EXPLORING INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES IN:

1. Athletics
2. Career Connections
3. Community Engagement
4. Consortial Arrangements
5. Cost Containment
6. Curricular Reform
7. New Academic Programs
8. New Student Populations

Read the full report at www.cic.edu/InnovationsReport.
The signature activity of the Council of Independent Colleges’ initiative, Securing America’s Future, was a series of eight workshops hosted by CIC member presidents on campuses across the nation in 2016–2017. The goals of these workshops were to help member colleges and universities prepare for the future more effectively and become more engaged in promoting the value of the liberal arts and of independent colleges and universities. These gatherings brought together teams of presidents, chief academic officers, other administrators, and faculty leaders to explore key trends in higher education and society, the pressures that individual colleges and universities face, and potential solutions that can be pursued by their institutions. Approximately 500 campus leaders from more than 120 CIC member institutions participated in the workshops.

This module is part of a larger report, Innovation and the Independent College: Examples from the Sector. As a whole, the report presents an overview of the major points of discussion held during the workshops and references hundreds of examples of mission-driven innovations shared by the colleges and universities that sent teams to the workshops. Each module of the report is designed to be useful on its own, however, as a description of innovations in a particular area. I encourage you to distribute this module to trustees, faculty and administrative leaders, campus planning committees, and other constituents who might be aided in their efforts to lead change on campus—and then share the rest of the report. The full report and the other modules are available from the CIC website at www.cic.edu/InnovationsReport.

CIC staff members and I are well aware that many additional CIC institutions are improving the quality and efficacy of education in imaginative ways. I encourage CIC institutions to send these innovations to http://bit.ly/CICinnovates. These examples will be added to the online version of the report so that others may learn about these promising projects, too.

Richard Ekman
President
Council of Independent Colleges
March 2018
Achieve the optimal balance of number and types of athletic teams for the institution’s mission, budget, culture, and student populations

Nearly half of CIC member institutions compete in Division III of the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) and another 21 percent compete in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). Among other defining criteria, Division III institutions do not offer athletic scholarships; NAIA institutions offer limited athletic scholarships. Yet a large number of students choose to attend CIC colleges and universities because of the opportunity to continue playing a sport they pursued in high school. Even small colleges may support as many as 30 sports, and a high percentage of students are intercollegiate athletes. In light of such strong student interest, a number of colleges and universities have re-examined their commitment to athletics and expanded the role they play on campus in order to enhance other functions of the institutions—especially student recruitment and retention.

CHALLENGES: Intercollegiate athletics can help CIC colleges and universities improve enrollment by attracting students—especially male students—who have specific athletic interests or a general interest in sports. Athletics also can help smaller colleges to compete successfully with institutions in both the public and the for-profit sectors for students and to retain students through graduation. In addition, intercollegiate athletics can help integrate the student life and academic affairs experiences and provide a wider variety of experiences for traditional-aged students while diversifying revenue streams, including alumni contributions.
Most of the following examples were provided by CIC member institutions and the expert presenters that participated in Securing America’s Future workshops in 2016–2017. They represent distinct but replicable responses to common challenges that many independent colleges and universities face.

EXPANDING ATHLETIC PROGRAMS

By far the most ambitious example of capitalizing on student interest in specific athletic teams and other co-curricular activities to increase enrollment was offered by Adrian College in Adrian, Michigan. President Jeffrey Docking told workshop participants that Adrian was in poor condition in 2005: The college was under-enrolled, with a significant operating deficit, deferred maintenance, low morale, and underpaid employees. To increase enrollment, Adrian created a business model built on leveraging athletics and other co-curricular activities. Using this strategy, the college’s enrollment rose from fewer than 900 students to nearly 1,700, the annual budget increased from $28.4 million to more than $70.3 million, and the endowment doubled.

First, the college gathered data to determine what was needed for a viable financial plan. The conclusion was that the institution needed to attract at least 280 more students every year. Reasoning that most prospective students see academic programs as largely the same at all institutions, Docking determined that “the draw had to be about the co-curricular experience. We spent a lot of time getting into the head of an 18-year-old.” Working with faculty and staff, the president identified 41 sports and other activities, appointed a person to direct each activity, and established the number of new students who had to enroll in each activity. The college then raised or borrowed funds to build a stadium, ice arena, tennis courts, track and field complex, baseball field, and practice fields. Meanwhile, Docking promised the faculty that returns on these immediate investments to attract new students would be used to strengthen academic programs later. In the final analysis, Docking said, enrollment success was a “three-legged stool” built on facilities, accountability of staff to
attract the specified number of students they were assigned to bring in, and support for each of the activities.

**LEARN MORE**
- Adrian’s Efforts to Increase Enrollment, http://bit.ly/2se7LKi
- Book: Crisis in Higher Education, http://amzn.to/2nHiZCb

**Alvernia University** in Reading, Pennsylvania, has expanded the number of its athletic offerings—including a new football program in 2018—as part of a comprehensive plan to increase enrollment and become a more residential campus. The physical expansion of the campus includes an innovative recreation, wellness, and health sciences complex (“The PLEX”) that is designed to serve student-athletes, other undergraduates, and members of the surrounding community.

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**Bethany Lutheran College** in Mankato, Minnesota, has undertaken a feasibility study to inform a decision about adding football or lacrosse teams.

**LEARN MORE**

**California Lutheran University** in Thousand Oaks, California, recently added two new varsity sports and five new junior varsity sports teams to improve enrollment and retention.

**Defiance College** in Defiance, Ohio, plans to reinstate a dormant men’s varsity wrestling program in 2018. According to Defiance College President Richanne Mankey, “This addition will enhance our athletic program, and the recruitment of future students will provide support to our strategic enrollment plan.” Wrestling is especially popular in Ohio, so the move will help attract high school graduates from inside the state.

**Texas Wesleyan University** in Fort Worth attracts many international students to join its coed table tennis squad and has won dozens of collegiate and national championships since the program began in 2001. The 2017–2018 roster includes 49 student-athletes, 43 of whom are international students from 19 different countries. The university also has become an international center for training...
JUNIOR VARSITY TEAMS

Brenau University in Gainesville, Georgia, is one of many CIC member institutions that has increased the number of junior varsity teams as a way to attract and retain students. Beginning in 2015–2016, the university offered new junior varsity teams in basketball and softball and added a dance unit to its competitive cheerleading team. The university has recruited an additional 30 to 40 students per year as a result of these additions, with a total entering student population of approximately 950.

LEARN MORE
- Brenau Breaks Student Athlete Record, http://bit.ly/2s5NE0M

PARTNERSHIPS WITH PROFESSIONAL SPORTS TEAMS

A number of CIC colleges and universities have partnered with professional sports teams to build new facilities, support the institution’s athletics programs, and capture media and community attention. The professional teams often provide jobs and internships for students as well. St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin, has hosted pre-season training for the Green Bay Packers since the late
1950s, and Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, has hosted the Pittsburgh Steelers since 1966. At least five CIC members provide facilities for NFL training camps, although the number is declining as professional football teams increasingly rely on their own facilities.

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When the Rams football team returned to Los Angeles in 2016, California Lutheran University moved quickly to offer its campus as a site for team offices and training facilities to be used throughout the year. The Rams paid for the installation of two practice fields on the northwest corner of campus, a paved parking lot, and temporary modular buildings containing offices, training areas, and locker rooms. The facilities will remain in place even if the Rams establish another base of operations at the end of their current multi-year contract with Cal Lutheran.

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Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina, is home to the Carolina Panthers’ training camp. The team has prepared for the upcoming season at the college each summer since the team was established in 1995. The Panthers are hosted in the college’s 60,000-square-foot Richardson Physical Activities Building. The facility also provides Wofford students with a fitness center, aerobics studio, and racquetball courts.

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ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

A number of CIC institutions have taken a different path by reducing the emphasis on athletics to focus attention and resources on other aspects of the institutional mission.
For example, Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, decided in 2002 to eliminate all intercollegiate athletics. The leaders of this historically black women’s college offered two compelling reasons for the decision. First was the relatively high cost of the intercollegiate athletic program (about $1 million a year for 80 varsity athletes competing in NCAA Division III). Second was a desire to focus the institution’s resources on more effective health and wellness facilities for the entire student population, especially in the face of rising obesity rates and related health issues among young African American women.

In 2000, Swarthmore College in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, eliminated its football program in the interest of “building a class that was equal in men and women and racially and ethnically diverse, with a large international population, and with engineers and classicists, musicians and biologists. The college’s small size was [considered] severely limiting and something had to give.” More than a decade later, however, the college was still reaching out to disappointed alumni and former football players.

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OTHER IDEAS AND ADVICE

According to James C. Hearn and Jarrett B. Warshaw, authors of the CIC-commissioned report *Mission-Driven Innovation: An Empirical Study of Adaptation and Change among Independent Colleges*, one of the most common institutional responses to the pressures faced by independent colleges and universities is to expand the athletic program.

A small but significant innovation was reported by the workshop team from **St. Lawrence University** in Canton, New York: College administrators finally persuaded the athletic coaches to use the same purchasing source for all uniforms—and the cost of uniforms was reduced significantly.

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

- Researcher Christopher Morphew posed a challenging question during the workshops: How can institutions create an intellectually engaging academic environment for students when 75 percent are on athletic scholarships?

- How can student-athletes be encouraged to identify themselves as scholar-athletes outside the athletic teams?

- Are there opportunities to create curricular programs that appeal especially to athletes, such as facilities management, athletics management, athletic training, sports medicine, or even dance? How can co-curricular programs be aligned with the curriculum?

- What are the most effective ways to integrate the academic program and career preparation?
ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS

CIC’s **Securing America’s Future: Workshops for Leaders of Independent Colleges and Universities** marked the final phase of an effort that included two earlier initiatives. The first initiative was *Securing America’s Future: The Power of Liberal Arts Education*, a public information campaign to highlight the effectiveness of study in the liberal arts and the contributions of the independent higher education sector. The second was a *Project on the Future of Independent Higher Education*, which brought together a steering committee of 22 CIC presidents to consider the challenges faced by the entire sector and fresh approaches for the future, in light of the particular qualities and missions of independent colleges and universities.

After two years of fact-finding and deliberation, the steering committee of the *Project on the Future* specifically called for a series of workshops around the country, viewing this step as “the most effective mobilization strategy.” The activities in 2016–2017 closely followed the plan the steering committee envisioned. This report draws upon both the formal presentations and informal exchanges that took place during the *Securing America’s Future* workshops.

CIC would like to thank the representatives of more than 120 colleges and universities who participated in the *Securing America’s Future* workshops. They provided most of the examples of innovation included in this report, through their comments at the workshops or in subsequent evaluation surveys. Whenever possible, all innovations have been independently confirmed using public sources. Any misstatements of fact or inadvertent mischaracterizations are the responsibility of CIC.

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ABOUT CIC

The **Council of Independent Colleges** (CIC) is an association of 767 nonprofit independent colleges and universities, state-based councils of independent colleges, and other higher education affiliates, that works to support college and university leadership, advance institutional excellence, and enhance public understanding of independent higher education’s contributions to society. CIC is the major national organization that focuses on services to leaders of independent colleges and universities and state-based councils. CIC offers conferences, seminars, publications, and other programs and services that help institutions improve educational quality, administrative and financial performance, student outcomes, and institutional visibility. It conducts the largest annual conferences of college and university presidents and of chief academic officers. Founded in 1956, CIC is headquartered at One Dupont Circle in Washington, DC. For more information, visit [www.cic.edu](http://www.cic.edu).

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