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MY VIEW: MYLES BRAND

NCAA urges, but can't compel, hiring of black coaches

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It's a good question.

If the NFL can dramatically increase the proportion of African-American head coaches, and if the two head coaches in this year's Super Bowl are African-Americans, why are there so embarrassingly few African-American head coaches in college football?

There has been considerable progress with minority hiring among head basketball coaches in Division I. There are now more than 80 African-American head coaches among the 326 institutions that play men's basketball.

But college football has been intractable on this issue for decades.

If you look beyond the head coaching positions at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), the numbers are dismal. There are two African-American head football coaches in Division III, one in Division II and 11 in Division I, including six among the 119 Football Bowl Subdivision (DI-A) schools. All together, 14 African-American head coaches among 616 football playing schools when the HBCU institutions are excluded.

This is simply inexcusable!

Responsibility for the lack of progress rests on the shoulders of those who do the hiring on campus. The NCAA cannot dictate who to hire, nor does it have authority to install the "Rooney Rule" for college football that – on pain of a significant fine – would require the inclusion of minority candidates among those interviewed.

As president of the NCAA, however, I do have the bully pulpit, the platform for calling on member institutions to aggressively seek diverse candidate pools. I can and do urge institutions to take the appropriate time to launch open and inclusive searches.

And even if the NCAA cannot regulate that there is a diverse pool of candidates, there is much the association can and does do. Two years ago, I created the office of diversity and inclusion in the national office to address issues around hiring and leadership for minorities and women.

In conjunction with the American Football Coaches Association, the Black Coaches Association and the NFL, the NCAA also conducts three unique academies each year to help prepare individuals for coaching positions. The first is the Future Coaches Academy, which identifies recent graduates interested in coaching and places them with mentors who can assist them along the way. The other two – the Men's and the Expert Football coaching academies – identify and assist coaches with experience to improve and reinforce various aspects of securing, managing and excelling in head football coaching positions. All of these names are provided to institutions hiring new head coaches. Kansas State University's Ron Prince, Columbia University's Norries Wilson and Chris Taylor at St. Peter's College are all recent graduates of these academies.

Frankly, I'm not convinced the Rooney Rule will work for higher education and intercollegiate athletics. It is unfair to subject minority candidates to insincere, pro forma interviews, just as it is to exclude them entirely. In any event, every college and university has its own broad-based, hiring policies designed to ensure open and diverse searches. Those policies need to be followed in the case of hiring head football coaches – and

indeed, in all searches for athletics personnel.

There is no question that the talent is there among African Americans for head football coaching positions. Based on BCA data through its hiring report card initiative, 30 percent of all those being interviewed over the last few years have been African Americans. But they aren't being hired.

The lasting answer in college football depends on a commitment to the value and values of diversity and inclusion. It is immoral because it is unfair of institutions of higher education not to embrace these values in football, as they do in other areas.