

The following interpretation applies to institutional staff members use of social network sites and contact with prospective student-athletes.

## **NCAA Bylaw Interpretation**

### **Educational Column -- Recruiting -- Electronic Transmissions -- Social Networking Web Sites (I)**

#### **Interpretation:**

NCAA Division I institutions should note that pursuant to NCAA Division I Bylaw 13.4.1.2 an institution may send electronically transmitted correspondence to a prospective student-athlete in sports other than men's basketball and ice hockey beginning September 1 at the beginning of the prospective student-athlete's junior year in high school. In men's basketball and ice hockey, an institution may send electronically transmitted correspondence to a prospective student-athlete beginning June 15 at the conclusion of a prospective student-athlete's sophomore year in high school. Further, electronically transmitted correspondence that may be sent to a prospective student-athlete is limited to electronic mail (e-mail) and facsimiles until after the calendar day on which a prospective student-athlete signs a National Letter of Intent. All other forms of electronically transmitted correspondence (e.g., Instant Messenger, text messaging) are prohibited.

Institutions should note that e-mail is not limited to a traditional e-mail service provided by an institution, Web site or Internet service provider. Therefore, it is permissible for an athletics department staff member to send electronically transmitted correspondence to a prospective student-athlete using a social networking Web site's (e.g., MySpace, Facebook) e-mail feature. All other electronically transmitted correspondence including, but not limited to, text messaging, Instant Messenger, chat rooms or message boards (e.g., a user's wall) within a social networking Web site or through other services or applications remain impermissible.

For example, a coaching staff member with a MySpace or Facebook account may send electronically transmitted correspondence to a prospective student-athlete's MySpace or Facebook account using the e-mail inbox feature located on that user's profile page. However, a coaching staff member may not send electronic correspondence to a prospective student-athlete via the comments feature on MySpace or the wall-to-wall feature on Facebook.

Institutions should also note that in accordance with Bylaw 13.10.2, before the signing of a prospective student-athlete to a National Letter of Intent or an institution's written offer of admission and/or financial aid, a member institution may comment publicly only to the extent of confirming its recruitment of the prospective student-athlete. The institution may not comment generally about the prospective student-athlete's ability or the contribution that the prospective student-athlete might make to the institution's team; further, the institution is precluded from commenting in any manner as to the likelihood of the prospective student-athlete's signing with that institution.

Accordingly, it is permissible for a prospective student-athlete's name and/or picture to appear on an athletics department staff member's profile page of a social networking Web site to identify the prospective student-athlete as a "friend" of the athletics department staff member. Institutions should note that the identification of the prospective student-athlete as a "friend" on an athletics staff members profile page confirms only the institution's potential recruitment of that individual. However, institutions are reminded they may not make any public comments about the prospective student-athlete's ability, the contribution that the prospective student-athlete might make to the institution's team or the likelihood of the prospective student-athlete's signing with that institution.

Please contact the Compliance Office if you have any questions.