

Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics

Can the Faculty Reform Intercollegiate Athletics? A Past, Present, and Future Perspective

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The subject of academic corruption in intercollegiate athletics has been of significant concern and empirical inquiry for over 100 years. There are many character and ethical issues that pervade intercollegiate athletics such as academic fraud, cheating in recruiting, sense of entitlements, illegal inducements from boosters, and academic fraud. The author makes an argument that many of the problems relating to the culture of college sports and character development cannot be repaired without changing the culture with regard to academics and academic integrity. The faculty driven movement toward academic integrity in college sports is explored, along with the efforts of outside groups, such as The Drake Group and the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (who have emerged as the leading faculty driven reform movements), along with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in the area of reform. Reform plans by these groups are juxtaposed with historical considerations; along with the relationship academic integrity has to reclaiming the morals and character of college athletics.

Keywords: Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics, The Drake Group

A few years ago, while a doctoral student at West Virginia University, I was preparing for the time-honored and arduous task of defending my doctoral dissertation entitled, *NCAA Division I Student Athlete Characteristics as Indicators of Academic Achievement and Graduation*. I desperately wanted to make a splash and impression on my austere five-person committee with a great opening vignette. I sought a vignette that would be humorous, dazzle, set the mood (and ostensibly relax) the committee, yet still be directly on point regarding the empirical issues I wanted to present. A few weeks before my defense, I found an editorial written by Joe Wyatt in August 13, 1999 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Wyatt, then President of Vanderbilt University, wrote an excellent opinion editorial prophetically titled “*Our Moral Duty to Clean up College Athletics*.” His opening paragraph, which I used as the opening

vignette, summed up the moral and ethical struggle between commercialized intercollegiate athletics and higher education perfectly, albeit using an unrelated analogy. It stated:

"Many years ago, a now-unknown Congressman sent the following response to a constituent who had asked, 'Where do you stand on whiskey?' 'If you mean the Devil's brew, the poison scourge, the bloody monster that defies innocence, dethrones reason, and topples men and women from the pinnacles of righteous, gracious living into the bottomless pit of degradation and despair, then certainly I am against it with all my power,' the politician wrote. 'But,' he continued, 'if you mean the drink that enables a man to magnify his joy and happiness and to forget life's heartbreaks and sorrows; if you mean the drink that pours into our treasuries untold millions of dollars, which are used to care for our little crippled children, our aged and infirm, to build highways and schools, then certainly I am in favor of it.'"
So, too, with collegiate athletics (Wyatt, 1999, p. A42).

Yes, so it is with college athletics indeed, not just the elite commercialized athletics programs found at the NCAA Division I level. The intoxicating lure of winning, money, and degradation of higher education academic standards even permeates the Division II and III levels as chronicled in the 2001 groundbreaking book, *The Game of Life*, by Schulman and Bowen, and later in the outstanding 2003 follow-up *Reclaiming the Game* by Bowen and Levin.

Ultimately the integrity of college sports must start at its stated purpose-education of the participants. The dearth of integrity in college sports has unfortunately also started at the premise of education. Sadly, even those who are guardians of the curriculum-the faculty- are as complicit as anyone in the degradation of academic integrity on campuses of higher learning in America. It is not only the faculty, but the faculty can and should be the lynchpin to actually reform the current system. However, it is not just the faculty who are at fault. This is also a "family fight" between all university constituencies including presidents, donors, faculty, staff, athletes, and fans. It is a fight to bring academic integrity back to intercollegiate athletics, but it must be led by the faculty. The question is can it be done, and what has been done, if anything to date, to change the system?

Intercollegiate athletics have been ingrained in the culture of American higher education for almost 160 years, and there is evidence of inter and intra campus athletic "events" going back to the 1600's in Europe (Falla, 1981). In short, the competition and desire to have intercollegiate athletics as part of American higher education is likely to stay entrenched in our society. With this long standing relationship, there have been problems; Problems that have plagued the enterprise since its inception. It is not new to intercollegiate athletics to have academic fraud, pay for play scandals, overzealous booster involvement, and athletes enrolled in school with little desire or motivation to focus on academic and social development (Falla: Ridpath, 2002). Historically, the challenges are largely the same and unchanged: How exactly to manage and/or reform the system, and who should lead the effort, has undergone several different iterations for over a century. The reform question has been studied by the government, non-government organizations, faculty led efforts, and even private foundations (Staurowsky, 2005). There exists many well-thought out suggestions and proposals, but the growth of intercollegiate athletics, most notably at the NCAA Division I level, continues to distance itself from the educational

mission of institutions of higher learning. There are many issues to address in the reform effort from paying players; athlete insurance benefits; coaches' salaries; rules and enforcement; budgetary items, and academics and eligibility. Focusing on one area, or many areas, by reform minded groups has been the one constant, but there has not been one clear effort in any one reform proposal area by a specific group until the beginning of the 21st century.

There is little doubt that college athletics can aid in the development of one's character—positively and/or negatively ("The Crisis," 1990; Gerdy, 2002; Ridpath, 2002). There are numerous positive attributes of using athletics to augment and provide an impetus to gain an education, improved physical fitness, learning teamwork and problem solving skills (Gerdy; Ridpath; Sperber, 1990; Svare, 2004; Zimbalist, 1999). Sadly, athletes can also develop the latter negative characteristics through feelings of entitlement, dearth of academic rigor, hero worship, money and revenue generation, and an insatiable win at all costs attitude (Gerdy; Ridpath; Sperber; Svare; Splitt, 2006; Zimbalist). Consequently, the educational and character development of a college athlete is also potentially affected in a negative way via intercollegiate athletic participation by scenarios like academic clustering into certain majors, eligibility maintenance, and yes—even friendly faculty who are willing to look the other way and perpetuate the fraud of the current system (Glier & Thamel, 2006). These negatives often outweigh the positives and can dramatically affect academic integrity at any institution sponsoring intercollegiate athletics.

The Program

The problems and issues in intercollegiate athletics are well-documented in several mediums, and even on the silver screen. In the early nineties there was a movie entitled, "The Program" starring James Caan and Halle Berry. This movie exposed many of the hypocritical aforementioned character and academic issues in intercollegiate athletics that have absolutely nothing to do with higher education, but have everything to do with fielding a competitive and economically successful football team. While this point is crystal clear in the movie, in reality the majority of institutions, and even the faculty, try to perpetuate a façade that an NCAA Division I athletic program is really part of the educational process and not mutually exclusive (Svare, 2004).

In "The Program," Caan portrays a head football coach of a fictional big time university called Eastern State University (ESU). ESU served as a great composite university that could "fit" on almost any campus in America. Caan, as Coach Winters, obviously is more concerned with winning than anything else, but still he battles in his mind the almost daily ethical, character, and academic dilemmas (e.g. eligibility, recruiting, and keeping his kids out of trouble) of high profile athletics in a higher education setting.

While the rest of the acting in the movie fell dramatically short of Caan's brilliant and realistic portrayal of a tortured big-time football coach driven by winning and money all the while knowing what he is doing is morally corrupt, it still is a very true to life film of what is going on behind the scenes in most intercollegiate athletic programs. From this writer's perspective, the best and most realistic scene in the movie shows Coach Winters sitting in at a student conduct hearing regarding the reinstatement of one of his players who had clearly

committed academic dishonesty and cheated on a test. Winter's face is tortured as he deals with the ethical dilemma of vouching for the character of an athlete who clearly cheated on a test, but who he also needs to play to enhance the chances to win. The daily conflict of big time college athletic success squares off against academia right in living color on the big screen. This is arguably similar to what actually goes on at institutions of higher learning on a daily basis when the discussion turns to college athletics. In this meeting, a dissenting academician in the judiciary hearing mentions that the athletic department, specifically the larger than life football program, is draining money from the academic mission of the university and not truly educating the athletes. Eventually the faculty member blurts out, "this is not a football vocational school!!" To which Caan replies, "That is all well and good sir, but when is the last time you've seen 80,000 people show up to watch a chemistry experiment" (*The Program*, 1993).

It is Academics-Period!!

Like the movie and results from empirical research, academic v. athletic issues on campus is a long time battle that currently is, quite frankly, a daily rout for commercialized athletics and the faculty for the most part has sat on the bench. Far too often athletics has become the proverbial tail wagging the dog, and now even academic decisions, such as reducing admission standards for athletes, creation of "jock" curriculums, special academic favors for athletes, are influenced by the power, money, and over commercialization of big-time intercollegiate sport. (McMillen, 1990; Glier & Thamel, 2006; Splitt, 2006). Acquiescing on issues like this give many athletes and coaches a sense of entitlement and feelings they can do anything, however wrong, and get away with it (Svare, 2004).

The cynical view of commercialized college sport by many, including in those of us in academe, is that the system and problems will never change and become true to the real mission of higher education due to the popularity of the games and tremendous amount of money involved (Duderstadt, 2000; Roberts, 2007; "A Call to Action," 2001). It is difficult to not take that stance given the power of high profile coaches whose salaries often are triple, quadruple, or more than that of a university president and more often than not, that of a Distinguished Professor, scholar, or researcher (Duderstadt; Splitt, 2006; Zimbalist, 2001; "A Call to Action"). It is not difficult to take a self-defeating stance when university governing boards are filled with major benefactors who have a huge interest and potential political and/or monetary stake in the success of university athletic teams. It is not difficult to take this stance when many of the players, specifically in football and men's basketball are merely used for their entertainment and economic value, rather than focusing on their intellectual and life skill development. It is not difficult to think this way when many people acquiesce to the seductive power and money of intercollegiate athletics as a student, booster, or fan. It leaves even the most motivated reformer wondering if the brakes can ever be put on and college sport return to some semblance of sanity (Duderstadt; Splitt; Svare, 2004).

Good people who work on campuses with values are constantly having their character, core values, and ethics challenged by morally corrupt academic practices that drive the commercialized college sport winning and money train. Many daily practices at many institutions, usually forced upon the administration by powerful coaches and boosters, challenge

the most morally centered individual. These challenges include things such as reduced or non-existent admission standards for athletes, development of costly athletic academic centers primarily used for eligibility maintenance rather than actual advisement and tutoring of athletes, and the special treatment that athletes receive in their communities whether from local merchants, or local law enforcement (Duderstadt; Splitt). Consequently, people who work on college campuses and in athletic departments, such as coaches, administrators, and university presidents, find themselves practicing the same situational morality like Coach Winters in “*The Program*,” just to ensure their athletic program satisfies an insatiable appetite for winning and success, lest they find themselves without a job including those who work in intercollegiate athletics, are convinced that most involved in college athletics want to do the right thing, but it is the system that pushes one toward a culture of winning and revenue generation rather than academic and social development. (Terry Holland, personal communication, November 10, 2007).

At the core of student, athlete, and even coach character development, is academics, education, and graduation. Intercollegiate athletics can have a part in this development if kept in the proper perspective. If academic corruption is minimized and even eliminated, it will greatly assist those involved in college sports toward positive character development rather than negative. *How to develop academic integrity* in college sports is a complicated question, but despite the faculty sitting on the sidelines for several years, there is hope there can be a change. There have been several faculty driven movements over the course of intercollegiate sports history that have presented an opportunity to correct academic integrity issues and finally bring forth that moral duty that Wyatt (1999) speaks of in his vignette used at the beginning of this manuscript. It is encouraging to see, albeit small, movements by the faculty to reclaim its role as guardians of the curriculum. To see how these current faculty driven movements have evolved up to the present day, a brief history of college athletics and other reform movements is helpful.

History of Intercollegiate Athletic Reform

The history of college athletics is laced with several efforts to reform itself over the past 100 years intended to align itself with the academic mission of higher education. Some of the most notable efforts at reform are the 1929 Carnegie Report; the 1949 NCAA Sanity Code; the American Council on Education Report (ACE) in 1972; and The Reports of the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics in 1992, 2001, and 2003 (Falla, 1981; Gerdy, 2002; Ridpath, 2002; Staurowsky, 2005). These efforts are currently ongoing, but overall the efforts have failed to change anything substantial to curb the commercialism and academic problems faced everyday in college sport. Still, there is optimism that one-day true academic reform may actually happen and intercollegiate athletics and academia can exist in a higher education setting (Gerdy).

These marginally successful efforts have created mostly ineffective and obscure rules and regulations, several other independent reports, and internal National Collegiate Athletic Association reviews, in which the language seems unchanged from 1929 to the present day (Gerdy, 2002; Ridpath, 2002; Sperber, 1990; Svare, 2004; Zimbalist, 1999). One can examine the Reports of the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics from 1989, 2001, and 2003,

and directly compare it to the 1929 Carnegie Report and read about the same exact issues still occurring in college sport (Ridpath) such as extra benefits for athletes, academic fraud, impermissible involvement by boosters, and recruiting violations.

The failure, or at the very least-the inaction and inability, of past reform efforts make it easy to deduce that nothing will change in the big money world of “big time” college athletics. This is especially noteworthy when reports written 75 years apart are essentially addressing and decrying the same academic topics (“A Call to Action”; Gerdy, 2002; Ridpath, 2002). Several groups and organizations have spent considerable time and money to rediscover the same problems for over 100 years, yet the system is still fundamentally unchanged and arguably worse now than it ever has been.

How the Faculty can Bring Academic Integrity to College Sport

A recent rash of intercollegiate athletic academic scandals involving high profile coaches since 2002 at institutions like Auburn University, St. Bonaventure, Marshall University, Baylor, Colorado, and Kansas have rallied numerous people and groups to finally intensify the academic reform effort. This includes, most notably, the faculty after several years of virtual inaction (Glier & Thamel, 2006). According to Staurowsky (2005), several faculty driven groups emerged during the first century of intercollegiate athletics to tackle academic and other reform issues, but during the past decade, two faculty driven groups, *The Drake Group* and *The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics* (COIA), have consistently taken the lead in formulating a strategic, and different plan(s) to finally reform intercollegiate athletics and bring integrity to a process that desperately needs it.¹ The effort of these two groups has been widely publicized and welcomed by many diverse groups, such as the national media and other education reformers, that it gives pause to think that maybe—just maybe, this time reform will work since it is the faculty pushing the effort. However, even within these two groups there are disagreements on how to best achieve reform. Reform itself has been mostly a failure over the past 100 years because there has been little agreement on how to accomplish it, even though it seems almost everyone involved claims they want reform to happen (Splitt, 2002; 2004).

The two groups may have a similar vision, but the goals and concepts are vastly different. The two groups do work together on occasion and share some common ground, but there is one glaring distinction and point of disagreement that may never be rectified, and that is how, or to even try, to work with the primary governing body of intercollegiate athletics, the *National Collegiate Athletic Association* (NCAA). The NCAA is an organization itself that seems much more concerned with television and advertising revenues rather than educating the athletes who perform in the athletic contests, and generate revenue that is so important (Splitt, 2004). Access to a true education and life skill development appears to be lost in the big money world and thirst

¹ In a presentation at the North American Society of Sociology and Sport in Greensboro, NC (2005, November), Staurowsky detailed six faculty reform minded groups that emerged as leaders in the reform effort over the past century. These groups included The Drake Group (2000); Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (2002); Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) (2003); College Sports Project (2004); Faculty Athletic Representative Association (FARA); and the NCAA.

for winning we currently live in. The Drake Group and COIA are working hard to abate this reality, but they are up against powerful forces that want to maintain the status quo and popular opinion that does not want the popularity of college sports in America to be diminished (Ridpath, 2005).

The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics

The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) is primarily geared toward having faculty senates agreeing with the COIA proposals and then working with the NCAA to have the platform approved through the NCAA governance and legislative process. Conversely, The Drake Group's core issue is academic responsibility and integrity by faculty at their respective institutions with backing and approval from the faculty senate. According to its website, COIA was originally formed in 2002 as an email network of faculty leaders from over 50 Division I-A schools. During the 2003-04 academic year, COIA began a transition to a coalition of faculty senates, welcoming membership from all Division IA schools. It seeks to become a faculty voice in the national debate over the future of college sports. Over 50 faculty senates have joined COIA, which in essence means publicly giving approval to its charter and goals. The COIA works with the American Association of University Professors, the Association of Governing Boards (a national organization representing college and university trustees), the NCAA, and other groups to promote serious and comprehensive reform of intercollegiate sports; its goal is to preserve and enhance the contributions athletics can make to academic life by addressing longstanding problems in college sports that undermine those contributions. The goals and proposals of COIA are detailed in its' charter and accessible on it website at <http://www.neuro.uoregon.edu/~tublitz/COIA/index.html>

The main points that COIA initially established as the main framework for reform were Academic Integrity, Athlete Welfare, Governance, Finances, and Over Commercialization. The specific proposals and original charter of COIA is as follows:

Academic Integrity. Colleges should admit only students with realistic prospects of graduation. Admissions practices should confirm that high schools must prepare athletes to meet such standards. Continuing eligibility standards should ensure that only academically engaged students compete in athletics. Faculty must take responsibility to ensure academic integrity in all programs. Athletics advisors must be closely integrated with academic advising to ensure prioritization of academic goals and integrity.

Athlete Welfare. The design and enforcement of limits on athlete participation in non-academic activities must be improved; assessment of coaches must reflect commitment to athletes' academic opportunities. Optimal season schedules for each sport should be designed and adopted. The terms and bases of scholarships should be reexamined so as to support student academics, and athletes should be fully integrated into campus life.

Governance. Shared oversight of athletics between governing boards, administrations, and faculty should involve clear communication and complementary responsibilities. Best-practice designs for the interaction of faculty athletics representatives, campus athletics committees, and faculty governance should be designed nationally, and adapted locally. Uniform reporting standards for athletics budgets should be established, to provide more financial transparency. Stable athletics conferences should support the linkage of athletics and academics, and become the basis for intercollegiate relationships beyond athletics competitions and finances.

Finances. The link between winning and financial solvency undermines the values of college sports and contributes to the athletics arms race. Broadened revenue sharing, and limits on budgets and capital expenditures should be implemented. Amateur goals appropriate to each sport should determine standards of expectations. Cost cutting in the areas of scholarships, squad size, season length, and recruitment should be explored.

Over-commercialization. Excesses in marketing college sports impair institutional control and contribute to public misperception of the nature and purpose of higher education. Schools must step back from over-commercialization by cutting costs and setting clear standards of institutional control and public presentation of college sports.

While COIA made some great suggestions in its first extensive document entitled “*Framework for Comprehensive Athletics Reform*,” the problem is the proposals were simply in the end just that-suggestions and best practices, with the hope the NCAA membership may one day approve. The glaring omission in the initial framework is a step-by-step action plan to accomplish COIA’s very worthwhile goals. The hope that COIA had was to eventually develop a comprehensive plan over the ensuing two years, in conjunction with the notoriously cumbersome NCAA governance structure, to implement the steps it is endorsed. The quandary was and still is that COIA wants a seat at the table with the NCAA to help advance its proposals, and the NCAA wants to protect its cash cow, huge television contracts, and power over the athletes that generate the revenue. This was never more evident than a comment in the Indianapolis Star, by NCAA President Myles Brand, who claims to support the efforts of COIA, but does little to advance COIA’s reform agenda. Brand praised the efforts and work of COIA when its’ original framework was released in 2005, but instead of stepping out in front and pushing the plan through the NCAA legislative process, he forebodingly said that he thought it would not be well received by the (NCAA) membership (Ridpath, 2005; Suggs, 2005). Predictably, as Brand thought, there was no significant action by the NCAA membership on any of COIA’s proposals in the Framework document. So COIA went back to the drawing board to work on its action plan and proposals to make them more agreeable to the NCAA membership.

The Drake Group

COIA's framework is heavily intertwined with the NCAA, and the NCAA's interests of commercialism and revenue generation may be counter to true reform. While COIA wants to work directly with the NCAA, The Drake Group wants to get to a core issue the group feels is missing in other reform efforts and that is the role of the faculty on individual campuses. The Drake Group desires to return the power over intercollegiate athletic governance back to where it belongs, to institutions and faculty. While COIA has a framework of a plan and hopes for action through the burdensome NCAA legislative process, The Drake Group has an action plan that, if adopted at individual institutions, can immediately affect positive change and achieve returning integrity to a shameful part of higher education.

The Drake Group urges faculty senates and other bodies concerned with academic integrity throughout the country to endorse its proposals as a first step toward closing the ever-widening gap between athletics and education. The group currently has a seven point plan accessible on their website www.thedrakegroup.org that can be put into place immediately, if individual faculty senates adopt them.² The group's current plan and charter is as follows:

1. Retire the term "student-athlete."

This proposal affirms that athletes are an integral part of the student body. There is no more need to call them student-athletes than there is to call members of the marching band student-band members. The NCAA created the term student-athlete in the 1950s to deflect the threat that its newly implemented athletic scholarship policy might lead Workers Compensation Boards to view athletes as paid employees. The words faculty use to refer to athletes should not be determined by the public relations needs of the NCAA. Replacing the term with "student" or "college athlete" in university documents is an action faculty can take immediately.

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

The 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 same "student-athlete" philosophy the Drake Group rejects. The goal of academic counseling is education not athletic eligibility. 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.

² The Drake Group plan is currently under revision and subject to approval by members the seven point plan will be broken down into phases with transparency (academic disclosure) being the main focus of the groups efforts. Overall the points will remain relatively the same. In addition, The Drake Group is taking the "student athlete" term proposal off the list, but will maintain a research based response on its website regarding the term and its use. Changes are due to go into effect in 2008.

3. Establish university policies that emphasize the importance of class attendance for all students and ensure that the scheduling of athletic contests not conflict with class attendance.

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 have a professional responsibility to enforce attendance policies that support quality instruction. In some instances, the problem arises because faculty members, rather than athletic personnel, do not demand students attend class. Faculty Senates can and should require faculty to establish attendance policies that treat all students equally.

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

As long as coaches and athletics directors can use factors related to athletics to determine whether financial aid will be renewed, athletes are under considerable pressure to make sports their main priority. This highlights the inherent hypocrisy in the term "athletic scholarship," a term that should be related 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 and the Knight Foundation have listed the creation of multi-year scholarships among possible reform measures they could support.

5. Require students to maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 each semester to continue participation in intercollegiate athletics.

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 steady decline in graduation rates for athletes in the revenue-producing sports (rates that declined despite the rise of multi-million dollar academic support units) 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.

6. Ensure that universities provide accountability of trustees, administrators, and faculty by public disclosure of such things as a student's academic major, academic advisor, courses listed by academic major, general education requirements, and electives, course GPA and instructor.

No individual student grades would be disclosed. Much of the academic fraud that has come to be associated with college athletics could be eliminated if information on how we educate students were publicly disclosed. Disclosure is not about student behavior-- it is about institutional behavior. Academic evidence of the quality of education being given athletes will enable faculty and administrators to monitor grade inflation and the educational practices that affect the quality of the institution's degree. A first step would be to disclose, on a yearly basis, the majors taken by college athletes and the average aggregate grades of students enrolled in those and other majors. For the purposes of clarification, the Drake Group is not advocating that any individual records of athletes be revealed nor is there an intention to "blame" athletes for this situation. Rather, our purpose is to expose areas within the academy where the so-called preferential treatment of athletes (e.g., advisement into bogus or easy courses, and manipulation of grades) actually constitutes a denial of equitable access to educational opportunity.

7. Return to a one-year residency requirement (competitive ineligibility for freshman) to ensure that the importance and priority of the academic mission, not athletics, is paramount.

It is important that incoming freshman who desire to compete athletically for a respective institution first demonstrates that he/she is capable of college level work. The demands on college students are acute enough without having a "full time" athletic career to worry about. Freshman will still be able to receive athletically related aid and practice with their teams, but the focus of that initial year is academics and it is incumbent on the athlete to prove that he/she can handle academics first, then athletics. This eliminates the common practice of "redshirting" and gives further credence to the five-year scholarship proposal. (www.thedrakegroup.org.)

In the world of college sport, institutional rules and standards trump conference and NCAA standards, yet many institutions are reluctant to unilaterally adopt more stringent standards than other schools that may put them at a "competitive disadvantage." In other words, most institutions want to recruit the best athlete-period to preserve the chance at winning and revenue generation. In many cases, these athletes for hire are only in college to develop for a potential, albeit doubtful, lucrative career in professional athletics (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998; Zimbalist, 1999). The United States is the only country in the world that maintains an intercollegiate athletic system like this within a higher education model. The current system has

turned many colleges and universities into farm clubs for the professional leagues who reap many rewards off a free developmental league. The Drake Group's plan in a nutshell is having "college students play college sports," not athletic ringers who are brought in and need an inordinate amount of assistance just to maintain eligibility to play the next game. Often this assistance turns into unethical practices that lead to academic fraud and scandal. The Drake Group believes if their plan were widely accepted, many of these problems would be eliminated. In turn, this could potentially force the professional leagues to take on the primary responsibility of player development themselves. This is exactly where it should be located as a realistic alternative to intercollegiate athletics for those not interested in an academic degree, at least at that point in their lives.

The author believes The Drake Group plan is different and more manageable than COIA's because it can be immediately enacted at institutions and requires no NCAA or conference approval. In fact the NCAA mechanism would have to adapt to the faculty and standards of a particular institution—as it also should be, instead of presenting bureaucratic roadblocks that alter or stop any significant effort at reform. COIA's plan appears to be more recommendations and best practices with the hope they will be followed, while The Drake Group plan is more action. What is needed more than anything with regard to reform of commercialized college sports is action and not lip service (Lipsyte, 2003).

In defense of COIA and its efforts, the current leadership of Nathan Tublitz of the University of Oregon and Virginia Shepherd of Vanderbilt University as co-chairs of the COIA steering committee, has been much more aggressive in pushing for change via the NCAA legislative process than previous efforts. Even though COIA and The Drake Group have expressed disagreement on how to solve the problem previously, the latest COIA document entitled "*Framing the Future: Reforming Intercollegiate Athletics*" was released on June 15, 2007, mirrored many of The Drake Group's original proposals including academic disclosure and transparency ("*Framing the Future*," 2007). While previous COIA documents have been gathering the proverbial dust on the shelf of the NCAA, this document promises to aggressively pursue change via the NCAA legislative process and not let the hard work of COIA go unnoticed. This document, while containing much of what COIA proposed previously, does contain many core issues The Drake Group supports and advocates. The common ground now found by both groups is encouraging as the faculty moves to exert greater control on intercollegiate athletics. In *Framing the Future*, COIA keeps most of its original framework in place and also presses for change in institutional admission and recruiting policies; the primacy of academics; athletics scholarships; competition and practice scheduling; integrating athletes into campus life along with academic advising; increased campus governance of intercollegiate athletic programs; and greater fiscal responsibility ("*Framing the Future*," 2007).

It is in the academic primacy section where The Drake Group and COIA find much common ground. COIA endorses a measure of academic disclosure and transparency to prevent eligibility maintenance and clustering of athletes in certain classes or majors. In addition, COIA supports the 2.0 GPA requirement for competition, integrating academic advising within existing university advisement and not through the athletic department, and scheduling reform to insure academics are at the forefront when discussing athletic schedules, not as an afterthought ("*Framing the Future*," 2007).

Conclusions and Recommendations

This change of direction of COIA by integrating many of The Drake Group's proposals is welcome in the faculty fight for academic integrity in intercollegiate athletics and demonstrates that COIA is not afraid to flex its muscles in the face of overwhelming pressure to not change the system by the NCAA. It may signal greater faculty involvement in the future. Currently, faculty overall are still ambivalent and cautious when it comes to getting involved in something as high profile as intercollegiate athletics (Splitt, 2002, 2004, 2006), but it is a task the faculty must do lest institutions continue to water down their standards for intercollegiate athletics at the expense of academic integrity.

College athletics must be reformed at its core, which is in the classrooms of institutions of higher learning where the faculty must defend their classrooms and curriculum with the same zeal that coaches try to win games. Nothing else can begin to be solved unless this basic issue is corrected. Transparency as detailed in the COIA and The Drake Group plans is a tool needed to give faculty that power. Transparency is about institutional behavior, faculty behavior, and athletic department behavior. It is not about athlete behavior (Jon Ericson, Personal Communication, September 7, 2007; www.thedrakegroup.org). Both The Drake Group and COIA see the athletes as victims in this process since many do not have a realistic chance at an independent access to an education and they certainly have little or no control over their future academic development. Reform simply cannot happen without academic transparency as the first line of defense for the faculty in the reform effort. Once academic integrity can be preserved, many other issues of debate in the reform process can be rectified.

As New York Times Sport Columnist and frequent critic of college sports, Robert Lipsyte stated, "You cannot continue to put lipstick on a pig."³ In short, the COIA plan is detailed and well intended, but it could end up like its previous reports and remain just lipstick. That would be truly sad if the NCAA rejects a group invited to the process and one the NCAA pledged to work alongside.

The Drake Group and current COIA plans attack the rotten ethical core of intercollegiate sport and present a plan to fix it and bring back academic integrity to the process. Educators and faculty senates on campuses nationwide need to start demanding that The Drake Group or the current COIA plans, or variations of both, be adopted so faculty can be put back in control of their respective campuses and in particular, their sometimes out of control athletic departments, so that true cultural change and academic integrity can finally happen within the college sports landscape.

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³ Robert Lipsyte, columnist for the New York Times and USA Today. Comments and the National Institute of Sports Reform Summit, Bolton Landing, NY, November 2003. Lipsyte is a renowned critic of college sports and a strong advocate for athlete integrity and overall reform. He wrote several columns on intercollegiate athletic issues during his 2002 series, "A Year at School" in the New York Times.

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