

THE GREAT LAKES INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETIC CONFERENCE



The Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) was founded in 1972. During the two years previous to the GLIAC's founding, several attempts were made to create a new NCAA College Division conference. In 1971, the Great Lakes Athletic Conference was formed, but plans for the new conference were put on hold and several of the participating schools subsequently withdrew their support.

However, the idea for a new conference did not die, and since 1972-73 the GLIAC has been a leader in the advancement and promotion of intercollegiate athletics for men and women.

The charter members of the GLIAC were Ferris State University, Grand Valley State University, Lake Superior State University, Northwood University, and Saginaw Valley State University.

Expansion of the GLIAC began immediately with the addition of Oakland University in 1974. Hillsdale College and Northern Michigan University were accepted as members in 1975, while Wayne State University joined in 1976. In 1977, the conference lost its first member when Northern Michigan withdrew. Michigan Tech University filled the vacancy when it became a member in 1980.

After the 1986-87 season, Northwood left the conference and was replaced by Northern Michigan. Northwood rejoined the conference in 1992.

After the 1989 season, the conference dropped football as a sponsored sport. The conference schools sponsoring football joined the members of the Heartland Collegiate Conference in forming the football-only Midwest Intercollegiate Football Conference (MIFC), which began play in 1990.

After nine years of existence as one of the premier conferences in Division II football, the MIFC merged as part of GLIAC on July 1, 1999. With the merger, the University of Indianapolis became an associate member as a football-only school.

The GLIAC entered a new era in the 1995-96 school year. Prior to 1995-96, all member institutions of the GLIAC were located in the state of Michigan. On December 14, 1994, membership was offered to three schools located in Ohio and Pennsylvania. The expansion members were Ashland University of Ashland, Ohio, and Gannon University and Mercyhurst College, both located in Erie, Pennsylvania. All three schools began their membership July 1, 1995.

On July 1, 1997, membership was granted to The University of Findlay, located in Findlay, Ohio. UF replaced Oakland University, which withdrew from the conference after the 1996-97 season as it moved to NCAA Division I status.

Westminster College, located in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania, became the 14th member of the GLIAC when it accepted its expansion offer in May of 1997. On June 30, 2000 Westminster left the conference as it changed its affiliation to NCAA Division III.

Overall the GLIAC conducts championships in 20 sports, 10 for men and 10 for women. The policy-making body of the GLIAC is the Executive Council, which is comprised of three representatives from each member institution – its director of athletics, faculty athletics representative and senior woman administrator. Final approval of all amendments to the GLIAC constitution and by-laws is required by the Council of GLIAC Presidents.

The presidency of the GLIAC is rotated alphabetically by school, with Steven Rackley, director of athletics at the University of Findlay, serving as GLIAC President in 2006-07. Tom Kirinovic, director of athletics at Ferris State, will serve as Past President, and Tim Selgo, director of athletics at Grand Valley State, serving as President-Elect.

As GLIAC commissioner, **Tom Brown** is responsible for all conference administration. He is beginning his 15th season as the conference's fifth commissioner. Assisting Brown are: **Jeff Ligney**, Director of Media Relations; **Denise Gross**, Assistant to the Commissioner; **Phil Barnes**, Supervisor of Football Officials; **John Kirk**, Supervisor of Basketball Officials; and **Jeanne Skinner**, Supervisor of Volleyball Officials.

THE HISTORY OF GLIAC FOOTBALL

The Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference began sponsoring football as a league sport in the Fall of 1973 with three teams, Ferris State University, Grand Valley State University, and Northwood University. In 1974, Hillsdale College joined the league as the fourth football team. The conference expanded again in 1975 when Saginaw Valley State University started a football program and Wayne State University joined the league. The number of GLIAC football teams grew to seven in 1980 when Michigan Tech University was added, though the Huskies left the league after the 1985 season. In 1987, Northwood left the league and was replaced by Northern Michigan University.

After the 1989 season, the GLIAC dropped football as a sponsored sport. The six conference schools sponsoring football, Ferris State, Grand Valley State, Hillsdale, Northern Michigan, Saginaw Valley State, and Wayne State, joined the five members of the Heartland Collegiate Conference, Ashland University, Butler University, the University of Indianapolis, St. Joseph's College, and Valparaiso University, in forming the football-only Midwest Intercollegiate Football Conference (MIFC), which began play in 1990.

The MIFC would change again for the 1993 season as two teams would leave and two teams would join. Butler and Valparaiso left the conference, but Northwood rejoined and the College of St. Francis (Ill.) was added. The league grew to 12 teams in 1994 with the addition of Michigan Tech and stayed at 12 teams until St. Joseph's left after the 1995 season. In 1998, the league expanded to 14 teams with the additions of the University of Findlay, Mercyhurst College, and Westminster College, but would drop back to 13 teams with the departure of St. Francis after the season.

Westminster would depart after the 1999 season, leaving 12 teams. Gannon University was added before the 2004 season, giving the league its current 13-team roster.

After nine years of existence as one of the premier conferences in Division II football, the MIFC merged as part of GLIAC on July 1, 1999. The GLIAC has a earned the reputation as one of the toughest and deepest Conferences in Division II with a strong postseason history. Three GLIAC teams made National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) playoff appearances. Grand Valley State made it to the national semifinals in 1978. Saginaw Valley State made three trips to the NAIA playoffs (1979, 1983, 1984), posting a 2-3 mark. Hillsdale earned five NAIA postseason berths as a member of the GLIAC (1981, 1982, 1985, 1986, 1988), taking home the championship in 1985.

The first team to represent the GLIAC in the Division II playoffs was Northern Michigan in 1987. The Wildcats made the D-II semifinals that season.

Grand Valley State started a three-year postseason run in 1989, though the Lakers failed to get out of the first round. Butler joined GVSU in the D-II playoffs in 1991, marking the first year the league had two teams participate in postseason play. Butler fell to the eventual national champion, Pittsburg State University (Kan.) in the first round. The 1992 Division II playoffs saw the first GLIAC team make it past the opening round in league history. Ferris State posted a first-round win over Edinboro University (Pa.) before falling to the University of New Haven (Conn.) in the quarterfinals. The 1992 season marked the beginning of a five-year playoff run for the Bulldogs, with their best performance coming in 1995 after a national semifinal appearance.

Grand Valley State made its fourth and fifth D-II postseason trips in 1994 and 1998, respectively. Ashland made its first appearance in the playoffs as a member of the GLIAC in 1997. After being shut out of the playoffs in 1999, the GLIAC posted two teams in the 2000 tournament as Northwood and Saginaw Valley State each made their first D-II postseason appearances. The Timberwolves claimed a first-round victory over Indiana University (Pa.) before falling to Bloomsburg University (Pa.) in the quarterfinals.

The 2001 season was historic for the league as two teams made it through the first round of the playoffs. Grand Valley State and Saginaw Valley State each posted opening-round wins and faced each other in the national quarterfinals. The Lakers won a shoot-out in Allendale (Mich.), 33-30, and cruised to a semifinal win over Catawba College (N.C.). GVSU advanced to the championship game before falling to the University North Dakota, 17-14.

The Lakers would redeem themselves in 2002 by claiming the league's first Division II football national championship. Grand Valley State defeated Valdosta State University (Ga.) in the finals, 31-24. GVSU would repeat as national champions in 2003. The Lakers knocked off North Dakota in that championship game, 10-3. Three league teams, GLIAC co-champions Michigan Tech and Northwood, along with Grand Valley State, would earn playoff berths in 2004. GVSU fell in the regional finals to North Dakota, 19-15. The 2005 season saw more postseason success for the GLIAC. GVSU, SVSU, and Northwood each gained postseason entrance. The Lakers and Cardinals battled for the Northwest Region title, but GVSU advanced, 24-17, and went on to defeat NW Missouri State, 21-17, in the Division II title game.

