

The Drake Group Proposals

The Drake Group (TDG) urges Faculty Senates and other bodies concerned with academic the ever-widening gap between athletics and education. Our approach is in three phases. TDG firmly believes that enacting the proposals listed below will dramatically improve the academic integrity of college campuses and return control of the classroom back to the faculty:

Phase I: Academic Transparency

Ensure that universities provide accountability of trustees, administrators and faculty by public transparency of such things as a student's academic major, academic advisor, courses listed by academic major, general education requirements, electives, course grade point average (GPA) and instructor—without revealing the names of individual students. In addition, TDG requests that average SAT and ACT scores for revenue producing sports teams be reported along with those of athletes in non-revenue sports, and scholarship students in the symphony orchestra, band, and other extra-curricular activities. Similar comparisons should be made regarding independent studies taken, grade changes by professors, and classes missed because of extracurricular demands.

Rationale: The goal of TDG with regard to academic transparency is to seek to ensure that all college athletes are afforded the full and equal opportunity to earn an education. Athletes devote long hours to their sport—up to 44 hours a week in a sport like football—and are often admitted to college by criteria lower than the average for the student body as evidenced by empirical studies done by the Knight Commission and even the NCAA¹. The Drake Group simply wants to ensure that athletes are afforded the opportunity to earn a college education as promised to them when they accept an academic scholarship and/or agree to participate on a team². Academic transparency is the first step toward creating an atmosphere on college campuses that encourages personal and intellectual growth for all students, and demands excellence and professional integrity from all faculty charged with teaching.

We call on colleges and universities to disclose the courses, including the name of the instructor and course GPA of members of student groups such as athletic teams, and other cohort groups, sufficient in number to protect the privacy of individual students and that which is allowable under FERPA since individuals will not be identified. The format will list the courses by grade received. Public disclosure ensures accountability by Governing Boards, Presidents, Academic Administrators and faculty for the academic integrity of the institution. Transparency, then, is directed at institutional, not student behavior, and provides for a necessary condition to address allegations of academic impropriety in college athletics.

Phase II: Academic Priority

Require students to maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0 each semester to continue participation in intercollegiate athletics.

Rationale: Students whose cumulative grade point average falls below 2.0 in any given semester need to give immediate attention to academic performance. Some will argue that this is an unfair standard because the standard for student academic eligibility on some campuses may be less than a cumulative 2.0 GPA in a specified semester. Given the often low graduation rates for athletes, most notably in the revenue-producing sports, and the acknowledged stressors on the lives of athletes, this measure would provide a safety net for those athletes who are most academically at risk.

Make the location and control of academic counseling and support services for athletes the same as for all students.

Rationale: The NCAA's stated basic purpose is to maintain intercollegiate athletics as an integral part of the

educational program and the athlete as an integral part of the student body. This proposal further reinforces the notion that athletes are students and should be integrated into the general student body. Separate athletic counseling centers have been spawned by the separation and control of the athlete—a philosophy TDG rejects. Academic counseling should be rooted in a genuine concern for assisting athletes in the pursuit of their education, not a short-sighted goal of keeping them athletically eligible. This goal cannot be accomplished in a setting that is compromised by pressure to produce winning athletic teams. Faculty Senates can and should act to ensure equal access to education for all students.

Establish university policies that will ensure that athletic contests and practices do not conflict with scheduled classes.

Rationale: To protect the athletes' right to have equal access to educational opportunities, faculty need to enforce the policy that class attendance should take priority over athletic participation. Whenever there are scheduling conflicts between sports and course requirements, faculty members and administrative staff members, have a professional responsibility to enforce attendance policies that support quality instruction. In some instances, the problem arises because faculty, rather than athletic personnel, does not demand that students attend class. Faculty Senates can, and should, require faculty to establish attendance policies that treat all students equally.

Phase III: Academic-Based Participation

Replace one-year renewable scholarships with need-based financial aid (or) with multi-year athletic scholarships that extend to graduation (five year maximum).

Rationale: As long as coaches and athletics directors use factors related to athletics to determine whether financial aid will be renewed, athletes are under considerable pressure to make sports their main priority during enrollment. This highlights the inherent hypocrisy in the term "athletic scholarship," a term that should relate to educational opportunities. To ensure that education remains the priority, renewal of athletic scholarships should be unrelated to athletic performance or athletic scholarships themselves replaced with educational grants awarded on the basis of financial need. In either case, universities should be committed to athletes as students whose value to the university exceeds their role in athletics. The Big Ten Conference, Knight Foundation, and several coaches including Dean Smith, Terry Holland, Bill Curry, and John Wooden have listed the creation of multi-year scholarships among possible reform measures they could support.

Require one year in residency before an athlete can participate in intercollegiate sport. This rule would apply to transfer students as well as to first year students.

Rationale: Keeping first year students and transfer students out of varsity competition until they have completed one year of residency would assist them in transitioning into to college life without added pressure and time commitment inherent in athletic participation. A one-year residency rule would also discourage coaches from recruiting high school and junior college players as a quick fix to turn around a losing program. Many coaches, including Dean Smith, Terry Holland, Bill Curry, and John Wooden have listed a return to a one-year residency requirement among possible reform measures they could support.

¹ See Knight Commission publications, "Keeping Faith with the Student Athlete: A New Model for Intercollegiate Athletics (1991) and A Call to Action: Reconnecting College Sports and Higher Education (2001).

² "Potuto and O'Hanlon's (2006) study, commissioned by the NCAA, entitled "National Study of Student Athletes Regarding Their Experiences as College Students," found that 65% of student-athletes believe that their GPA would be higher if they did not participate in a varsity sport (p. 29)." Furthermore, when asked to respond to the statement, "I view myself more as an athlete than as a student" 62% of athletes responded that they strongly agreed, agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement (p. 35).