

## **Platform launch highlights DIII forum**

**By Jack Copeland**

**The NCAA News**

Division III delegates rolled up their sleeves Friday and responded to a call for ideas on how to implement a newly unveiled strategic-positioning platform.

The platform's formal unveiling featured the premiere of a video portraying the Division III educational and athletics experience and presentations on the process and ideas leading to the platform's creation, during an issues forum that Division III Presidents Council chair Paul Tribble described as "the highlight of our business here in Atlanta."

But the forum's highlight came when delegates rose from roundtable discussions and began suggesting a lengthy list of ideas for using the platform, ranging from creating ways to share the messages it contains to identifying new audiences who might be receptive to learning more about Division III.

Delegates also made clear that the effort to activate the platform has just begun.

"Overall, we're very pleased with it, but there's work to be done," said Presidents Council member Robert Antonucci, president of Fitchburg State College, speaking on behalf of one of 88 roundtable-discussion groups at the forum. "We need to leave here today committed to go back to our campuses, to make sure that we begin to have a dialogue about the platform not just next week but in the year ahead."

The Presidents Council's incoming chair, Jim Harris of Widener University, pledged resources to help in that work, noting that the lion's share of a proposed \$1.2 million expenditure for platform activation will go directly to campuses in the form of \$1,000 annual allocations to purchase materials. Division III also will allocate \$100,000 annually to national activation of the platform.

Delegates suggested many ways in which that support might be put to good use, including through such applications as new media and social networking and by creating materials such as videos and brochures in which institutions can include their own logos and messages alongside depictions of the Division III experience.

But they also offered a reminder of the importance of old-fashioned, face-to-face communication with constituencies ranging from faculty to alumni to community groups – and also student-athletes on campuses.

"For this to fly, the students really have to be involved, because they're the ones who are hosting our prospective student-athletes and the ones who are talking up their involvement," said Elese Lebsack, senior woman administrator at Mills College.

In describing the new platform, Division III Vice President Dan Dutcher emphasized its positioning statement (see below), which he said articulates three key components of the student-

athlete experience – academics, athletics and the opportunity to participate in co- curricular activities.

He also encouraged the membership to adapt the platform – and any resulting tools and materials that may be produced to promote its messages – to their own uses.

“We are a very large and diverse division, and as you might expect, it was difficult to create a document that applies to all 450 member institutions,” he said. “When you use the document to help tell your story as part of the Division III story, it’s OK to customize it and use those components that make the most sense for you.”