Task force to look at SIUE athletics

Intelligencer Sports Staff  feedback@theintelligencer.com
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A task force has been established to consider three possible scenarios for the future of intercollegiate athletics at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, including options to strengthen the existing program, create a program that would compete at the NCAA Division I level, or develop a "hybrid" that would include Division I and II teams.

According to Narbeth Emmanuel, vice chancellor for Student Affairs, the successes of SIUE's athletics program since 1999 have been a result of planning by an initial athletics committee that was commissioned by then-SIUE Chancellor David Werner.

"That original committee was created to consider whether the university should field a football team," Emmanuel explained. "However, it was determined that other alternatives should be explored, and, because of the committees work our programs have been strengthened over the past six years to the point that we are now poised to move SIUE intercollegiate athletics to a new level."

Emmanuel cited several successes within the program:

- The men's soccer program has achieved national success;
- The men's basketball program has been ranked nationally for the first time and has achieved conference-level success;
- The men's and women's track and field programs, as well as the men's wrestling program, continue to send athletes in increasing numbers to compete at the national level; and
- The softball program has grown to a perennial national contender.

"SIUE Athletics over the years has become a respected program in the Great Lakes Valley Conference," Emmanuel pointed out. "Such success was no accident, but rather the result of careful strategic planning."

The new task force--made up of SIUE students, faculty, staff, alumni, residents of the surrounding communities, and chaired by SIUE School of Business Dean Gary Giamartino -- will now consider the following alternatives:

- Continue to strengthen the existing athletics program to become the very best at this level, utilizing the current tier
system, with special emphasis on tier four sports that includes wrestling and men's golf.

- Consider transitioning from an NCAA-II program to NCAA-I with both the appropriate level of financial resources as well as the necessary facilities to be competitive to achieve national recognition.

- Consider a "hybrid" that would include Division I and II teams with the appropriate resources and consistent with NCAA policies.

The task force also will explore personnel and financial resources needed to achieve one of these recommendations. Giamartino said the entire process will be guided by specific core values, including student-athlete academic and personal welfare, integrity and ethics, commitment to Title IX guidelines.

Giamartino said the work of the task force will be completed by spring 2007.