

Testimony of

Dr. Fitzgerald Hill

for

The Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection

“The Lack of Diversity in Leadership Positions in NCAA Collegiate Sports”

Submitted

February 26, 2007

For Collegiate Football Coaches
Race Defines Space

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Abstract

African American student-athletes, after finding success on the football field, have subsequently discovered that opportunities in the coaching profession and athletic administration remain elusive. Most postsecondary institutions embrace the notion that equal opportunity exists for those that are qualified. However, qualified African-American football coaches have not been given the same career opportunities as their white colleagues. Although affirmative action legislation was designed in effort to aid African-American football coaches in the employment arena, the implementation of these laws has had little, if any positive impact in creating employment opportunities and advancement for African-American football coaches.

The effect of how race continues to impact coaching opportunities is rarely understood by white administrators and coaches. Race continues to influence the decision-making process for collegiate coaching positions, particularly the head coaching jobs. To explain the effects of skin color on the sport, consider this: If Vince Lombardi had been born black, he would have never been given the opportunity to be a head coach. The same holds true of Bud Wilkinson, Woody Hayes and many others of their generation. If that had been the case, think of all the young men who would have been denied the opportunity to learn and play for the great Hall of Fame coaches.

Yet there are those, including many athletic administrators and some political activists such as former University of California regent Ward Connerly, who continue to claim that equal opportunity is available to all coaches, regardless. Mr. Connerly and those athletic administrators might rethink their positions when confronted by another fact: More African Americans have served our country and our president as a secretary of state than have worked as a head football coach in the Southeastern Conference.

Thanks in part to the ill-advised comments of individuals such as the late Jimmy ‘The Greek’ Snyder, the public was exposed to the stereotypical perceptions regarding the ability of African-American coaches. Snyder, a colorful and often quoted CBS sports commentator, was fired from the network in 1988 after making racial remarks regarding African-American athletes and African-American coaches. He was quoted as saying that if African-Americans “take over the coaching jobs like everybody wants them to, there’s not going to be anything left for the white people”.

Since 1982, there have been 437 head coaching vacancies at the Division I level. African-American football coaches have been selected for 26 of the head coaching positions with 12 of the appointments occurring after 1996.

An examination of these numbers illustrates why so many African-American coaches can understand Ralph Ellison’s novel, “The Invisible Man” without having read the book. Athletic Directors and Presidents tend to see right through coaches of color, regardless of their qualification and experience. The numbers tell the story.

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Dr. Fitzgerald Hill, President of Arkansas Baptist College, Former

Division I-A Head Football Coach and Author of soon to be published book:

CrackBack! Throwing the Flag on College Football's Coaching Apartheid

The current extent to which employment opportunities are restricted for African-American football coaches is often underestimated by those associated with intercollegiate athletics. In fact, it is often difficult to convince many university academic leaders, athletic administrators, and influential boosters that current employment patterns of collegiate football coaches do not provide equal opportunities for qualified African-American football coaches.

This misperception occurs largely because many Americans continue to think of racial discrimination in terms of overt and purposeful bigotry. It is, however, normally implemented through subtle and covert tactics that may not appear racially motivated. As a direct result, on many coaching staffs, white administrators and coaches are frequently perceived by African-American coaches as perpetrators of this discreet form of modern day discrimination. Exacerbating the situation is the fact that most white athletic administrators and coaches do not intentionally attempt to treat African-American coaches any differently than white coaches; yet they fail to understand how their biased attitudes and stereotypical perceptions often create invisible but impenetrable barriers restricting accessibility to equal opportunity.

The Problem

African-American student-athletes, after finding success on the football field, have subsequently discovered that opportunities in the coaching profession and athletic administration remain elusive. Most postsecondary institutions embrace the notion that equal opportunity exists for those that are qualified. However, qualified African-American football coaches have not been given the same career opportunities as their white colleagues. Although affirmative action legislation was designed in effort to aid African-American football coaches in the employment arena, the implementation of these laws has had little, if any positive impact in creating employment opportunities and advancement for African-American football coaches.

In the 138-year history of Division I football, African-American football coaches have been selected to serve as head coach a mere 26 times. Even following the sport's widespread racial integration in the 1950s and 1960s, coaching opportunities for African-American coaches at predominantly white colleges and universities were still difficult if not impossible to attain. During the 1970's and 1980's the common practice was for colleges to hire one African-American football assistant coach per staff. This sole minority coach understood that his primary duties at the institution were to recruit, retain, and cultivate African-American student-athletes. The minority hire also frequently served as the "poster boy" example of equal opportunity for the African-American coaches who were deemed "safe" enough to employ.

Since the early 1990's, the number of African-American football assistant coaches has increased significantly. However, over the same period, the number of

African-American head coaches has actually decreased. This has created a confused and frustrated group of minority coaches who are searching for answers to explain why their skin color penalizes their employment opportunities.

The effect of how race continues to impact coaching opportunities is rarely understood by white administrators and coaches. Race continues to influence the decision-making process for collegiate coaching positions, particularly the head coaching jobs. To explain the effects of skin color on the sport, consider this: If Vince Lombardi had been born black, he would have never been given the opportunity to be a head coach. The same holds true of Bud Wilkinson, Woody Hayes and many others of their generation. If that had been the case, think of all the young men who would have been denied the opportunity to learn and play for these great Hall of Fame coaches.

Unlike college football, the National Football League has made tremendous progress in creating employment access to all coaches since implementing the “Rooney Rule” in 2002. This rule mandates that whenever a NFL team has a head coaching vacancy, the organization must interview a minority candidate for the position or face a substantial fine.

Early this month, the Super Bowl was played in Dolphin Stadium in Florida. The most popular story angle by far was the unprecedented historic achievement of both teams being led by African-American head coaches. Tony Dungy was on the sidelines for the Indianapolis Colts. The Chicago Bears were Lovie Smith’s team.

The two men deserved every bit of that hype. But one can only wonder how long it will be until college football has a national championship game where both head coaches are African-American—or if such a matchup will ever take place? The odds of it

happening are miniscule, considering how few minorities are hired as head coaches each year. These odds will not improve until Division I universities implement significant changes in their hiring practices and policies.

In the five Bowl Championship Series (BCS) games following the 2006 season, the 10 head coaches all were white. Of the 64 coaches in bowl games, 62 were white. At the conclusion of the 2006 football season there were 23 colleges and universities that needed new coaches. In theory, this meant significant opportunities for African-American and minorities. Of the 23 openings, only the University of Miami hired an African-American. Randy Shannon was promoted from his job as the Hurricanes' defensive coordinator – but only after Miami failed to land its top choice, Rutgers head coach Greg Schiano.

An examination of these numbers illustrates why so many African-American coaches can understand Ralph Ellison's novel "The Invisible Man" without having read the book. Athletic Directors and Presidents have a tendency to see right through coaches of color, regardless of their qualification and experience. The numbers tell the story.

Since 1982, there have been 437 head coaching vacancies at the Division I level. African-American football coaches have been selected for 26 of the head coaching vacancies with 12 of the appointments occurring after 1996.

In 2006, of the 119 Division I football coaches, only 4.2 percent were minorities. But 5.1 percent of the 119 Division I university presidents were minorities. Why are the percentages greater for college presidents than head football coaches? The hiring process would suggest that the hiring for university presidents at public schools is usually wide open. Candidates are publicized and brought before a committee that usually includes

some trustees, administrators, faculty members and students. They usually demand a varied list of candidates, with some diversity.

This is not the case in the collegiate football coaching profession. Research indicates that African-American football coaches are rarer than an undefeated season. According to the NCAA record book, during the 138 years that college football has been played, there have been 322 unbeaten and untied teams at the Division I level. In those same 138 years, there have been only 26 hirings of African-American head coaches. By my rudimentary calculations, it is therefore six times more likely that a Division I college athlete will play for an undefeated football team than play for a black head football coach. These are ridiculous odds. Yet there are those, including many athletic administrators and some political activists such as former University of California regent Ward Connerly, who continue to claim that equal opportunity is available to all coaches, regardless of color. Mr. Connerly and those athletic administrators might rethink their positions when confronted by another amazing fact: More African-Americans have served our country and our president as a secretary of state than have worked as a head football coach in the Southeastern Conference.

It is remarkable that, while Condoleezza Rice and General Colin Powell have been trusted to negotiate with world leaders at the highest level, only one African-American person – Sylvester Croom of Mississippi State – has so far been trusted to coach football players in the SEC. Fortunately, General Powell and Secretary Rice had a goal of emulating Henry Kissinger instead of Bear Bryant. It should be noted that Bryant himself would have not had the opportunity to become the head coach of Alabama if he was born with 1/10 of African American blood in him. How many coaches of color that

possessed Bear Bryant potential were not considered head coaching material because they were born African-American?

The hiring scoreboard for black football coaches shows that since 1996, there have been 200 Division I head coaching vacancies. African-American coaches have been selected to fill 12 of those jobs, or six percent of the openings. As the 2007 season approaches, only six of the 119 Division I football coaching jobs are filled by African-Americans. That is three fewer African-Americans than coached at the same level 10 years ago. My conclusion? Racial equality in the collegiate football profession is not progressing forward. It is actually moving backwards.

Unconscious Employment Barriers

Civil rights legislation and equal opportunity laws in the 1960s removed many of the structural barriers confronting African-American football coaches at NCAA Division I institutions. Nevertheless, many white collegiate administrators remain unconvinced that subtle forms of prejudice and discrimination take place within their institutions or organizations.

For example, Roy Kramer, the now-retired commissioner of the Southeastern Conference stated that the selection of the head football coach is each individual institution's prerogative. Kramer served as the SEC commissioner from 1990-2002. During that time period, he insisted that equal opportunity was in place throughout his conference, even though no SEC member had ever employed an African-American head football coach. In 1997, Kramer told the Washington Post: "I think institutions are making that commitment [to hire black coaches] across the board." Kramer must

therefore have been convinced that no African-American football coach possessed the qualifications to lead a football program in the SEC, because according to his comments, if one did, he would have been hired. Kramer's statement, revealing his oblivious bias, explains much of the problem with the current hiring situation in the 21st century.

Most white athletic administrators and coaches are honorable men and women. They do not intentionally attempt to treat African-American coaches any differently than they treat white coaches. But as honorable as these collegiate administrators may be, their unwitting biased attitude and behavior toward equal opportunities and employment access creates chaos for minority coaches. The administrators' pride and ego enables them to actually believe that they are hiring the most qualified head coaching candidate, and that skin color is not a factor in their decisions. Trying to get these collegiate administrators to understand their bias is often as difficult as trying to get a fish to discover water.

Another example of the college establishment's lack of awareness was evident in a statement by former Texas A & M Aggies, Head Coach, RC Slocum. In a May, 1992 interview with the Dallas Morning News, Slocum boldly claimed: "There is no one coaching that has any more opportunity than a young black coach . . . I can name you example after example".

This statement confused many African-American coaches seeking employment opportunities in the collegiate coaching profession. Why? Examine the hiring situation for African-American coaches during the early 1990's. During the 1992 football season, only one African-American served as a head football coach at a Division I institution. Among the 108 major colleges, most coaching staffs employed only one African-

American football coach. Yet in Slocum's mind, equal opportunity was readily available and accessible to coaches of color.

It is obvious that in the minds of Kramer and Slocum, both white men, subtle bias existed. It helps explain why college football lags in terms of equality hiring. Both men should have taken to heart the comments of then NCAA Executive Director, Cedric Dempsey in August of 1994. Dempsey noted that NCAA member institutions had not been active enough in providing opportunities to minorities. He acknowledged that a long road must be traveled before true diversity is achieved in collegiate athletics, especially in the sport of football and key leadership positions in athletic administration. Dempsey stated: "We must redouble our effort to allow minority individual's access to careers in intercollegiate athletics." Nearly 15 years later, there is minimal progress to report. If the NCAA were a college football program, its behavior would be penalized and the players benched, replaced by people who could at least attempt to follow the game plan. And if Kramer and Slocum looked at the situation realistically, they would realize that their definition for equitable access in the coaching profession was, at least, grossly distorted. At most, it is a factual lie.

Unfortunately, many college administrators do not understand what is happening on their campuses. They do not see how that they have built glass ceilings – or brick walls – because of an ingrained collective mindset. This mindset involves stereotypes that are perpetuated by too many in the college football culture. This mindset is exacerbated by fears that alumni will not accept an African-American head coach as well as by the internal, insular "network" of college football administrators that coaches of all colors readily acknowledge. But mostly, the situation exists because when white

administrators and influential boosters picture their ideal head football coach, they rarely if ever picture a black man.

Thanks in part to the ill-advised comments of individuals such as the late Jimmy ‘The Greek’ Snyder, the public was exposed to the stereotypical perceptions regarding the ability of African-American coaches. Snyder, a colorful and often quoted CBS sports commentator, was fired from the network in 1988 after making racial remarks regarding African-American athletes and African-American coaches. He was quoted as saying that if African-Americans “take over the coaching jobs like everybody wants them to, there’s not going to be anything left for the white people”.

This mindset no longer exists in college basketball. Many men of color have succeeded in that profession – including Tubby Smith, Nolan Richardson, John Thompson, John Chaney, and Kelvin Sampson. No school’s boosters think twice today when an African-American is hired to coach a Division I basketball team. The presence of successful coaches such as Smith, Richardson and Thompson on the sidelines, coaching their teams to conference championships and the Final Four, has made it easier for athletic directors to envision other African-Americans as ideal candidates to coach basketball at their institutions. A similar scenario has taken place in the National Football League.

College football is different. White athletic and academic administrators routinely go on the record supporting equal opportunities and inclusiveness for African-American football coaches. But tracking the hiring patterns reveals they are actually thinking something else. A quote from Notre Dame athletic director Kevin White when he was asked why George O’Leary was hired to coach the Irish without a thorough

background check of his qualifications—which would have revealed a deceptive resume that ultimately caused O’Leary to resign a few days after his hiring—reveals another case of subliminal bias. White explained away the school’s error this way: “George kind of appeared to us like something out of central casting.”

In other words, when university administrators were casting the role of head coach in South Bend, they first envisioned a middle-aged white guy who talked a good game and fit the right “image” for Notre Dame. After terminating O’Leary for falsifying personal information on his resume, Kevin White hired Tyrone Willingham, who happened to be an African-American. White is far from being a racist, obviously. But his remark shows how benignly insidious and hidden the prejudice against minority head coaches can be.

A similar situation recently took place at the University of Miami following the 2006 football season. Randy Shannon was promoted from his job as the Hurricanes’ defensive coordinator – but only after Miami failed to land its top choice, Rutgers head coach Greg Schiano, who happens to be white.

Much credit should be given the white athletic administrators who are trying to overcome negative stereotyping and the subconscious biased behavior in the employment arena. These administrators – either in good conscience or because they are ordered to do so – frequently create “guidelines” or “processes” to try and give minority coaches a more “fair” chance for jobs. It is obvious that colleges can learn from the National Football League. By implementing “guidelines” or “processes,” the NFL has created access to head coaching opportunities for coaches of color. The proof is in the pudding.

As of February 2007, to merely match the NFL's progress in this area, college football would have to hire 21 more African-American head coaches tomorrow.

The NCAA has attempted to create a pool of minority football head coaching candidates for colleges and universities by developing the Coaches Academy. This Academy attempts to select and prepare the top tier minority coaches in leadership training to ready themselves for head coaching positions. This program has pros and cons. It can imply that African-American football coaches are born inferior to their white counterparts and need additional training outside of the normal coaching regime. On the flip side, the program is a great networking gathering for white athletic administrators and black coaches to meet, greet, and become acquainted with one another. This is an important step toward creating diversity because many white athletic administrators are often not aware of the qualified minority candidates available. The Black Coaches Association (BCA) works closely with the NCAA to identify and recommend prospective candidates for the program.

Collegiate Football Coaching Opportunities

My historical analysis of hiring patterns for African-American head football coaches at the Division I level reveals one consistent trend: Most African-American assistant coaches desiring to become head coaches will likely be offered the opportunities to do so for college programs that require major rebuilding. The low winning percentages associated with these institutions may negatively influence the perception of the coaching potential of African-American coaches. Consequently, many head coaching opportunities at traditional collegiate football powers remain elusive and African-

American coaches continue to take jobs that may not appear to be very promising on the surface.

Tyrone Willingham, the University of Washington head coach, is the only African- American that has been terminated from his head coaching duties at one Division I school who has been granted another opportunity to lead another Division I football program. This is vastly different from Willingham's many white counterparts, who are frequently recycled and given second opportunities – which in many ways prevents many African-American coaches from even receiving a first chance. Such employment practices indicate that African-American coaches tend to be evaluated collectively while white coaches are evaluated individually.

It is often difficult for white coaches to understand the general discontent shared by African-American coaches regarding their chances for career advancement. In my interviews with many white coaches, they have said they are tired of hearing African-American coaches complain about the lack of coaching opportunities. But as sociological literature suggests, the way that people--white or African-American--perceive a particular employment situation is usually reflected by how that individual is affected by the situation. However, hiring patterns that follow racial lines support the fact that race has dramatically affected the careers of African-American football coaches.

The following comments are from African-American coaches I interviewed in my research.:

An African-American assistant coach employed in the Pacific-10 Conference expressed his views on employment issues facing African-American coaches:

“The bottom line is that racism exists in all areas of life and football is no exception. Administrators hire white head coaches because the vast majority of them are white. In turn, white head coaches hire mostly white staffs because they want to work with people that they are familiar with. In most cases that person is someone of their own race. The African-American coach is then hired to fill a quota, recruit the African-American athlete and become their mentor.”

Another African-American football coach from the Big West Conference wrote:

“There seems to be a mentality that two African-American coaches are basically enough. If you have two, then you’re okay. I’ve been here going on four years and we’ve had no more than two coaches of color during that time. The head coach didn’t know either of us before we were hired. There also is a perception amongst the white assistants that we have it made because of our skin color. What they don’t realize is that we are competing for those two spots out of the nine assistant jobs, while they are competing for the other seven. Also the “good” African-American coach gets over. Any straying from that gets you labeled as a troublemaker, malcontent, and subversive.”

An African-American coach from the Big East considered himself to be an authority in dealing with African-American recruits and their families.

“I am perceived as the resident “expert” on all minority affairs. African-American players come to me for social, personal and academic problems. That does not set well with others on the staff. On recruiting weekends, regardless if I have one of my own recruit or his parents visiting the campus, I host the African-American parents. I have developed great relationships with parents and

players. Often other coaches come to me to find out about “their” recruits or personal problems.”

Studies suggest that the percentage of African-American collegiate football coaches does not reflect the number of African-American football coaches with qualifications to do one of those jobs. Caution must be used when using statistics to show under-representation. Nevertheless, Dr. Terry Don Phillips, the director of athletics at Clemson University and a licensed attorney, believes that qualified coaches should come primarily from those who actually participated in athletics. This is currently not the case.

When companies, industries, and colleges prove they cannot regulate themselves within constitutional guidelines, those institutions eventually are forcibly regulated. History teaches that social change doesn't normally occur without litigation or legislation. Integration did not occur without litigation. School desegregation required litigation. Title IX required litigation. Universities have left coaches of color virtually no other option except to use the courthouse for justice. Civil Rights laws were passed in 1964. But in 2007, these Congressional hearings are taking place because the laws have not been applied equally as it relates to employment equity for all coaches regardless of color at collegiate football programs.

For genuine equality to occur within the coaching profession, white collegiate administrators and coaches must come to terms with the fact that they are a product of a racially biased society which unconsciously can negatively affect their perceptions of African-American Americans. Recent studies and content analysis of Division I football media guides shows that if the situation is improving, it is doing so at a glacial pace. Past employment patterns, as well as current hiring trends, show there is a definite need to

seek measures that will genuinely promote equal opportunity for all within the college football coaching profession.

Implications

Much progress has been made in the world of sports since Jackie Robinson integrated Major League Baseball in 1947. However, more than half a century later, studies indicate that race continues to have a dramatic influence on the employment opportunities for African-American football coaches at predominantly white colleges and universities. During the civil rights era, sports created educational and economic opportunities by making skill the most important determinant for success. It is unfortunate that white administrators and coaches seldom judge African-Americans solely on the basis of character and merit. To say that society is color blind and that equal opportunity exists for everyone is neglectful of the real problems and issues of race.

Ron Brown was employed as an assistant football coach at the University of Nebraska for more than 15 years. He possessed an impressive resume with impeccable credentials. When his alma mater, Brown University of the Ivy League, began its search for a new head football coach, Brown was contacted and asked to interview for the position. During the process of the interview, Brown was told that there were individuals who had reservations about hiring an African-American head football coach. According to Brown:

“The athletic director told me just prior to the interview, ‘Some alums are not happy because you’re African-American.’ They said, ‘We don’t want to play that

experiment here.’ It really bothers me. I played there. You get all the pats on the back while you’re playing. All of a sudden, there’s a drawn line.”

Recent hiring decisions regarding head football coaches at Division I universities indicate that college presidents and athletic directors are seeking individuals who are well perceived by an institution’s constituents. White collegiate administrators often become appalled at being labeled racist for the lack of African-American coaches hired at their institutions. The truth is, there is a demand for coaches who are articulate and well dressed, and those qualities are not frequently associated with African-American coaches.

Many African-American and white coaches alike will not openly discuss their true feelings concerning race-related issues for fear of possible reprisals or harm to their career. The lack of genuine, open, and honest dialogue when it comes to personal feelings regarding equal employment practices involving African-American and white coaches contributes to a stale and stagnant employment situation. Studies of African-American football coaches have discovered the following:

- African-American football coaches often lower their expectations and become complacent satisfied just to be employed. Sociological literature refers to this as the “shattered dreams syndrome.”
- African-American coaches often see white coaches with equal or lesser qualifications advancing and assume that skin color is the explanation.
- African-American coaches develop what is defined as coping fatigue as they perceive that white coaches do not acknowledge their competence or knowledge of the game.

- The current hiring trend continues to stratify African-American football coaches into positions that tend not to lead to head coaching positions.
- To advance their careers, African-American football coaches may believe it is necessary to deny their culture for acceptance. This can lead to an identity crisis.
- African-American coaches perceive they cannot voice their true feelings regarding apparent employment barriers for fear of damaging career opportunities. The result of this is defined as self-censorship.

Current hiring patterns of African-American football coaches may explain why a significant majority of African-American coaches believe that a “diversity plan to increase the number of African-American coaches is necessary.” However, it is possible that many white coaches may perceive that implementing any institutional hiring practices based on the goal of achieving racial diversity or equal opportunity actually promotes reverse discrimination.

It is astounding that African-American football coaches often seem content to complain loudly to everybody except the institutional leaders who actually possess the authority to alter unjust hiring practices. But if meaningful changes are going to occur, African-American coaches must join together and voice their opinions regarding employment perceptions and institutional treatment. However, to avoid alienating collegiate and academic and athletic administrators, African-American coaches must also take a sensitive approach when addressing these issues. The words racism and discrimination can provoke a defensive posture on the part of many white academic and athletic administrators.

Game Plan for Corrective Action

Correcting the inequities in college football hiring practices would not be as difficult as many people imagine. It would mostly involve college administrators bringing the same hiring policy perspectives to football that they already use in other areas of their universities. If these policies are implemented in football, they should provide a more fair atmosphere for coaches of all colors. My recommendations:

1. END SECRECY

When many institutions are hiring a new football coach, too often the process is kept hidden from sight. This happens either because a candidate does not want his name made public, or because schools want to keep one candidate's name secret from another candidate.

This is dramatically different from the way universities usually hire their top academic or administrative personnel. Candidates for school president are publicized and asked to appear before a committee that includes some university trustees, administrators, faculty members and students. They usually demand a varied list of candidates, with some diversity.

With football coaches, that's very seldom the case. If a school wants to confine the search solely to a buddy of the athletic director -- or to the favored candidate of a booster who contributes the most money to the football program -- then the school can do exactly that. There is no way to tell if every good candidate is even being considered and no guarantee that candidates are being held to certain standards.

Is it any wonder so many minority coaches believe there might be a covert conspiracy to deny them an opportunity for job interviews? Is it any wonder that so many

coaches--of all races--feel they aren't getting a fair shake when it comes to hiring?

The remedy is easy: End the surreptitious circus. Require that all interviews of head coaching candidates take place in an open atmosphere. Make sure every name of a candidate is made public so that the school's constituents – students, alumni, football fans -- know that the university is making a broad effort to hire the best person for the job.

2. SLOW DOWN THE PROCESS

The Daytona 500 takes more time to run than it takes for some universities to conduct a “coaching search.” To hear athletic directors and school presidents tell it, they have no time to conduct a measured, methodical review of coaching candidates because the school might risk losing key high school recruits, or because “continuity” is imperative, or because a top coaching candidate might take a job somewhere else.

At best, these are rationalizations. At worst, they are a devious cover story. There is no demonstrable proof that hiring a head coach quickly results in a better won-loss record. After the 2000 season at Ohio State, the school administration dithered for weeks and weeks until finally hiring its third or fourth preferred candidate, Jim Tressel of Youngstown State. Tressel coached the Buckeyes to a national championship in his second season.

The NCAA should mandate a two-week or three-week “cooling off” period between the time a coach is fired or quits, and the time when a new coach is hired. This would allow all coaching candidates to receive a fair look and for schools to perform better diligence before making a hire. It would also give minority candidates a better

chance to put themselves in play for a job, since many are “outside the loop” regarding the hiring process.

3. EXPAND THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

At many schools, the “hiring committee” for a new football coach basically consists of two people -- the athletic director and school president. Sometimes, it consists of only one person. If so, it is usually the athletic director. The president then rubber-stamps the choice.

This situation hardly takes into account all of college football’s stakeholders -- administrators, faculty members, students, alumni, boosters. If the school is a public institution, taxpayers are also stakeholders.

The NCAA should require Division I universities to form an advisory committee whenever a head coaching job in football becomes open. Colleges can become bogged down in bureaucracy, so this committee would have to be set up wisely, with a mission to be efficient and nimble. I would suggest that the committee be appointed by the school president, who could use it as a year-round athletic advisory board that would already be in place when an opening occurs. The committee would not do the actual hiring. But it would be in position to suggest names of candidates, to interview those candidates when they come to the campus and to file strenuous objections if the athletic director appears to be making a nonsensical move. It would also shine more sunlight on the hiring process and make the candidates confident that they are not victims of the “good old boy” syndrome perpetrated by athletic directors who hire only their old cronies or coaches who are recommended by other old cronies..

4. EMULATE A SUCCESSFUL MODEL

During the 2002 football season, the NFL recognized it had a significant problem with racial inequity. Of the 32 head coaches in the league, only two were black – Tony Dungy of the Indianapolis Colts and Herm Edwards of the New York Jets. The NFL Players’ Union expressed concern with the situation, at least partially because 67% of its membership was African-American.

Dan Rooney, the Pittsburgh Steelers’ owner, made a proposal to help bring more diversity to the coaching ranks. It was adopted by the league and has come to be known as the Rooney Rule. It mandates that every NFL team with a head coaching vacancy must interview at least one minority candidate before filling the job. A team that fails to follow this guideline is subject to severe fines.

The rule’s intention is threefold. It gives more minority candidates the chance to audition for head coaching positions. Secondly, even if those minority coaches do not earn a head position, the interviewing experience usually makes them more prepared and comfortable for the next interview. Thirdly, the names of the minority coaches who interview for the vacant positions are circulated in the media and around the league, putting those coaches on a list of likely candidates for coordinator positions as well as subsequent head coaching vacancies.

The Rooney Rule has been dramatically successful. By the 2004 season, the NFL had an unprecedented 14 offensive and defensive coordinators who happened to be minorities. There were also 173 minority assistant coaches, another record. And at the start of the 2006 season, there were seven African-American head coaches in the NFL, including the two who eventually coached against each other in the Super Bowl, Dungy

and Lovie Smith..

There is no reason the NCAA could not adopt similar legislation, using the Rooney Rule as a template. Before any Division I university hires a football coach, it should be required to give a serious interview to at least one minority candidate. But instead of a university simply being fined if it fails to follow the rule, the school would be placed on NCAA probation and barred from going to a bowl game for a season or more.

5. MANDATE ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS

When a school does not list specific hiring criteria when searching for a new head football coach, it leads to all sorts of confusion. Candidates have no idea what to accumulate on a resume. When attempting to smash a glass ceiling, the best ammunition is to remove any doubts about job qualifications. But if there are no clearly stated qualifications for that job, how can you know what it will take to become “qualified?” Athletic administrators have shown a tendency to be extremely subjective when evaluating football coaching candidates.

Astonishingly, in some cases, high school coaches are required to have more academic credentials than Division I coaches, given the high schools’ teaching and faculty needs. For the same reason, at smaller Division II and III colleges, coaches are required to have masters’ degrees. But major college football jobs don’t require one. In fact, there are no real academic requirements at all to apply for those jobs.

Uniform standards should be set. If the head football coach is going to be the highest-paid “faculty member” on campus, he should have some academic credentials. At minimum, every head coach of a Division I school should possess a master’s degree. Colleges should also be required to publicly state the level of experience or

expertise necessary for a job -- and adopt a policy of never hiring a coach who does not meet those requirements over a coach who does. That way, when job candidates are attempting to accumulate the proper credentials early in their careers, they have a clear idea how to do so. As a bonus, football players at these schools would likely receive more competent and proficient coaching with an educational component..

6. CREATE MORE OPPORTUNITIES

At the Division I level, most coaching aspirants begin their careers as graduate assistants. These jobs are low paying (or in some cases, basically volunteer-type positions) that are a good stepping stone to a full-time job. Currently, the NCAA allows Division I schools to employ two grad assistants. As you can imagine, the competition for those two jobs is fierce. There are always many more applicants than positions available.

To create a larger pool of diverse coaching candidates in the future, the NCAA should mandate an extra graduate assistant position to be filled by a minority, at all 119 Division 1-A schools. The expense would not be onerous, given the small stipend that grad assistants are provided. But the 119 extra jobs could be financed by tapping the “diversity program fund” that already exists in the organization. Either that, or the NCAA could tap the enormous profits generated by the BCS bowls. Another possibility: The NFL and NFL Players’ Association could combine to donate the money.

Under this proposal, no jobs would be taken away from white graduate assistants -- or any current grad assistants, for that matter. Individual schools would not have to come up with extra dough for the extra position because it would be paid for by outside

money. More young coaching talent would be exposed to Division I football. And finding qualified candidates of all colors for full-time positions in the future would be far easier.

7. EDUCATE THE CONSTITUENTS

In recent years, schools have tried to gain more control over the actions of their most rabid athletic boosters. Often, these boosters are urged to attend an educational “seminar“ at which NCAA rules regarding improper benefits and illegal support mechanisms for athletes are outlined. Boosters could also be asked to undergo an educational program about the benefits of racial diversity in college coaching. The program would also foster candid dialogue on the issue. Thus, when the next head coaching vacancy occurs, boosters might more easily understand why hiring practices to encourage minority candidates are in place.

8. STOP THE BRAIN DRAIN

Just as universities work hard to keep their best professors from leaving for a private sector job, college football administrators must make efforts to identify their talented minority coaches and keep them from evacuating to the NFL. Many young African-American coaches today believe there are far better opportunities for them in pro football than on campus. After the sight of Dungy and Smith coaching against each other in the Super Bowl was witnessed by millions, that perception is easy to understand. College administrators must cultivate and encourage young minority coaches – not with financial compensation alone, but with moral support and pledges to provide more opportunities at the offensive and defensive coordinator positions.

College football draws millions of people to campuses each fall. Many people believe the sport is one of the best things about our nation's culture. The NCAA and our higher education system must demonstrate that college football truly believes in the vision of equality for all that Americans desire. Right now, in terms of the head coaching position, the sport seems to exist in a world apart from that vision. There is no reason that should continue. These guidelines would provide a template for positive change.