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Task Force To Examine Student Athlete Health, Welfare at Illinois Wesleyan

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Illinois Wesleyan President Richard F. Wilson has appointed a five-member task force to review the University's policies and procedures with regard to the health and welfare of student-athletes in the wake of last month's death of a senior football player.

Doug Schmied, 21, offensive lineman and senior co-captain, died on August 24 during the football team's preseason practices.

"The tragic death of Doug Schmied represents one of the saddest periods in the history of Illinois Wesleyan," Wilson wrote in his letter charging the task force with its work. "I find myself driven to do whatever is possible to ensure we never lose another student athlete in this way."

The task force will be coordinated by Roger Schnaitter, acting provost, and Jeff Frick, acting registrar and faculty representative to the NCAA. Other members will be Dennie Bridges, director of athletics; Kathy Cavins, vice president for student affairs and dean of students; and Kim Nelson-Brown, associate athletic director.

According to Wilson, the task force will be asked to address two matters in separate reports. Schnaitter will coordinate the review of events leading up to Schmied's hospitalization while Frick will coordinate a broader examination of practices and policies.

"The health and welfare of student athletes is of paramount importance to the University, and we must make sure that we are doing everything possible to protect student athletes while they are training, practicing, and competing," Wilson said. "The task force is asked to compare our policies and procedures with best practices at the collegiate level and to make recommendations for change where warranted. The review should be comprehensive and cover all areas where health and safety risks exist or could be imagined."

In its work, the task force will be asked to consult widely not only with athletic administrators and coaches within Illinois Wesleyan but also those at other institutions as well as experts on specific issues.

Wilson has asked that the task force make recommendations on matters that need attention as soon as they are identified so that they can be addressed immediately rather than waiting for the final report to be forwarded to him.

Illinois Wesleyan has 18 varsity sports with almost 400 students involved in intercollegiate competition annually.