

The Drake Group

A Voice for Faculty Charged with Educating College Athletes

www.thedrakegroup.org

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THE DRAKE GROUP RESPONDS TO THE RELEASE OF *The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) White Paper entitled Framing the Future: Reforming Intercollegiate Athletics*

The Drake Group, a consortium of faculty, staff, and others concerned about academic integrity in college sports commends the COIA, Nathan Tublitz, Virginia Shepherd the steering committee with constructing a well thought out and detailed white paper (<http://www.neuro.uoregon.edu/%7Etublitz/COIA/FTF/FTFtext&appendix.htm>). TDG fully supports the efforts of the COIA in the reform movement. This document is an excellent template for needed reform, and we are delighted to see many TDG proposals included in the COIA plan. The COIA is dead on correct when it states that the faculty is the key and responsible for academic integrity on our campuses along with the critical step of aligning athletics with the university mission. Specifically the call for “no academic programs or majors designed specifically for athletes or created for the purpose of allowing athletes to maintain their eligibility.” This is a lynchpin proposal and is in line with TDG’s core proposal of academic disclosure. TDG’s position remains and will remain, without full transparency regarding courses, GPA, majors, and faculty—there simply cannot be true reform. Validation of this point by the COIA is important as the faculty continues to reclaim its role as guardians of the curriculum on our campuses.

There are areas in the white paper that do not go far enough, such as not calling for a return to freshman ineligibility, but the COIA addresses important points that TDG supports such as changes to athletic scholarships, academic advising for athletes, practices and scheduling, and most important—better faculty oversight of the enterprise on each individual campus. TDG supports the proposal of establishing Campus Athletic Boards that are more than just advisory in nature. Having tenured faculty in a position to actually establish and influence policy, without the threat of retaliation, bodes well for better faculty involvement and oversight. If established however, these boards must have the ability and authority to check and balance the athletic department and the president with regard to athletic issues—just as the faculty senate does. Clearly, many Faculty Athletics Representatives (FAR’s) have either abandoned the established mission and fell in with the athletic machine, or he/she does not care. A faculty athletics board may mitigate some of these issues and provide a needed check for academic integrity.

It is important to note that for these common sense and effective proposals to be implemented, they must be approved through an NCAA governance process that has been unkind to issues regarding academic integrity and reform. It is important for the COIA to continue to lead this fight through the NCAA system. TDG has serious reservations that the NCAA, the presidents, and Dr. Myles Brand are serious about enacting these proposals forwarded by the COIA. With regard to previous COIA proposals, Brand has stated—instead of leading the reform effort, that he liked the proposals but felt the membership “would not go for it.” This kind of rhetoric is damaging in that Brand has shown a history of talking big change, but relenting in the end to satisfy the forces that currently guide intercollegiate athletic policy. Brand and the NCAA presidents can currently do the right thing and push the COIA reforms through while steadfastly supporting them, instead of letting them die in the NCAA governance process as so many other well meaning reforms in the past.

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TDG supports the intent of the content in the white paper but we are currently unconvinced the NCAA governance system as is will make these needed changes. If this prediction holds true, and we hope it does not, then the NCAA will have missed the last best chance to reform itself and garner any credibility in the reform effort. If this does indeed happen, the only remaining alternative is to enact the TDG seven-point plan, specifically academic disclosure, via government intervention with a full examination of the NCAA's tax exempt status. No disclosure: No reform