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North Coast Athletic Conference Special

For Immediate Release

**NORTH COAST ATHLETIC CONFERENCE EXPANDS
TO 10 MEMBERS WITH ADDITION OF HIRAM, WABASH**

December 21, 1998

CLEVELAND -- Hiram College of Hiram, Ohio, and Wabash College of Crawfordsville, Ind., have accepted invitations to join the North Coast Athletic Conference. This action was finalized by a unanimous vote of the NCAC Presidents' Council at its meeting in Columbus on Dec. 17.

The expansion brings North Coast Athletic Conference membership to 10 NCAA Division III institutions spanning the states of Ohio, Indiana and Pennsylvania. Hiram and Wabash join Allegheny College (Meadville, Pa.), Denison University (Granville, Ohio), Earlham College (Richmond, Ind.), Kenyon College (Gambier, Ohio), Oberlin College (Oberlin, Ohio), Ohio Wesleyan University (Delaware, Ohio), Wittenberg University (Springfield, Ohio) and The College of Wooster (Wooster, Ohio).

The NCAC was founded in 1984 and is currently in its 15th year of operation. Allegheny, Denison, Kenyon, Oberlin, Ohio Wesleyan and Wooster are charter members. Earlham and Wittenberg joined the conference in the 1988-89 academic year. Charter member Case Western Reserve University (Cleveland, Ohio) will relinquish NCAC membership and begin participating in the University Athletic Association on a full-time basis next fall.

Hiram and Wabash will compete in the NCAC in all sports except football beginning with the 1999-00 academic year. Competition in football will begin in the fall of 2000.

"We are delighted to welcome both Wabash and Hiram into the NCAC," says Thomas B. Courtice, president of Ohio Wesleyan and the NCAC. "Both are outstanding academic institutions and we are proud to have them share in the many successes of the conference. Each endorses the important ideals of the NCAC and will enrich the conference through their own unique contributions."

Courtice, who is also a member of the 11-person NCAA Division III Presidents' Council, headed a committee of four NCAC presidents that studied expansion and the new members in particular. "As our presidents viewed the collegiate conference trends, both regionally and nationally, it was clear that it was in our best interest to become a larger conference," says NCAC Executive Director Dennis Collins. "Becoming a conference of 10 provides options in team-sport scheduling, which would have become much more difficult with fewer conference members. And with significant changes coming at the NCAA level for Division III championships (automatic qualification requirements), adding Hiram and Wabash secures our position in nearly all NCAA post-season events."

Hiram, founded in 1850, is a coeducational institution with an enrollment of 850. It is classified in the highest level (I) of Baccalaureate (Liberal Arts) Colleges and Universities according to the Carnegie Foundation Report of 1994. The only Ohio schools ranked as such are the NCAC's six other Ohio members and Antioch. Its Phi Beta Kappa chapter was granted in 1971.

Hiram sponsors a broad-based athletics program of 19 varsity sports -- 10 for men (baseball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, soccer, swimming, tennis, indoor track and outdoor track) and nine for women (basketball, cross country, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, indoor track, outdoor track and volleyball). The Terriers have recently been affiliated with the Ohio Athletic Conference (1989-present) and Presidents Athletic Conference (1972-89).

"The North Coast Athletic Conference schools are nationally respected institutions with rich academic and athletic programs," says G. Benjamin Oliver, president of Hiram. "Hiram has had a long and positive relationship with these schools and we look forward to many more years of friendly competition. We believe that we are a good fit for the NCAC and we are eager to contribute to the respect the conference enjoys both in the region and across the nation."

Wabash, founded in 1832, is an all-men's institution with an enrollment of 800. It also is classified in the highest level (I) of Baccalaureate (Liberal Arts) Colleges and Universities -- as are all 10 NCAC schools -- and is a member of the Great Lakes Colleges Association. Its Phi Beta Kappa chapter was granted in 1898.

Wabash sponsors a broad-based athletics program of 10 varsity sports (baseball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, soccer, swimming, tennis, outdoor track and wrestling). The Little Giants have recently been affiliated with the Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference (1998-present) and the Indiana Collegiate Athletic Conference (1987-98).

"We are pleased to become aligned with the outstanding colleges and universities represented in the NCAC, with whom we share so many common academic values," says Andrew T. Ford, president of Wabash. "As we look to the new millennium, we are excited about the opportunities this new conference affiliation will present for the entire Wabash community -- students, faculty and staff, alumni, and friends of the college."

The North Coast Athletic Conference sponsors championship competition in 22 sports -- 11 for men and 11 for women. The 11 women's sports are the most offered by any Division III conference, while the 22 total sports rank sixth among the 88 conferences in all three divisions of the NCAA. Forty-four teams from 20 North Coast sports were represented in NCAA post-season competition during the 1997-98 academic year. Ohio Wesleyan won the Division III men's soccer championship this fall to run the NCAC's national championship count to 34 over 14-plus playing seasons.