

BYLAW 5

Conference Membership

5.1 MEMBERSHIP

- 5.1.1 Conference membership shall be established by using the procedures of this section.
- 5.1.2 Colleges will be provided the opportunity to decide their conference membership with the final authority for conference placement by the COA Board.
- 5.1.3 Colleges and conferences shall maintain written athletic philosophy statements. The philosophy statements are to be used to guide the conference membership process. Colleges should be in conferences that have similar philosophies, goals, and objectives.
- 5.1.4 Colleges may become a member of an established conference by receiving a majority vote of the college presidents of the current member colleges of the conference the college wishes to join.
- A. Colleges joining an already existing conference must show evidence that they have a similar philosophy as that of the conference they are asking to join.
 - B. A college's exit from a conference cannot leave its original conference in violation of Bylaw 5.1.6.
 - C. Member colleges of the conference the college is asking to leave cannot block the exit of the college if all other criteria are met.
 - D. The COA Board has final authority over conference placement.
- 5.1.5 There shall be three (3) types of conferences:
- A. Conferences that administer sports other than football.
 - B. Conferences that administer only football.
 - C. Conferences that administer all sports.
- 5.1.6 There shall be a minimum of seven (7) colleges in a conference.
- 5.1.7 Colleges shall be eligible to change conferences once in a four (4)-year period unless the college was placed in a conference by the COA Board. An exception to this rule must be approved by the COA Board.
- 5.1.8 Successful college appeals for conference change shall become effective on July 1 of the following year.

5.2 CHANGING CONFERENCE MEMBERSHIP

The following procedures shall be used by the college when it wishes to change conference membership or to form a new conference:

- A. Prior to the first Friday in April, the college president shall make known the college's intent to appeal for a conference membership change in writing and include a completed FORM M, Conference Membership Change. The paperwork should be sent to the college presidents of the conference it wishes to leave, the college presidents of the conference it wishes to enter, to the COA Executive Director, and to the two (2) conference commissioners.
- B. The written appeal and the FORM M must address but not be limited to the college athletic program philosophy, the financial impact of the change, geographical considerations, sport program offerings for men and women, and the reason for the change.
- C. Prior to the second Friday in May, the conferences affected by the college appeal for change shall respond in writing to the college president and to the COA Executive Director. The conference response should address the issues stated in Bylaw 5.2.B.
- D. When conferences vote on conference membership there shall be one (1) vote per college cast by each conference college president.
- E. The conference responses shall be reported to the COA Executive Director.
- F. The COA Executive Director will place the item on the MC agenda for consideration at the fall or spring meeting.
- G. The MC shall forward its recommendation to the COA Board for action at the same or following meeting.
- H. The COA Executive Director will place the item on the COA Board agenda for consideration at the fall or spring meeting.
- I. All financial obligations to the college's current conference must be satisfied before becoming eligible to join a new conference.
- J. Any active sanctions of the college shall be carried with it to the new conference.
- K. If approved, the change shall take place July 1 of the following year.

5.3 ESTABLISHING A NEW CONFERENCE

5.3.1 In order to establish a new conference, the following procedures are to be used:

- A. Presidents of colleges wishing to establish a new conference shall make their intent known by a written appeal and a completed FORM M prior to the first Friday in April.

- B. The paperwork shall be sent to the college presidents and the commissioner of the conference they wish to leave, to the COA Board, and to the COA Executive Director.
- C. The written appeal and the FORM M shall address, but not be limited to:
 - 1. The reason for establishing a new conference,
 - 2. The philosophy of the new conference,
 - 3. The financial impact,
 - 4. The geographical considerations, and
 - 5. The sport offerings for men and women.
- D. This issue will be taken to the COA Board for consideration at the fall or spring meeting.

5.3.2 No new athletic league, conference, or association of California community college representatives shall be formed to promote competition among colleges belonging to the COA unless such athletic organization is approved by the COA Board.

CONFERENCE MEMBERSHIP FLOW CHART	
Step	Date
FORM M, plus written support from college president, sent to: Exiting conference president and commissioner, Entering conference president and commissioner, and COA Executive Director	Prior to 1 st Friday in April
Conference findings: One vote cast by each conference college president	2 nd Friday in May
Conference action reported to: Appealing college president, Exiting and entering conference colleges, and COA Executive Director	2 nd Friday in June
To COA Board for action	Fall or Spring COA meeting
If approved, change shall take place	July 1 of following year

5.4 DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE

- 5.4.1 Conferences or associations that have ten (10) **eight (8)** or more colleges participating in a sport may be divided into divisions for that sport. Each division shall have at least five (5) **four (4)** colleges. **Conferences with less than ten (1) colleges under this provision shall identify one (1) conference champion.** *(Approved December 4, 2010; effective January 1, 2009: Changed for cost containment through June 30, 2012.)*
- 5.4.2 When conference divisions are established, the opportunity to participate in postconference competition shall be established by the MC.

5.5 CRITERIA FOR HOSTING SPORTS

When a conference has fewer than four (4) colleges participating in a sport, the COA Board shall determine hosting assignments among the various conferences. (See Bylaw 5.6.)

5.6 HOST CONFERENCES *(Adopted October 19, 2007; effective July 1, 2008.)*

- 5.6.1 The COA Board is responsible for assigning colleges to “host” conferences if the parent conference has fewer than four (4) teams in a specific sport. Upon the request of commissioner of the parent conference for the need to find a host conference for a member team(s), the COA Board or designee will assume responsibility for designating the appropriate conference that will provide the opportunity for competition.
 - 5.6.1.1 Deadlines for notification to the COA Board of the need for hosting shall be April 1 for fall sports and September 1 for spring sports.
 - 5.6.1.2 Unless there are extenuating circumstances, conferences requesting hosting for a specific sport after the deadline dates will not be assigned a host conference for their colleges. Appeal of this rule may be made to the COA Executive Director and the COA Board, who may or may not then place a team in a hosted conference after the deadline date.
- 5.6.2 The COA Executive Director shall consult with the commissioners of the requesting conferences and the various potential hosting conferences regarding the appropriate placement of teams in each sport.
- 5.6.3 The COA Executive Director shall make recommendations concerning hosting assignments to the COA Board. He/she further will inform involved commissioners of the Board recommendations for team hosting placement as soon as those recommendations have been made.
- 5.6.4 A college hosted by a conference in a sport shall have the same rights and privileges provided for and shall be bound by the same rules and procedures required of all the colleges in that conference for that sport, unless exempted by the conference.
- 5.6.5 Colleges hosted by a conference shall pay an administrative fee to the host conference. Additional fees may be assessed hosted colleges, as needed for awards, officials, entry fees, etc, for that sport in a manner consistent with other conference colleges.

5.7 SUSPENDED OR EXPELLED COLLEGES

- 5.7.1 A college which has withdrawn or has been suspended from the COA or the conference may not compete in any game, meet, or match whether it be regularly scheduled, a practice, or an informal event that involves any individual, group of individuals, squad, or team enrolled in or representing any California community college.
- 5.7.2 If a college is suspended by a conference from participating in a sport(s); it is suspended from participation in that sport with any college of that conference or host conference. The suspended sport(s) may participate as a free-lance sport. Free-lance participation requires satisfying all *Constitution and Bylaws* eligibility requirements, receiving permission of both the conference and the COA Board, and is not eligible for conference competition or postconference competition.
- 5.7.3 If the COA Board approves the expulsion of a college from a conference, that college is prohibited from participation in California community college competition for the length of the expulsion.

5.8 CONFERENCE VIOLATION(S)

- 5.8.1 Conferences that violate the provisions of this Bylaw shall be liable for disciplinary action by the COA Board.
- 5.8.2 Disciplinary action may include but is not limited to fines, probation, and/or suspension.

5.9 PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION OF BYLAW 5

- 5.9.1 See Article 7.4.12.

