But there's one thing he wants to make clear: The NCAA will never become the equivalent of a pro league.

INDIANAPOLIS -- As a growing number of schools play musical chairs with conferences, NCAA President Mark Emmert says he is concerned about the perception that money is driving the decisions and declared "this is not the NFL, the NBA, it's not a business."

Instead, Emmert is urging school presidents to consider factors besides revenue when choosing conference affiliation.

"I think what came across [with realignment] is that all we care about is money and what we can do that is to our advantage," Emmert said in an interview Wednesday with The Associated Press. "Nobody was talking about what this is going to do for student-athletes or intercollegiate athletic programs. It was all about let's make a deal."

Emmert understands the urge, perhaps even the necessity, for schools to do something.

Nobody wants to give up a potentially big payday, and nobody wants to be left without a seat when the music stops playing.

Before leaving the University of Washington to take the NCAA job last October, Emmert participated in the same sort of discussion with his Pac-10 colleagues. Emmert and the others eventually voted to accept two new members, Colorado and Utah, which allowed the conference to add a football title game as another moneymaker.

There's nothing wrong with finding more revenue, Emmert said, as long as it is used properly and doesn't add to the perception that college sports is all about the bottom line.

"We shouldn't say money isn't important," he said. "It is very important to fund intercollegiate athletics because universities can no longer afford to take money out of their regular budgets to subsidize sports. Money's not evil. It's what you do with the money that's evil."

In April 2010, the NCAA signed a $10.8 billion television contract with CBS and Turner to televise the men's basketball tournament. The NCAA says more than 90 percent of that money will go directly back to schools.

Bowl games generate tens of millions of dollars for participating teams, which are then divvied up among all of the teams in the league. And some conferences have started their own television networks, which pump millions into athletic department budgets, and many schools have spent millions more on their facilities in the recruiting race.

That's only part of the equation.

School leaders are debating proposals that would cover an athlete's full cost of attendance, money that would go beyond the cost of tuition, room and board, fees and books. The hope is to lessen the temptation of being influenced by outsiders offering money or benefits that run afoul of NCAA rules.

Conference realignment cropped up last year when the Big 12 lost Nebraska (Big Ten) and Colorado. That prompted other changes and things really took off recently when the ACC announced it was accepting Syracuse and Pittsburgh from the Big East and Texas A&M announced plans to leave the Big 12 for the Southeastern Conference.

Critics fear the changes could lead to a handful of 16-team superconferences that could break away from the NCAA or dictate looser rules to stay competitive.

Though Emmert has no authority to dictate school decisions about conferences, he is trying to redirect the conversation.

"I'm not concerned so much about one university moving from one conference to another or exploring what their options are," Emmert said. "What I want, and what I've been encouraging schools to do, is look at what the end is.

"The end is not having 16 schools in a conference or doing a deal. It's why are you going in that direction and what are the outcomes you are trying to achieve? They better be looking at it to see what it will do for student-athletes. Will it allow us to create more revenue to support these big intercollegiate programs, and whether we're contemplating something that won't create more impositions for our student-athletes."

Emmert has downplayed the significance of conference expansion or contraction, pointing out that leagues have expanded and dissolved before.

But there's one thing he wants to make clear: The NCAA will never become the equivalent of a pro league.

"The past handful of weeks, we have seen people behaving perfectly rationally because they think they'll be left without a chair when the music stops. Or that they'll be in a disadvantageous position or that they'll be left out of a media cycle," he said. "I get that. But at the end of the day, these presidents, these conference commissioners and myself, we have to be able to work together.