

## **Pella Christian Athletic Conference Task Force**

November 15, 2021

Pella Christian established a board-approved athletic conference task force in August of 2021. The purpose of this task force was to evaluate and, as appropriate, recommend alternatives for the future of Pella Christian's participation in a modified or new athletic conference due to the growth of school sizes within the Little Hawkeye Conference. Members included Ryan Agre, Mike Boender, Brad Jungling, Joe Ritzert, Tammi Wight and Dan Branderhorst.

The task force evaluated and analyzed the following options:

- 1) Starting a new conference with area schools considering geography, size, facilities, programs offered, community support and socioeconomic factors
- 2) Joining an existing conference considering the factors listed above
- 3) Remaining in the Little Hawkeye Conference

Task force leaders had conversations with more than 15 schools regarding desirability of either new conference creation or Pella Christian joining their existing conference. In addition to individual conversations, several informal group meetings were held to determine the viability of a new conference. A law firm was also engaged to review IGHSAU and ISHAA rules on conference changes and to determine the Iowa Department of Education's role in the process.

Two other schools showed significant interest in starting a new conference after the completion of several individual and group meetings. However, a critical mass of 7 schools would be necessary to formally begin a new conference. The task force determined that it is not advisable to leave the LHC without having the new conference established. The group also determined that conference independence would be crippling for some of the programs at our school.

The task force also contacted established conferences that meet desired demographics. Each indicated that Pella Christian would not be voted into the conference if approached. Pella Christian could pursue an administrative approach by utilizing the Iowa Department of Education process. This approach would not be collaborative and would likely be met with resistance by schools within the conference selected.

Based on extensive conversations with potential schools and further background work, the task force is recommending the following: Pella Christian should remain in the Little Hawkeye Conference (LHC) for the time being.

It is worth noting that LHC membership does not impact all athletics and athletes. Half our sports programs compete against conference schools on a regular basis. Significant realignment is already taking place in the LHC and within area conferences. More change is expected, which will create opportunities for new or revised conferences in the future.