

ASU to Conduct Football Feasibility Study

Written by Mike Flynn
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Appalachian State University athletics will conduct a feasibility study to evaluate its football program's position in NCAA Division I, director of athletics Charlie Cobb announced on Thursday.

The goal of the study is to evaluate Appalachian's options with regards to the changing Division I landscape. ASU currently competes as a member of the Southern Conference in the NCAA Division I Football Championship Subdivision (FCS — formerly known as Division I-AA). ASU's Board of Trustees approved the feasibility study last week. Appalachian athletics has selected the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA) to conduct the independent study and a private donation will cover its cost. A completion of the study and an internal analysis of its findings will likely take approximately 9-12 months.

"With the changing Division I landscape and the unprecedented success that our football program has enjoyed on and off the field in recent years, the time is right to analyze all of our options as a Division I athletics department and football program," Cobb said. "This study is a broad, campus-wide analysis to identify what our options are as a University, athletics department and football program going forward. It does not take away one bit of focus from our football program's goal of winning a sixth-straight Southern Conference championship and competing for a fourth national title in six years."

Appalachian conducted a feasibility study to explore a move to what was then known as Division I-A (now known as the Division I Football Bowl Subdivision) in 1998 and it was ultimately determined to remain as a member of Division I-AA. However, in light of recent changes in the Division I ranks, Appalachian is joining fellow SoCon member Georgia Southern and FCS power Montana as athletics departments that are in the midst of or have recently completed football feasibility studies.

Appalachian's success on and off the field is unprecedented for an FCS program. The Mountaineers won NCAA Division I national championships in 2005, 2006 and 2007 and has won five-consecutive SoCon titles while leading FCS in regular-season home attendance each of the past three years. Through two home games this season, ASU is once again tops in FCS attendance with an average of 28,963 fans at 21,650-seat Kidd Brewer Stadium.

Off the field, the football program's most recent Academic Progress Rate score of 970 fell just shy of earning an NCAA Public Recognition Award, which recognizes programs that rank among the nation's top 10 percent in terms of APR scores.