

PC Earns NCAA Full Division I Certification

Written by Simon Whiaker
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A process that began five years ago culminated Wednesday when the NCAA Executive Committee voted to approve Presbyterian College's full certification to Division I. Presbyterian College, which began competing as a Division I institution and member of the Big South Conference, was granted provisional status in 2007. While allowed to play a Division

I schedule, all but two teams could not earn an automatic bid or play in NCAA or NIT Tournaments until 2012-13, pending a successful transition and final approval by the Executive Committee. Softball and men's tennis were fast-tracked into full membership and began competing for postseason play in 2010. The remaining sports were still prohibited from postseason play.

"Today is a historic day for Presbyterian College," said PC president Dr. Claude Lilly. "Because of the diligence and dedication of many, our athletic program now boasts the same elite status as our academic program. PC student-athletes will benefit from the challenge of facing top-level competition, providing a well-rounded college experience for them all. I am proud to be a part of the PC community as we move forward in this new era of Blue Hose athletics."

PC undertook a NCAA-mandated Self-Study and issued a report to the NCAA for its review as part of the transition. A peer team visited the campus to review the report and to meet with several student-athletes, faculty and staff. The site visit was a success and the peer team submitted a positive recommendation to the Executive Committee last spring.

With the vote of approval, PC now becomes a full-fledged member of Division I. All 15 sports will now be able to compete for a spot in Big South and NCAA Tournaments, while the athletics department will be given access to the NCAA's revenue sharing program as well as other grants and scholarships.

"I am ecstatic that PC has gained full NCAA Division I athletic certification," said Brian Reese, Director of Athletics. "The process has been difficult at times and has taken a lot of hard work by the faculty and staff. I am happy for our student-athletes and coaches who can now play for more than just pride and can compete in Big South and NCAA post-season championships. A lot of effort was put into the self-study by a great number of people. This was a true broad-based effort campus wide. There are many to thank, including Walter Ridgely, PC Treasurer and Director of Resource Planning, for his excellent work as Chair of the self-study process."

Presbyterian College has enjoyed recent success during its transitional period. The men's tennis team advanced to the league tournament championship, while softball won its first Big South tournament game, this past season. The football team posted its most conference wins, going 3-3 to finish tied for third in the Big South last fall. The men's basketball team defeated 20th-Ranked Cincinnati during the 2011-12 season, after earning victories over Auburn and Wake Forest in 2010-11.

PC has earned several individual honors since joining the Big South. Over the last five years the Blue Hose have garnered 38 all-conference selections with one Player-of-the-Year and three Freshman-of-the-Year awards. Football player Justin Bethel earned Big South Defensive Player-of-the-Year honors in 2011, while teammate Donelle Williams was league Freshman-of-the-Year. Also earning Freshman-of-the-Year honors were baseball's Brad

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Zebedis in 2011 and women's basketball's Mariah Pietrowski in 2010. There have been 10 All-Freshman team selections and 66 All-Academic team honorees since 2007.

Bethel proved to be one of PC's most successful student-athletes, racking up several regional and national All-American honors. The 2012 graduate became the first PC football player to be drafted by the NFL since 1969. He was taken by the Arizona Cardinals in the sixth round last April.

Five PC student-athletes have garnered national recognition in the classroom, earning CoSIDA Academic All-District honors during the transition. Women's soccer athlete Meghan Skinner earning the George A. Christenberry Award in 2011, the highest academic honor an athlete in the Big South can achieve. Over the last five years 776 Presbyterian College student-athletes have been named to the Big South Presidential Honor Roll for academic excellence.

All of PC's 15 teams are sponsored by the Big South, including women's lacrosse, which begins competing in the league in 2013. In addition, PC sponsors baseball, men's and women's basketball, men's and women's cross country, football, men's and women's golf, men's and women's soccer, softball, men's and women's tennis and volleyball.