specifics
17 down to what this additional scrutiny will look like, what
18 criteria would be applied in the evaluation of responses,
19 I think one of the charges of that group will be, you
20 know, how does this impact resources at the clearinghouse
21 level? At the national office level? And I guess perhaps
22 even at the campus level?

23 But we're going to be attentive to it, but
24 I really don't have any response to that right now.

25 MATT RENNIE: Okay. Thank you.

1 KEVIN LENNON: Sure.

2 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Next question, please.

3 THE OPERATOR: And we'll take a follow-up
4 question from Duff Wilson of the New York Times.

5 DUFF WILSON: Thanks. I'd like to
6 understand one of the numbers you said in answer to
7 another question: Well over a hundred schools identified,
8 so far, that are what? Lacking adequate oversight already
9 that may receive further oversight from the NCAA?

10 KEVIN LENNON: No, Duff. This is Kevin.

11 Let me clarify. The response was to a
12 question of how many do you think -- I think it was from
13 Brad -- how many do we think fall in this nontraditional
14 category? And the question was, you know, 5, 20, or a
15 hundred? And I said, I think it's well over a hundred. I
16 just don't know the exact number.

17 But again, that -- we're talking about that
18 as a first sorting. That's not saying that those are the
19 ones at the end of the day where you say this is really a
20 diploma mill, this doesn't have integrity. I don't know
21 what that number is. But that's something that we're
22 going to try to get our hands around, obviously.

23 DUFF WILSON: Let me understand. There
24 could be three numbers. How many are in the possible
25 nontraditional category? A smaller number, how many you

1 really want to ask the most questions of? And the smaller
2 number, how many you disqualify? What's this hundreds?
3 Is that the first number, the whole university that you'd
4 look at? Or those that may need to be asked additional
5 questions to certify their integrity?

6 KEVIN LENNON: Yeah. That's -- I think I
7 do understand your question. I'm not sure that at the end
8 of the day we're going to divide it up into those three
9 levels of sorting.

10 You know, as I mentioned, every week, the
11 clearinghouse is getting new nontraditional high schools
12 submitting information. As it stands right now, it's
13 probably close to around 5,000 or a little bit more that
14 fall at that first sort of nontraditional high schools --

15 DUFF WILSON: Right.

16 KEVIN LENNON: -- in our database. Okay?
17 But again, that number continues to increase, as I
18 mentioned, every week.

19 The next, you know, the next level of
20 sorting is still yet to be determined. But at the end of
21 the day, you want a process that says, based on these
22 responses and based on other auditing, visits, whatever it
23 is, we have now determined that this final number of
24 schools needs to be removed. They are not a sufficient
25 rigor.

1 Now, how many cuts and sorts along the way?
2 I don't know yet. I think that's what the subcommittee is
3 going to evaluate. Alls I know is that it will not be the
4 5,000 plus that we talked about that are nontraditional,
5 because the vast majority of those do a good job. It will
6 be a far, far fewer number, and that's what we're working
7 towards.

8 DUFF WILSON: And so with the reference to
9 more than a hundred, meaning those that there would be
10 additional auditing and possibly visits and questions to?

11 KEVIN LENNON: No. The hundred again was
12 just in response to Brad's question when he asked, Do you
13 think it's more than a hundred? And I said, Yes, it's
14 more than a hundred. It's actually, like I said, as it
15 stands right now, probably around 5,000 plus.

16 DUFF WILSON: Okay. Thanks.

17 KEVIN LENNON: Sure.

18 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Next question, please.

19 THE OPERATOR: And we'll take a follow-up
20 question, and our last question from Jack Carey of USA
21 Today.

22 JACK CAREY: Diane, this is some
23 housekeeping here. Can you spell your last name for us,
24 please?

25 DIANE DICKMAN: Dickman, D-I-C-K-M-A-M.

1 JACK CAREY: Thank you.

2 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Jack, this is Erik for
3 you and others. Diane's title is managing director of
4 membership services for the NCAA.

5 THE OPERATOR: And it appears there are no
6 further questions at this time.

7 Mr. Christianson, I'd like to turn the
8 conference back over to you for any additional or closing
9 remarks.

10 ERIK CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, again, for
11 joining us today.

12 I want to point out that if you have not
13 already received our press release that summarizes the
14 meeting today, you can find that on the NCAA web site at
15 NCAA.org. Thank you for joining us today.

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