***Spring Hill College Readies for NCAA Visit***

The Final Year of the Transition from NAIA to NCAA is to be “Graded” in October

 Spring Hill College is nearing completion of the three-year transition process that will change the institution’s athletic platform from NAIA to NCAA.

 The final year of transition, the “Provisional” year, will take place throughout the 2016-2017 academic years, and will test Spring Hill College’s implementation of certain policies necessary for NCAA schools to complete. This Provisional year comes after a do over of the second year of the process. The redo, which took place during the 2015-2016 academic year, allowed for the development of Spring Hill College’s own policy and procedure manual. Athletes voiced their aggravation with the extra year of transition, and were sent an email describing the situation and outlining the process that stood in front of athletics from that point on.

The most visible downside to the extra year of transition is that Spring Hill College athletics are currently excluded from NCAA postseason and tournament play. Assistant Athletic Director and Director of Compliance, Chad Leblanc said the largest reason for the extra year was that “There was just a lot of turnover throughout the school in key compliance positions”. The turnovers took place in the offices of: President of Spring Hill, Director of Compliance, Faculty Athletic Representative, Senior Woman Administrator, and the Registrar. These high profile and important positions were vacated and filled with new members who were new to spring hill, and “that is why the NCAA thought Spring Hill College should repeat that second year” said LeBlanc. The second year was to be used to get the new faculty a firm foundation within the institution, and give them the ability to see how Spring Hill College functioned.

The next step in the process is the NCAA Blueprint Review. LeBlanc described the review as when “NCAA representatives will come to campus, and for two days, essentially audit everything [in my office] and will audit everything in the registrar’s office as well as financial aid and other offices”. The NCAA representatives will also take a look at the academic and medical paperwork of all the student athletes, and look over various things such as institutional and outside scholarships, as well as the expenditures throughout the athletics department.

The most notable takeaway from the transition to NCAA Division II is that once completed, Spring Hill College will be eligible for postseason play and eligible to compete in NCAA tournaments. Other benefits of being a NCAA qualified institution include being eligible for the Student Athlete Assistance Fund. The fund offers schools a pool of money that can be used for student athletes in need. For example, if a student-athlete has a family emergency and cannot personally afford a plane ticket home, the school could reach into the fund and purchase the ticket for the athlete. The same can be done if a student-athlete cannot afford to repair his vehicle if it breaks down. The ability to use small programs that impact student athletes is on the list of positive opportunities once the transition is complete.

The school will be finished with the process of being evaluated after the Blueprint Review in October, and will have until the board reviews in July to make any improvements deemed necessary by the NCAA. The board review takes place in mid July, and reviews various schools that are also transitioning to the NCAA platform. The board evaluates the school’s progress and makes a decision based on the Blueprint review from the year before, and determines whether or not a school is ready to be fully NCAA qualified.

This transition marks a new era for Spring Hill College, and students and faculty are anxious and ready to be finished with the process.