

Task Force on Women in Sports

Date: March 8, 2022

Time: 1 – 3:30 pm

Location: Grand Valley State University: Pew Campus
The L. William Seidman Center
Multipurpose Room 1008
50 Front St. SW Grand Rapids, MI 49504

- I. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson/Secretary Benson at 1:03 pm.

Task Force Attendance	Present	Absent
Jocelyn Benson (Chair)	X	
Penny Allen-Cook	X	
Ketra Armstrong, Ph.D.*	X	
Kathy Beauregard	X	
Keri Becker	X	
Lorin Cartwright		X
Carolyn Cassin	X	
Ramona Cox, Ph.D.	X	
Cali Crawford*	X	
Joanne Gerstner	X	
Jennifer Granger	X	
Mike Guswiler	X	
Carol Hutchins		X
Samantha Mullet		X
Erika Swilley		X
Michele Lewis Watts (Director)	X	

*Attended via video conference.

Task Force Advisory Members attending in person: Dan Gould, Meg Seng, Mark Uyl

Neena Chaudhry, Richard Lapchick, Patti Phillips, Scott Pioli, Alana Glass and Kari Pardoe (Wilson Foundation) attended via video conference.

II. Welcome & Updates

Chairperson/Secretary Benson welcomed everyone, and thanked the staff of Grand Valley State University, Keri Becker and Mike Guswiler for hosting the meeting. She acknowledged that a quorum was present in the room and thanked those that were attending via video conference.

Chairperson/Secretary Benson also highlighted recent work and successes of Task Force members.

III. Approval of November Meeting Minutes

Dr. Watts provided a brief overview of the November meeting minutes, which were unanimously approved. (Motion: Carolyn Cassion; Seconded: Mike Guswiler)

IV. Meeting Overview & Objectives

Chairperson/Secretary Benson provided the objectives of the meeting which were to discuss recommendations as provided and vote which ones will be included in the final report. The report will be announced formally in May or June in celebration of the 50th anniversary of Title IX, after which the Task Force will disband. She also indicated that GVSU President Dr. Philomena Mantella will provide remarks.

V. Recommendations Discussion

The recommendations developed at the November meeting were reorganized into five large recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 1 Create a Statewide Government Role

Create a cabinet-level position and/or executive-level office 1) to engage and promote collaboration among state departments, boards and commissions to address barriers and support best practices, 2) to identify resources for initiatives and programs, and 3) to promote and monitor accountability.

In response to Dr. Gould's question regarding this recommendation being in place just during the current Governor's term, Secretary Benson indicated that legislation would need to be passed (instead of executive order), ideally with bi-partisan support, to create the report or office for long-term continuation. Additional considerations and consequences for this recommendation as mentioned by members include oversight or enhancement of statewide organizations and programs, inclusion of sports tourism efforts, a focus on gender equity, recognizing gender-specific importance of sports and increasing physical activity for improved health outcomes. The recommendation needs to clearly identify the responsibilities of the office/role.

RECOMMENDATION 2 Create A Pipeline for Women Leaders in Sports

Invest and incentivize a pipeline for opportunities for all to advance as women leaders in sports to address structural and systemic barriers to employment and opportunities to play sports to inform, inspire and support women's entry and advancement within the industry.

Increasing participation is a key element of establishing the pipeline to turn players into coaches and then administrators. Dr. Cox highlighted the Academy for Sport Leadership led by Meg Seng as a best practice for a leadership pipeline. As research

shows that most women executives played sports, increasing participation can lead to more women in leadership roles. Jennifer Granger noted that different strategies may be needed for professional team executives as not all positions necessitate previously playing sports. Patti Phillips suggested that intentional infrastructure is needed, such as the database of candidates, created by Women Leaders in College Sports, along with bias education of hiring managers and interview panels. Dr. Lapchick supported replicating this best practice. Scott Pioli indicated that a clear process and plan to promote such a database is needed. It was suggested that a benchmark of data be established. Carolyn Cassin added that explicitly stated requirements are needed.

RECOMMENDATION 3 Enact A Modernized Title IX for Michigan
Bolster shortcomings in existing federal Title IX legislation with a new state Title IX law that includes proactive equity measures.

The report should include context for the law such as what has been accomplished since 1972. The goal is to move beyond performative actions to meaningful desired outcomes, such as increased accountability. Dr. Ketra Armstrong suggested that bias training be a legal requirement with accountability statewide after training. Kathy Beauregard added the need for training standards, to understand the role and use of search firms in the hiring process, and the need to influence individual college's hiring processes, including campus presidents. She provided an example of a student who worked in collegiate football operations who later received an opportunity at the Detroit Lions. It was noted that many hirings in sports is based on relationships, influencers (i.e. athletic department donors), and other power brokers; More objectivity is needed in the hiring process to increase inclusivity per Dr. Armstrong. Dr. Gould added that hiring in college athletics doesn't align with the stringent standards of academic hiring.

Title IX legislative adjustments at the K-12 level may need to be different.

The City of Portland and a local governing agency, Oregon Metro, have done intentional racial equity work that could serve as model for revised Title IX legislation. Other states to investigate are Pennsylvania, Connecticut and California and Washington, D.C.

RECOMMENDATION 4 Engage Michiganders in Supporting Women and Girls in Sports Through Public Fundraising Efforts

Engaging the public in financial investment will require public education. Jennifer Granger and Carolyn Cassin agreed to develop a philanthropy plan. Data on fundraising via Michigan license plates will be provided one strategic pathway.

RECOMMENDATION 5 Bring A Professional Women's Sports Team to Michigan

The Los Angeles Football Club ownership model and marketing plan could serve as an example.

Keri Becker motioned, and seconded by Penny Allen Cook, to amend the five recommendations into three that comprises the recommendations. The motion passed unanimously.

- 1) Modernize Title IX legislation for Michigan that includes a sports-specific governing entity that focuses on accountability and inclusivity
- 2) Create a talent pipeline that supports the growth of women and girls through and in sports
- 3) Engage the public and business community to support this work including bringing a professional women's team to Michigan

Break - Keri Becker introduced GVSU president Philomena Mantella who provided greetings from the university and reiterated the importance of sports for women and girls.

VI. Report Announcement

The group discussed the benefits and negatives of announcing the report/recommendations at the Detroit Regional Chamber's Mackinac Policy Conference. Because the recommendations include policy work, Dr. Cox stated that this is an importance audience and could be an effective vehicle for raising awareness among both policy makers and media. Joanne Gerstner noted that sports media, an important audience, may not be at the conference. Others suggested a separate, possibly second, announcement close to June 23 with athletes with Mackinac Policy Conference serving as a teaser.

Secretary Benson will discuss the potential of a Mackinac Policy Conference announcement with the Governor. Carolyn Cassin will investigate further with the Chamber.

VII. Public Comment – No members of the public requested to comment.

VIII. Next Meeting – The final meeting of the Task Force will be in May in Lansing for final approval of report, announcement and release of report, and next steps for work. In the meantime, the report will be designed and drafted. Dr. Watts will coordinate follow-up conversations on funding, Title IX language, and media rollout.

Meeting adjourned at 3:08 pm (Motion: Keri Becker; Seconded by Joanne Gerstner)