

TO: President Mark Emmert, NCAA
Donald Remy, Chief Operating Officer, NCAA
President Michael Drake, Chair of Board of Governors, Ohio State University
President Eli Capilouto, President of Division I Board, University of Kentucky
President Sandra Jordan, Chair of DII Presidents Council, University of South Carolina, Aiken
President Tori Murden McClure, Chair of DIII Presidents Council, Spalding University
Morgan Chall, President of DI SAAC
Alex Shillow, President of DII SAAC
Braly Keller, President of DIII SAAC

FROM: Brian Adams, Alcorn State University Men's Basketball, '00
Austin Brown, University of Mississippi Men's Golf, '04
Ciarra Cherry, University of Southern Mississippi Softball, '18
Josh Christian, University of Mississippi Baseball, '04
Nick Crawford, Millsaps College Baseball, '07
Miles Daniels, Jackson State University Basketball, '21
Alyssa Davis, University of Southern Mississippi Softball, '21
Janice Felder, University of Southern Mississippi Women's Basketball, '96
Trey Griffith, Mississippi College Men's Tennis, '03
Ontario Harper, Mississippi State University Basketball '05
Kim Hobson, University of Southern Mississippi Softball, '18
Diandra Hosey, Mississippi College Women's Basketball, '04
Nedra Hosey, University of Southern Mississippi Women's Basketball, '98
Lindsey Hunter, Mississippi Valley State University Men's Basketball Coach and Head Coach and
Jackson State University Men's Basketball, '93
Jordan Jefferson, Jackson State University Football, '20
Trey Johnson, Jackson State University Men's Basketball, '07
David Kelly, Mississippi Valley State University Men's Track and Field, '01
Jaylon Keys, University of Southern Mississippi Baseball, '19
Chase Nelson, University of Southern Mississippi Softball, '19
Karley Nichols, University of Southern Mississippi Softball, '22
Amber Pack, University of Southern Mississippi Softball '21
Samantha Papp, University of Southern Mississippi Softball, '19
Jonathan Pettus, Mississippi College Men's Soccer, '03
Willie Powers, Jr., Mississippi College Men's Basketball, '06
Martavious Prince, University of Southern Mississippi Football, '07
James Shelton, Mississippi College Men's Basketball, '04
Lincoln Smith, Mississippi State University Basketball, '04
Norlando Veals, Alcorn State University Football, '17
Jonathan West, Belhaven College Men's Tennis, '13
Marvin Williams II, University of Southern Mississippi Men's Track and Field, '03
Terrica Williams, University of Southern Mississippi Softball, '22

DATE: June 18, 2020

**STATEMENT OF FORMER AND CURRENT NCAA STUDENT-ATHLETES/
REQUEST FOR CHANGE IN NCAA CONFEDERATE FLAG POLICY**

We are current and former National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) student-athletes who represent or represented institutions in the State of Mississippi and live in Mississippi. We write you, on the eve of Juneteenth, to request the NCAA's assistance in our efforts to de-sanction the Mississippi State Flag, which prominently features the Confederate battle flag.

First, let it be said that Mississippi is our home; it is filled with good, kind and generous people. We write in the spirit that we want what is best for it. For too long the good of our state has been overshadowed by a symbol reflective of its sordid past. The Confederate battle emblem is a signal of a perpetuation of inequality and racism against people of color. It hearkens to the systemic efforts to derail opportunities for black Americans: from slavery, to Jim Crow, to segregation, to systematic incarceration and police brutality. Despite these truths, in our respective NCAA experiences, we compete or competed under the public display of a symbol that has terrorized generations. Those of us who have children in public schools still walk our kids underneath that flag and into school every morning. We write you, because it is far past time for this to end.

A. THE NCAA'S ADOPTION OF THE "CONFEDERATE FLAG" POLICY

One of the core values of the NCAA is the promotion of "[a]n inclusive culture that fosters equitable participation for student-athletes and career opportunities for coaches and administrators from diverse backgrounds." In a well-intentioned attempt to further this core value, on August 10, 2001, the NCAA's Board of Governors adopted its "CONFEDERATE FLAG POLICY" (the "Policy") which remains in effect today. The Policy states: "[t]he NCAA will not award future predetermined championship sites in states where the Confederate battle flag continues to have a prominent presence."

In April 2004, your Board went a step further, directing the Football Certification Subcommittee of the Division I Championships/Competition Cabinet "to deny any requests for certification of bowl games in any state where a moratorium exists as a result of the state's Confederate Flag stance."

Since South Carolina took the confederate flag down in 2015, the Policy now only applies to Mississippi. From its website, the NCAA has selected more than 600 host sites for preliminary rounds and finals of predetermined championships in Divisions I, II and III for this coming year. Sadly, none are scheduled to occur here.

Our assumption is that the NCAA enacted the Policy to effect change in Mississippi for the betterment of the experience of the student-athlete. However, if anything can be taken from the last 20 years, it is that the Policy, as currently enacted, has been unsuccessful in achieving its goal. We believe this can change. Please consider the following two premises:

(1) THE "CONFEDERATE FLAG" POLICY AS ENACTED DOES NOT PENALIZE MISSISSIPPI IN A MANNER THAT WILL EFFECT CHANGE.

It is our belief that Mississippi's political leaders have resigned themselves to the fact that Mississippi will not be chosen to host pre-determined NCAA events of any economic magnitude (i.e., bowl games, Div. I men's tournament games or Div. I women's regional semifinal and regional final round games) irrespective of your Policy. So in essence, Mississippi perceives it loses nothing by not taking action on the current flag.

Politicians have stated, even since the recent protests here and around the country in the wake of the recent murder of George Floyd, that there remains no political appetite to change the flag.

Mississippi's leadership also knows the Policy allows Mississippi's largest institutions (Mississippi State University, the University of Mississippi and the University of Southern Mississippi) to host non-predetermined, on-campus playoff events they cherish, such as:

- the popular and lucrative Div. I baseball regionals held annually (MSU, UM and USM are perennial top 15 programs nationally). At each selected location, 50-60,000 visitors spend the weekend in each respective town (two successive weekends if the institution also hosts a super-regional) with millions of dollars of economic impact for those institutions and towns;
- the popular and lucrative first and second round women's basketball games hosted annually at Mississippi State University (in the past five years, Mississippi State was become a top women's basketball program) where 12,000 people come to town for a weekend, also meaning millions of dollars in economic impact.

It is not easy to suggest this, but in order for the Policy to accomplish its goal, the NCAA should announce an intent to expand the ban to include these on-campus events if action is not taken to change the flag. Once these events are threatened or precluded, and Mississippi's leadership is faced with a tangible loss as a result of their inaction, we believe they will relent and consider the impact of the flag is too great in taking it down.

(2) THE "CONFEDERATE FLAG" POLICY AS ENACTED HAS A DISCRIMINATORY IMPACT ON MISSISSIPPI STUDENT-ATHLETES PLAYING SPORTS THAT ARE MAJORITY AFRICAN-AMERICAN IN PARTICIPATION.

There is a second reason that the "Confederate Flag" Policy should be expanded to include all postseason events: such an expansion would put to rest the notion that the current Policy has a discriminatory impact on certain student-athletes. As currently enacted, the Policy forbids the top playoff and postseason events in football and men's basketball from being played in Mississippi. Consider the following participation levels in the Southeastern Conference in 2019:

Division I Sports Mississippi Cannot Host as Pre-determined Championship Sites

Football - 61% black participation

Men's Basketball - 64% black participation

Division I Sports Mississippi Can Host as Non-Predetermined, Earned, On-Campus Events.

Baseball – 6% black participation

Softball – 11% participation

Soccer (average of both genders) – 10% participation

Volleyball (average of both genders) – 18% black participation

Tennis (average of both genders) – 3% black participation in region

See <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/ncaa-demographics-database>

Since Mississippi has the highest percentage-based African-American population in the U.S., these numbers are likely even more lopsided when narrowed to participation in Mississippi as opposed to the entire SEC. So consider that in terms of equality and inclusion, the Policy forbids black athletes who play majority black participation sports from playing playoff games at home. However, the same NCAA policy allows Mississippi to continue hosting non-predetermined, playoff events that are the staple of NCAA championship sports popular in Mississippi with overwhelming majority white participation (including baseball, soccer, volleyball and tennis).

The Policy currently creates differing experiences for the NCAA's student athlete based on race or at least racially-popular sport. It is a policy that, regardless of your intent, affords white student-athletes who participate in white-majority sports to play in front of family within an affordable distance of home, while not creating the same environment for black student-athletes participating in black-majority sports and their families.

It also bears mentioning that while these graphics theorize about current student-athletes, we cannot begin to take into account the impact the Policy has on Mississippi's black youth, many of whom will become future NCAA student-athletes. The Policy would appear to deny these youth, in their most formative years, proximate exposure to important NCAA football and basketball competitions. These events also happen to be the most watched games at the pinnacle of public excitement over collegiate competition. Given this, the Policy is likely to, albeit unwittingly, diminish the number of black youths in Mississippi who desire to participate in college athletics, while black participation in the country as a whole continues to climb with each passing year.

Finally, the policy disallows the general public in Mississippi, our country's most diverse state, from witnessing these black-majority playoff sports in close proximity, while we have ready access to postseason events that do not feature black-majority participants.

B. REQUEST FOR NCAA ACTION.

We are confident these issues with your "Confederate Flag" Policy were unanticipated at its enactment, and that the NCAA wants little to do with a Policy that is ineffectual in furthering its mission of equity, inclusion and diversity.

We are also confident that, in reviewing the above issues and data, you will determine that, in its current format, the Policy has no effect or perhaps even a negative impact on these goals in Mississippi. The Policy must become more restrictive in order to accomplish needed change. It must eliminate the ability of Mississippi's larger and more politically connected institutions to host postseason events in the future (including Division I baseball, beginning January 1, 2022). This stance will allow the public and legislature almost eighteen (18) months to consider this impact and act. We believe it will finally push Mississippi lawmakers to join civic leaders and the business community in solidarity to take action to de-sanction the current Mississippi state flag.

Time is of the essence. Because of this current climate of protest and awareness, Mississippi's legislature has spent the past two weeks reviewing and debating laws to change the state flag. Despite public support for a flag change being at an all-time high, Mississippi's leadership looks as if they will table the issue during the final weeks of the 2020 session. We trust that you, as leaders of an organization that champions

the experiences and well-being of its student-athletes, will join our voices in this movement to remove a known symbol of oppression, division and hate.

There is no denying that the NCAA is uniquely situated to support this movement. Our communities' love for collegiate athletics is transcendent. It, of course, will not be easy to endure the potential loss of more beloved sports and activities in the short term. Even more so, we cannot continue, as a state, to never-endingly deny a change that is necessary, inclusive, good and just.

We have spoken to many more former, current and future NCAA student-athletes who are in support of this movement. We invite them to join us by taking actions they feel appropriate, whether it be by adding their name to this statement through the petition created on [change.org](https://www.change.org), writing you with their own thoughts on the subject, discussing this matter with their coaches, discussing this matter with their athletic departments, discussing this matter with their hometown government officials and/or by sharing this statement along with words of support for a more expansive Policy and a change in the state flag via social media.

Mississippi student-athletes are realizing their voice, and their days of playing sports underneath a confederate flag in Mississippi will soon be over, one way or another. Please consider your mission, and join us in our movement forward. Together and united, we will have our change. Then, no one will ever need your Policy again. Which was your point twenty (20) years ago.

Thank you for your consideration.