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***From Educational Model to Commercial
Enterprise: The Philosophical Change of
U.S. Women's Intercollegiate Athletics in the
Title IX Era***

The establishment of the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) in 1971 marked a major development in the history of the U.S. women's intercollegiate athletics. The AIAW became the first national governing body for women's college athletics with institutional memberships. The formation of the AIAW brought great optimism to women's sport. Probably more significant than the organization's structure was its philosophical approach to college athletics which was self-consciously distinct from the image of commercialized men's intercollegiate athletics. The AIAW projected itself as the advocate of the "educational model" which emphasized service to the students over the "winning at all cost" mentality. Shortly after the AIAW became operational, Congress passed Title IX of the Education Amendments, prohibiting sex discrimination in all educational activities including college athletics. Never before was

the climate so favorable for the promotion of women's athletics. Yet the "educational model" as well as the traditional "separate sphere" of women's college athletics were soon to be tested by the legal, social, and economic realities of the time.

Legal challenges came first. In January 1973, a group of women student-athletes and their coaches from two Florida colleges filed a lawsuit against the AIAW's scholarship. Foreseeing the inevitable defeat in court and loss of membership, the AIAW changed its rules to allow the awarding of athletic scholarships to female students. The revision jeopardized the AIAW's commitment to the "educational model". Its membership and income from dues soared, however, as a result of the philosophical compromise. By 1975, the AIAW membership had jumped to 757 from the original 278 charter members.

Changing the policy on athletic scholarships was only the first step away from the "educational model." In the decade following the Kellmeyer case, the AIAW saw itself, step by step, becoming more commercialized. From financial aid to eligibility, to recruiting, to transfer students, to amateur status, and to divisional structure, AIAW policies become more and more non-educational although some of them were less commercial than NCAA policies. In 1976, the AIAW officially endorsed commercial subsidy of AIAW championships and in 1977 Eastman Kodak Company became the first major commercial sponsor of its national championships. Within another seventeen months, the AIAW also endorsed the sponsorships of Hanes-Medallist All-Star Basketball Classic, Tea Council of the USA for Small College Tennis Championship, Coca-Cola USA for the funding of the High School Brochure and AIAW championships, Hanes All-American Basketball Classic, and the Broderick Award and Cup for the outstanding women college athletes. By 1978, the women's organization had modified its commercial policy to permit "the advertisement of beverages such as beer and malt liquor" on televised AIAW events. In 1979, the AIAW also established the three-division structure, similar to that of the NCAA.

From the revision of athletic scholarship rules in 1973 to the full embracing of commercialism in 1979, the AIAW, in less than six years, changed itself from an organization of idealism to one whose policies were becoming more and more dependent on its commercial potentials. By the end of the 1970s, the AIAW had adopted, with few exceptions, the "commercial model" championed by men's big-time collegiate athletics. It can be argued that the "educational model" was compromised for greater legal security and that commercial enterprise was accepted to secure women's power and control of intercollegiate athletics for women. The compromise of philosophy greatly prevented the AIAW from future legal challenges. The acceptance of commercialism, however, did not bring security to women's control of women's intercollegiate athletics. In the quarter century following the passage of Title IX, opportunities for women's participation in intercollegiate athletics bloomed. In the meantime, women's control of intercollegiate athletics diminished with the fall of the AIAW.