1. **Preface.**

Conference USA member institutions value the principles of sportsmanship and the ideal of pursuing victory with honor in intercollegiate athletics. The Conference believes that athletics should be conducted in a way that reflects positively on the individual participants and institutions. The standards of sportsmanship below are written to emphasize the basic expectations of the Conference related to sportsmanship and provide the Commissioner with broad authority to ensure that Conference activities are consistent with these principles.

2. **Principles of Sportsmanship.**

The essential elements of sportsmanship and ethics in sports are embodied in the concept of character building and six core principles: respect, responsibility, fairness, honesty, integrity and good citizenship. The highest potential of sports is achieved when competition reflects these six principles.

3. **Standards of Conduct.**

a. Member institutions' student-athletes, coaches and staff shall conduct themselves in an appropriate manner in connection with all intercollegiate sporting events in which they participate ("Events"). They shall conduct themselves as positive role models and represent their institutions in a manner that exhibits the principles of sportsmanship. They shall exhibit respect and courtesy towards all participants, and comment about other institutions, coaches and student-athletes only in a positive manner.

b. Behavior that is not considered sportsmanlike or appropriate in connection with Events includes, but is not limited to, the following:

   i. Striking (e.g., kicking, hitting, throwing objects at) or other acts of violence, attempted acts of violence or attempts to incite violence;

   ii. Obscene, profane, demeaning or unduly provocative language, gestures or actions directed towards an opposing team, institution, contest official, staff member or spectator;

   iii. Public criticism of or publicly disparaging statements about an opposing team, institution, contest official, staff member, or spectator;

   iv. Failure to immediately leave the playing area when ejected from a contest;

   v. All other actions, as determined by the Commissioner, in violation the principles and standards of sportsmanship.

c. The appropriate public response to media questions regarding officiating is “per Conference policy, I am unable to comment”. Any other response is a violation of the sportsmanship policy.

4. **Recruiting.**

   a. Institutional staff members shall maintain the highest standards of integrity in their recruitment of prospective student-athletes.

   b. The staff shall only comment about other institutions, coaches, and student-athletes in a positive manner.

   c. The staff shall fully disclose to prospective student-athletes all relevant information regarding the institution, its programs and the nature of any financial aid being offered.

5. **Competitive Environment.**

   a. The management and conduct of Events is the responsibility of the hosting institutions. In their discharge of this responsibility, through the appropriate seating of students and the provision of adequate support personnel and security, all member institutions shall ensure a competitive environment that is safe, fair, and consistent with the principles and standards of sportsmanship.

   b. All ancillary support groups subject to institutional control (e.g., spirit squads, bands, mascots) shall conform to the principles and standards of sportsmanship.

   c. Institutions are responsible for the conduct of spectators at Events they are hosting. Spectators whose conduct is abusive to officials, participants or spectators, or that violates reasonable social standards of conduct, should be removed from the Event.

   d. Spectators should not be permitted on the court or the field of play until the visiting team and officials have made safe transition to the locker room.

6. **Member Institution Obligations.**

   a. Each member institution shall be responsible for promoting sportsmanship and appropriate conduct and for ensuring that its participants conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike manner in connection with intercollegiate sporting events.

   b. Each member institution shall adopt policies and procedures to implement the Principles and Standards of Sportsmanship.

   c. Each member institution shall take appropriate disciplinary or remedial actions in response to any conduct in connection with sporting events that is not sportsmanlike or appropriate by its participants.
PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS OF SPORTSMANSHIP

d. The athletic director of a member institution shall promptly inform the Conference Commissioner of any conduct or actions by participants in connection with events that are not sportsmanlike or appropriate, and of any actions to be taken in respect of such conduct.

7. **Powers of the Conference Commissioner.**

It shall be the responsibility of the Commissioner to promote and enforce these principles and standards of sportsmanship in connection with all Conference activities involving a member institution, including competition against non-conference opponents. The Commissioner shall have broad authority to interpret the standards, review disciplinary action taken by member institutions, and further penalize those deemed to have violated the standards.

8. **Penalties.**

   a. Specifically and without limitation, the Commissioner has the authority to require a member institution to take any one or more of the following actions: (i) publicly or privately reprimand any participant; (ii) forfeit any sports events or competitions; (iii) suspend or expel any person from attendance at or participation in one or more events; or (iv) pay a fine to the Conference (not to exceed $50,000) for each occurrence of unsportsmanlike or inappropriate conduct.

   b. In instances of flagrant misconduct, all individuals involved shall receive a minimum penalty of a suspension from one contest. Flagrant misconduct shall include, but not be limited to, striking (e.g., kicking, hitting, throwing objects at), or attempting to strike an official, coach, player or spectator. In the sport of basketball, standard NCAA penalties will apply for Flagrant Fouls. However, all Flagrant 2 Fouls will be reviewed by the conference office which has the authority to implement further penalties for egregious actions.

   c. If a coach, student-athlete, or administrator is ejected from a contest, they must immediately leave the playing area. Any delay or contrary action will result in an automatic suspension from the following contest.

   d. Repeat violations by an individual, team or institution will subject them to increasingly greater penalties.

   e. In instances in which there is a failure of host institutions security measures which places the visiting team or officials at risk, the hosting institution shall be fined an amount not to exceed $10,000 on the first offense, $20,000 on the second offense, and $30,000 for each offense thereafter in the same five-year period.

9. **Procedure.**

   a. Incidents that may involve violations of these standards shall be immediately reported to the president and the director of athletics of the involved member institution and the Commissioner.

   b. The director of athletics shall immediately review the incident to determine whether these standards have been violated.

   c. As soon as possible, but no later than 48 hours or prior to the next competition, whichever is first, the director of athletics shall advise the Commissioner in writing of the finding and specific disciplinary action, if any, imposed by the institution. A copy shall go to the institution's president and faculty representative.

   d. The Commissioner shall promptly review the incident and action taken, and make a determination regarding whether additional penalties should be imposed. The Commissioner will notify the institution of any directive with additional penalties accordingly.

   e. Penalties shall be imposed prior to the next competition.

   f. Subject to the right of appeal established in Section 10 below, each member institution shall comply with all written directives issued by the Commissioner.

   g. The Commissioner and athletic director may designate another member of their respective staffs to act on their behalf, and the Commissioner shall have the authority to waive the timing requirements set forth above.

10. **Right of Appeal.**

    a. Any member institution shall have the right to appeal any directive of the Commissioner to the Conference Board of Directors' Executive Committee. To properly appeal a directive, the member institution must submit a written statement to the Conference office within 24 hours of receipt of the directive. The appeal should include the nature of the institution's objections to the proposed directive, supporting information, and the actions, if any, that the institution contends should have been taken or required by the Commissioner in the directive at issue.

    b. The Commissioner shall promptly notify the Executive Committee and provide them with the institution's appeal materials, a summary of the directive, and supporting information.

    c. The Executive Committee may affirm, modify or set aside the directive with or without affording the appealing institution a formal or informal hearing. All decisions by the Executive Committee shall be final.

    d. If the Executive Committee finds that the appeal was made without basis, and determines that it was done in an effort to gain competitive or other advantage, it shall have the power to impose a fine to the institution no less than $5,000 and no greater than $50,000.

    e. An Executive Committee member from the institution making the appeal shall be excused from hearing the appeal.