

The Drake Group

A Voice for Faculty Charged with Educating College Athletes

IMMEDIATE RELEASE (2 Pages)

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WHAT: "The Drake Group Concerned Over Apparent Northwestern University Fumble"

On October 14, 2005, Dr. Frank Splitt, VP Emeritus, Nortel Networks, a Life Fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, a Fellow of the International Engineering Consortium, and a member of the Drake Group received notice that his title as McCormick Faculty Fellow at the McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science, a title he has held since 1993, was effectively retracted by Northwestern University. Although Northwestern University officials deserve the opportunity to explain their decision to strip Dr. Splitt of his title, the timing of the decision is of particular note. As a vocal advocate for college athletic reform, Dr. Splitt's notification of this decision came only nine days after the publication of a letter to the editor in The Wall Street Journal on October 5th entitled "Who Wants to Tackle Biggest Man on Campus?" Further, Dr. Splitt has been extremely vocal and involved in advancing the work of The Drake Group in lobbying leaders in the United States Congress for the purpose of developing disclosure mechanisms to create more effective accountability in intercollegiate athletics.

Dr. Splitt's letter to the editor, followed other letters under the headline, "Can Colleges Control the NCAA Beast?" published on September 24. These letters were in response to Skip Rozin's Sept. 15, 2005 WSJ *Leisure & Arts* column, "The Brutal Truth About College Sports." Rozin summarized the mess in big-time college sports. He also alluded to The Drake Group's congressional initiative.

Since it is not an unusual occurrence that faculty around the country may be retaliated against for speaking out regarding the need for college sport reform, the retraction of Dr. Splitt's title raises questions about what has happened in this case. Was there a connection between the removal of Dr. Splitt's title and his vocal activism? As a matter of academic freedom and public interest, we believe this question warrants an answer.

Over the past few years Dr. Splitt has worked in areas of higher education that have an underlying need for reform. This work ranged from systemic engineering education reform to the current faculty-driven movement advocating disclosure and the restoration of academic and financial integrity in our institutions of higher learning. He has raised public awareness by writing a number of truth-telling essays and commentaries. In his foreword to Dr. Splitt's essay, "The Faculty-Driven Movement to Reform Big-Time College Sports," Dr. James Duderstadt, President Emeritus, University of Michigan, said: "This sequel joins Splitt's first paper as a must read for those concerned about the future of higher education in America." The editor of *College Athletic Clips* calls him "one of the loudest and bravest voices advocating college athletics reform." Support for Dr. Splitt's work on college-sports reform has come from other former university presidents, such as Harvard's Derek Bok, North Carolina's William Friday, Notre Dame's Rev. Theodore Hesburgh, and Northern Arizona's Clara Lovett. Support has also come from former provosts, Tuft's Sol Gittleman and Drake's Jon Ericson, as well as from many other academic notables.

Dr. Splitt said, "Personally, even more important than high-level support, is the support that I have received from embattled faculty across the land and from the victims of violence by college athletes. Faculty members, deans, provosts, and even presidents, have been, and still are, subjected to badgering. Faculty are pressured to change grades, approve "empty" courses for credit, overlook infractions, and other forms of academic corruption, to keep college athletes eligible to play and to cover up unethical conduct. Presidents are pressured to approve costly football and basketball palaces, athletic scholarships, exorbitant coaches' salaries, professional-class training facilities, eligibility centers, and more. They are then under pressure to approve

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extortion-like seat taxes, an extension of the football season by the addition of a 12th game, and other revenue-enhancing mechanisms to help service the incurred debt. The victims of brutal assaults at the hands of athletes have also been the "victims" of cover-ups by colleges and universities across the country as well as 'blame-the-victim' based defense strategies on behalf of the athletes."

Dr. B. David Ridpath, Executive Director of The Drake Group said, "I suspect that forces well beyond Northwestern may have been behind this action." If in fact the loss of Dr. Splitt's title was retaliation for his willingness to address issues pertaining to corruption in college sport, his loss can be added to a long litany of losses and trauma suffered by others in academe -- including the loss of jobs, brutal assaults, and death threats. The length of the litany demonstrates the stranglehold that the college-sports entertainment business holds over our institutions of higher learning, even Northwestern. Barbara Tuchman once said: "Telling the truth about a given condition is absolutely requisite to any possibility of reforming it. What she didn't say was that telling the truth about college sports and its impact on higher education has dire consequences, just ask the victims."

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The mission of [The Drake Group](http://www.thedrakegroup.org) (TDG) is to help faculty and staff defend academic integrity in the face of the burgeoning college sport industry. The Drake Group's national network of college faculty, staff, and concerned individuals lobby aggressively for proposals that ensure quality education for college athletes, supports faculty whose job security is threatened for defending academic standards, and disseminates information on current issues and controversies in sport and higher education. The Drake Group seeks to form coalitions with other groups that share its mission and goals.

www.thedrakegroup.org