

Courtesy: Appalachian Sports Information Release: Friday 05/20/2011 (ET BOONE, N.C. — Appalachian State University's athletics feasibility study committee announced on Friday that it will continue its work and not make a recommendation to ASU Chancellor Dr. Kenneth E. Peacock at this time.

The committee decided during Friday's regularly scheduled meeting that more information-gathering and analysis is needed at this point in the study. There is no deadline in place for a recommendation to be made.

"While May was the stated goal for when we wanted to provide a recommendation to Chancellor Peacock, we will not sacrifice making the most informed recommendation possible to meet an artificial deadline," committee co-chairperson G.A. Sywassink said.

The committee has identified two issues that require further study. First, any potential major tuition increases at Appalachian must be accurately accounted for in financial models, as athletics pays tuition bills for 400-plus ASU student-athletes. Secondly, many NCAA Division I conferences and institutions are in the process of evaluating potential changes in membership and/or football-subdivision affiliation and Appalachian must continue to monitor and analyze these evaluations in order to determine its own place in the changing Division I landscape.

North Carolina's budget uncertainty plays only an indirect role in Friday's decision, as state appropriations are not used to fund athletics. However, while the issues are separate, the timing is not right for Chancellor Peacock and, ultimately, the ASU Board of Trustees, to consider any recommendation that the committee might bring forth.

"Chancellor Peacock's ultimate recommendation to the Board of Trustees needs serious reflection and discussion that cannot occur while he and the other UNC leaders are focused primarily on advocating in Raleigh for state support of higher education," ASU director of athletics Charlie Cobb said. "Over the next several months, his focus and the focus of our other University leaders will be — and should be — on the state budget."

Since January, Appalachian's athletics feasibility study committee has been analyzing data collected by Collegiate Consulting LLC (formerly NACDA Consulting) regarding the feasibility of seeking a change in ASU's conference and/or football-subdivision affiliation. The University's Board of Trustees approved the feasibility study last September. Once the committee develops a final report based on its analysis and makes a recommendation to Chancellor Peacock, he will make his own recommendation to the Board of Trustees, who must approve any change in Appalachian's athletic affiliations.

A member of NCAA Division I since 1971, the Mountaineers currently participate in the Southern Conference. In football, Appalachian and the SoCon compete in the NCAA Division I Football Championship Subdivision (FCS — formerly Division I-AA). ASU won an unprecedented three-consecutive NCAA Division I Football Championships from 2005-07 and has won six-straight SoCon titles. Appalachian has led the FCS in regular-season home football attendance each of the past four years.

Story Courtesy of Appalachian Sports Information.