

Faculty Action at UC-Berkeley Warrants Emulation

Clips Guest Commentary

Members of the UC-Berkeley Faculty Senate pave a path for other Faculty Senates to follow.

By Frank G. Splitt, The Drake Group, 11-03-09

Kudos to Doug Lederman for his informative story calling attention to the planned action of members of the UC-Berkeley Faculty Senate re: their proposed resolution on intercollegiate athletics.^{1,2} Reference to Lederman's piece will show that it prompted a number of wide-ranging comments. As I stated in my own comment:

"Members of the UC-Berkeley Faculty Senate did an excellent job in formulating their "Resolution on Intercollegiate Athletics at UC Berkeley." These members are proving to be all too rare exceptions to what I have perceived to be a general rule in college sports reform: Untenured faculty are too busy getting tenure to work for reform, while tenured faculty are too busy doing research and/or just don't want to get involved in controversial nonacademic affairs.

My letter to the editor (appended³) made the above point and several others, apparently only too well. In a blatant act of retaliation, my honorary position as a McCormick Faculty Fellow was declared invalid a few days after its publication in the October 5, 2005, issue of *The Wall Street Journal*.

Fear of career-impacting retaliation has likely been a major deterrent to faculty-driven reform. Retaliation could come not only from school officials, alumni, athletics-friendly faculty and students, but most assuredly via the influence of the biggest men and women on campus—wealthy, sports-promoting, members of the school's governing board.

To be sure, college sports reform is not a popular subject with school and government officials, as well as the media, or, for that matter, with the American public that has an apparently insatiable appetite for 24/7 sports entertainment.

Reform will take a concerted effort and strength in numbers. As Alice Agogino, one the authors of the UC Berkeley faculty resolution that will be brought to a vote on November 5, has said: "We have to stop the Intercollegiate Athletics arms race and we can only do this together." To this end, the national steering committee for the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) can ask its members to consider using the UC-Berkeley Resolution as a template for a similar resolution by their faculty senates and report their progress at COIA 's national meeting this coming January."

The thought behind this comment was that this is an opportune time to not only take advantage of the work done by the UC-Berkeley faculty, but also to exploit the fact that many of America's colleges and universities are now beginning to recognize that their presidents are apparently powerless to curtail out-of-control spending by their athletic departments.^{4,5}

The faculty senates should feel free to tailor the UC-Berkeley resolution to fit the circumstances at their schools. In a personal communication, COIA Co-chair Nathan Tublitz suggested that consideration should be given to incorporating the following wording from COIA's 2007 white paper.⁶

1) The Athletic Department's budgets, revenues and expenditures should be transparent and aligned with the mission, goals and values of the institution. The University President should take the lead to ensure that fiscal reports, including dash board indicators as listed in the 2006 NCAA Presidential Task Force report, are issued annually and made available to the campus faculty governance body. The President should work closely with faculty leaders, existing faculty committees, and athletic department personnel to achieve these goals (Proposal 4.1)

2) The overall annual growth rate in the Athletic Department's operating expenditures should be no greater than the overall annual growth rate in the university's operating expenditures. (Proposal 4.2)

3) The athletic department budget should be integrated into the university general budget process where feasible. The proposed athletic department budget should be evaluated by the same process as the budget for academic units. (Proposal 4.3)

There have been expressed desires to support the emulation of this faculty-driven effort. Kadie Otto, the president of The Drake Group has said: "We, of The Drake Group, are certainly in agreement with the comments that have gone back and forth via recent emails. I really think that if we have a "united call to action" (both COIA and TDG) we will be more effective." Alice Agogino, Chair of the UC-Berkeley Academic Senate the year it agreed to join COIA added: "I think I can speak for members of the Resolution Committee to say that we would be delighted to help out in similar efforts on other campuses."

Working together can make college sports reform happen.

AFTERWORD

"We won the vote yesterday!", said Alice Agogino, one of the authors of the UC-Berkeley faculty resolution on intercollegiate athletics. The resolution was brought to a vote by the university's Faculty Senate on Thursday, November 5, 2009. It carried 91-to-68.

Regardless of the positive outcome of the vote, the framers of the resolution are to be commended for doing a significant, breakthrough service by their example—not only making college and university faculty across America aware of the brutal truth about intercollegiate athletics, but also showing how something can be done about the issues that surround it.

November 6, 2009

NOTES

1. Lederman, Doug, "Bad Time for Sports Overspending," *Inside Higher Ed*, <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/10/30/ucsports>, October 30, 2009.

2. Agogino, Alice, et al, "Resolution on Intercollegiate Athletics at UC Berkeley," http://academic-senate.berkeley.edu/meetings/documents/Intercollegiate_Athletics_resolution.pdf

3. Splitt, Frank G., "Who Wants to Tackle Biggest Man on Campus?," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 5, 2005. The text of this letter follows:

The Sept. 24, (2005) Letters to the Editor in response to Skip Rozin's superb Sept. 15, Leisure & Arts column, "The Brutal Truth About College Sports," were aptly headlined, "Can Colleges Control the NCAA Beast?" The answer, plain and simple, is no. Here's why and what the Drake Group is doing about it.

Big-time (NCAA Div I-A) university and college presidents cannot advocate true reform without risking termination – cultivated by a storm of protest about fiscal irresponsibility and assorted emotional arguments by trustees/regents, boosters, alumni, and rabid fans. Untenured faculty are too busy getting tenure to work for reform, while tenured faculty are too busy doing research and/or just don't want to get involved in controversial nonacademic affairs.

With the NCAA's apparently successful co-option of the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, there is no one charged with anything resembling responsibility for controlling the billion-dollar beast that has become expert at resisting true reform, exploited college athletes, provided weak rules enforcement, shown a lack of concern with regard to violence by college athletes and the connection of violence to the use of performance enhancing drugs, and shrouded its nefarious conduct in a veil of secrecy – protected by the Buckley Amendment to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. And in the midst of all this the NCAA maintains a nonprofit IRS status as an institution of higher education

Also, America's love affair with sports, its high tolerance for misbehavior by its heroes, and really big money, has helped bring us today's horrific mess in big-time, college sports ... a mess characterized by seemingly unrestrained growth in spending with a corresponding desperate need for additional revenues.

Over the past two years, members of the Drake Group [the organization's Web site states that its "mission is to help faculty and staff defend academic integrity in the face of the burgeoning college sport industry"] have been working to provide the Group's position on the above issues for easy availability to all concerned parties – especially to members of Congress where the Group is working a quid pro quo initiative on disclosure and the restoration of academic and financial integrity in our institutions of higher learning.

4. _____, "On Reforming College Sports and Curbing Profligate Spending,"
http://thedrakegroup.org/Splitt_On_Reforming.pdf, October 29, 2009.

5. _____, "Don't Give Up on College Sports Reform,"
http://www.thedrakegroup.org/Splitt_Dont_Give_Up.pdf , September 23, 2009.

6. Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics, "Framing the Future: Reforming Intercollegiate Athletics,"
<http://coia.comm.psu.edu/FTF/FTFtext&appendix.htm>, June 15, 2007.