

## A MODEL FOR INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

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A prestigious and academically distinguished institution, the University of Florida has developed a complex and tightly organized structure for intercollegiate athletics that provides a state of the art example of control and accountability. During the past decade, the university felt the full impact of the dramatic changes influencing intercollegiate sports throughout the nation. Possessed of a proud and successful athletic tradition, intense faculty, student, alumni, and public interest, and an admirable collection of avid supporters, the University of Florida entered the 1980s well placed for an impressive decade of athletic performance. While the program's teams did indeed perform exceptionally well in many sports, a major NCAA investigation in 1984, followed by severe sanctions, and a subsequent investigation in 1988, followed by minor sanctions, brought the university under intense public scrutiny.

This traumatic experience prompted the university and its leadership to reexamine all aspects of its sports programs, values, organization, and operation. As a result of these efforts, the university has emerged at the beginning of the decade of the 1990s with a program of institutional control and management for intercollegiate athletics that, while surely not perfect, clearly meets and often exceeds contemporary standards for quality, effectiveness, and responsibility.

In presenting the general parameters of this model here, we know that organizations do not guarantee the appropriate behavior of individuals. We do know that the university's organization and procedures can and will reduce unacceptable behavior to a minimum and will permit the institution to respond quickly and effectively to individual errors.

Much has been written about intercollegiate athletics and the discussion, often controversial and contentious, will certainly continue. Given the tremendous visibility and significance of high profile athletic programs such as the one operated at the University of Florida, we anticipate no relief from the tremendous pressures that bear on student-athletes, coaches, athletic directors, and the university's academic and administrative leaders who work with these programs. The combination of large investments in facilities, extraordinary public exposure, complex financial arrangements, and close identification of institutional symbols with sports programs all provide incentives for inappropriate and improper behavior by everyone connected to intercollegiate sports. These pressures correspond to those that press on scientists engaged in studying what may become highly lucrative commercial products or on students seeking admission to intensely competitive advanced academic programs,

tremendous pressures to subvert intercollegiate athletic programs become difficult to resist.

Recognizing this principle, the Florida legislature and the Board of Regents of the State University System have explicitly designated the presidents of its individual institutions as responsible for the conduct and integrity of the athletic programs of their institutions. It is the president who hires and, if necessary, terminates head coaches and athletic directors. It is the president who must establish the institutional policies for academic and financial integrity. It is the president who must insist on the maintenance of standards in all areas related to intercollegiate athletics.<sup>4</sup>

Even more specific, the Florida legislature and Board of Regents require that legally independent organizations in support of the university's missions, such as booster clubs or athletic fundraising organizations, must be controlled by the president. In the Florida context these organizations are known as *direct support organizations* and include other university fundraising groups in addition to those related to athletics. The laws and rules under which these organizations exist permit their establishment for the sole benefit of the university. The university president and a regents' representative must serve on the organization's board, the president approves its chief operating officer who reports to the president, quarterly expenditure plans are approved by the president, and annual audits and budget are approved by both the president and regents.<sup>5</sup>

Thanks to the explicit action of the legislature and regents, and as reflected in the bylaws of athletically related organizations of the University of Florida, the president of the university is accountable for and has the responsibility and authority to control intercollegiate athletics at the university. Presidents cannot, of course, directly manage the many details of intercollegiate sports effectively and at the same time fulfill their other responsibilities,

so the president's day to day control is, in many aspects, delegated to different university officers. Critical to this delegation of authority is the multiple involvement of university officers whose primary responsibility is not related to intercollegiate athletics.

At the University of Florida the vice-president for administrative affairs monitors the financial arrangements related to intercollegiate athletics, the provost monitors and reviews policy and practice related to student-athletes and their academic progress, and the vice-president for student affairs monitors aspects of student-athlete life. All of these officers have a responsibility to see that intercollegiate athletics meets the institution's standards in all areas, including gender equity. These officers report to the president and bring their special, university-wide expertise on finance, academics, and student life to the task of supporting and encouraging intercollegiate athletics.

The key presidential appointee, however, is the athletic director. Appointed by and reporting to the president, the athletic director is responsible to the president for the proper management of all aspects of intercollegiate athletics. The athletic director is a member of the president's staff along with other senior academic and administrative officers and serves the university's broader interests as well as managing the athletic program.

Within this structure, the president also controls the university's athletic support organization, the University Athletic Association and its board. Further, the president appoints the university's Intercollegiate Athletics Committee. These two groups of appointed individuals drawn from faculty, staff, alumni, and students review budgets, discuss policy, participate in setting goals and priorities, review financial and other issues associated with scheduling and television contracts, and set standards for recruiting and compensating coaches and other athletic department personnel. The university is currently reviewing these two

Some have recommended that we limit the time student-athletes spend in practice. While there have long been limitations on the time organized sports teams spend in practice and seasons, such has not been the case until recently for many individual sports. The University of Florida opposes these limits on practice time. We believe that the test of whether an individual student spends too much time outside of class is performance in class. We do not limit the time student leaders spend on student government nor do we limit the practice time of musical performers. To single out student-athletes for this kind of rigid time constraint confuses the issue. We oppose the current legislation and will work within the NCAA to make eligibility depend on academic performance and progress toward graduation rather than on simple-minded time constraints which discriminate against student-athletes as a class.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Financial Integrity**

Nothing enhances the difficulties and challenges of intercollegiate sport more than the power of money. Stadiums, scholarships, coaches, weight rooms, practice fields, dormitories, travel expenses, operating staff, and a host of other needs require money. The funds come from television, shoe contracts, ticket sales, premium seat programs, fundraising activities, fees, bowl games, and other commercial activities of the athletic programs. The size of these budgets for intercollegiate programs loom large within the total financial operations of the university. At the University of Florida, the budget for intercollegiate athletics runs at about \$15 million per year while the university's non-athletic budget exceeds \$900 million.

When programs are well managed and appropriately scaled to the needs and capabilities of the institution, then the income and expenses balance, and the athletic program represents a neutral financial element within the university. Some universities, with aspirations beyond their means, commit to expenses that have no

corresponding income stream, and end up subsidizing athletics from general academic operations. The solution to this problem is not mindless cost cutting but the appropriate scaling of athletic programs.

At the University of Florida, loyal supporters, superb financial management, careful husbanding of resources, and quality programs have combined to produce an athletic operation that not only breaks even but returns a surplus to the university, maintains a reserve for repair and enhancement of facilities, and keeps pace with inflation and other costs. The University of Florida's organization of intercollegiate activities permits a complete and full accounting of revenue and expenses for sports and deserves some special comment here.

The University Athletic Association, a special non-profit corporation, serves as the university's holding company for athletic programs. Invented to assure a skeptical legislature that sports would never divert state educational funds, the University Athletic Association maintains completely separate books, audits, budgets, and funds. Even though the University Athletic Association is a legally separate corporation, it operates in coordination with the university by virtue of being controlled by a board including faculty and line administrators appointed by the president and by having its financial affairs reviewed by the vice-president for administration of the university. Thus, while completely under the control of the institution and its president, the separate books of the University Athletic Association permit the University of Florida and all its friends and supporters to clearly understand the financial commitments and liabilities of intercollegiate sports.<sup>9</sup>

A peculiarity of the Florida situation results from the state's aggressive sunshine laws. The university, as a state agency, is subject to one of the most open sunshine laws in the nation. Practically everything the university does is open for inspection. The University Athletic Association has long been operating

academic programs within the state university system of Florida, and consequently offers a strong mechanism for review and certification. In addition, the University of Florida has had the dubious distinction of having had its system of institutional control reviewed by the NCAA and found to be clearly in compliance with the standards of that organization. The university also continues to perform financial, academic, and NCAA compliance audits internally.<sup>12</sup>

Consequently, while the national discussion on certification continues, and we support some forms of national certification, the regents in Florida have already instituted such a program at the state level.

### Conclusion

While we have much to do to make intercollegiate athletics fully reflect the values and goals of our institutions, we at the University of Florida have learned from our successes and the pain of our failures. Perhaps as a result of the unremitting publicity and sensational if exaggerated speculations about our program, we have confronted all the major issues in

intercollegiate sport and dealt with each in an explicit and clearly visible fashion.

Living in the sunshine state, everything we do is available for public scrutiny. We hide nothing. With a quality program, strong presidential control, clear academic integrity, obvious financial integrity, and an independent certification program, the University of Florida offers one example of how to continue progress towards the full achievement of our goals for college sports.

We are not done. A presidentially appointed Blue Ribbon Committee is reviewing the structure described here and will report to the president on ways to improve it as well as recommend action on other issues that will surely affect our programs in the future. With the presentation of their report, our continuing conversation about intercollegiate athletics at the University of Florida will find new perspectives and continue the evolution of quality and accountability that must be our hallmark.

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<sup>9</sup> The University Athletic Association financial summary is as follows:

Year	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Income	18.804	19.647	19.012	17.124
Expenses	(18.179)	(19.359)	(19.676)	(16.993)
Reserves to University	0.279	0.362	0.951	0.341

Contributions from UAA reserves to the university include funds for the bookstore, library, academic fundraising, band, and the extraordinary contribution paid out of 1989-90 in support of academic needs.

<sup>10</sup> The university's Gator Clubs, which at one time helped recruit student-athletes, now recruits merit scholars and raises funds for scholarships to support them. The Gator Boosters organization is audited by an outside auditor as well as being under the full control of the university and its president. Gator Boosters financial summary is as follows:

Year	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Income	5.305	5.680	5.409	6.102
Expenses	(0.717)	(0.993)	(1.116)	(1.211)
Transfer to UAA	4.365	4.680	4.166	4.851

The Gator Boosters also makes a small annual contribution to its endowment fund. The funds transferred to the UAA support scholarships primarily and some capital costs for athletic facilities.

<sup>11</sup> The model contract for head coaches runs to some 31 pages and meets or exceeds every standard outlined by the NCAA and the Knight Commission report cited above. Copies of the contract are available from the University of Florida, President's Office. The academic bonus has the following general characteristics: The first time a team achieves a 40% graduation rate, the coach receives a \$1,000 bonus; the first time the team achieves a 50% rate, the coach receives \$1,000; then, in any year the rate goes to 60%, the bonus is one month's salary; and finally, when an 80% rate is achieved, the bonus becomes 10% of the coach's annual salary. The university reviews and approves all the coaches' income, and if outside compensation involves university functions, facilities or name, the contracts are negotiated with the university. An example would be the football and basketball coaches television and radio shows which are owned and operated by the university. Shoe and equipment contracts are approved in advance by the university and the company involved.

<sup>12</sup> The regents reviews of intercollegiate athletics involved self-studies in 1986, 1988, and 1990, and in 1990, the university also participated in an NCAA self-study.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For a sample of the literature, see Rick Telander's anguished expose of the sports he loves in The Hundred Yard Lie: The Corruption of College Football and What We Can Do to Stop It (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989). A much more systematic and informative study is in Donald Chu's The Character of American Higher Education and Intercollegiate Sport (Albany: State University of New York, 1989). Wilford S. Bailey and Taylor D. Littleton offer a reform proposal in Athletics and Academe: An Anatomy of Abuses and a Prescription for Reform (New York: ACE/Macmillan, 1991). For a historical perspective that helps understand the constants of American collegiate sport see Ronald A. Smith's Sports and Freedom: The Rise of Big-Time College Athletics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> The complex environment of challenge and change is reflected in the following selection of representative items. For an interesting discussion of some key issues see John R. Thelin and Lawrence L. Wiseman, The Old College Try: Balancing Athletics and Academics in Higher Education (Washington, D.C.: The George Washington University, 1989). To get a sense of the long-standing character of this debate see the collection by Donald Chu et al., eds., Sport and Higher Education (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics Publishers, 1985). The wheeling dealing atmosphere in some parts of college sports is reflected in Alexander Wolff and Armen Keteyian, Raw Recruits (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990) and the dissatisfaction with the principal governing organization of college sport, the NCAA, appears in Don Yaeger's Undue process: The NCAA's Injustice for All (Champaign, Ill: Sagamore Pub., 1991).

<sup>3</sup> Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, Keeping Faith with the Student-Athlete: A New Model For Intercollegiate Athletics (Miami: The Knight Foundation, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Florida Statute 240.227 charges the university president with the responsibility to administer the university's athletic program. Board of Regents' rule 6C-9.012, adopted pursuant to Florida's Administrative Procedure Act, grants the regents general oversight authority.

<sup>5</sup> The legislative authority for these organizations appears in Florida Statute 240.299 and Board of Regents' rule 6C-9.011.

<sup>6</sup> The University Athletic Association has a detailed and comprehensive Coaches Handbook and an equally detailed Policy Manual. These documents clearly outline the organization, responsibilities, support systems, and obligations of all participants in intercollegiate sport. The Coaches Handbook includes explicit information about ethical conduct, recruiting, academic expectations, and the like. The university's model career counseling panel that advises student-athletes on agent and professional representation and athletic and post-athletic career opportunities is described as is the institution's Office of Student Life. Copies of these two model manuals are available on request from the Athletic Director, University Athletic Association, University of Florida.

<sup>7</sup> Data on graduation rates and other academic information indicates a need for improvement, particularly in men's basketball and football. Improvement takes a considerable amount of time to appear in the data since better recruitment and admissions do not show up in graduation rates for four, five, or six years. Similarly, poor recruiting and academic support of years past drives currently reported graduation rates. The difficulties in Florida's programs during the latter half of the 1980s has had some negative impact on currently reported graduation rates which are low in men's football and basketball. Note that differences in entrance standards, access rules, and relationships with community colleges affects graduation rates in complex ways making comparisons between institutions difficult. The best indicator of student-athlete graduation rate success is the comparison between the institution's general student and student-athlete graduation rates. Rates calculated for individual sports with small numbers of student-athlete participants are also subject to substantial fluctuations over time since small changes produce large rate changes because of the small numbers involved. Given the potential for misuse of these data, some universities have resisted the release of such numbers. The University of Florida provides detailed data on graduation rates to the regents, the public, and the press on a regular basis. The 1990 graduation rates for the university were: All students, 47.5%; recruited student-athletes, 33.8%; football 29.6%; basketball, 20.0%.

<sup>8</sup> For a review of the national data on graduation rates and other comparisons between student-athletes and other students see: Clifford Adelman, Light and Shadows on College Athletes: College Transcripts and Labor Market History (Washington: US Dept. Education, Office of Research, 1990).

in the sunshine, and its budgets, financial arrangements, and meetings are open to the public and the press. Bright sunshine combined with comprehensive outside audits and presidential control all contribute to a remarkably solid financial foundation for the University of Florida's programs.

So well has the University Athletic Association managed its affairs that over the past several years it has transferred about \$250,000 per year to the university in support of general university programs. In this year (1990-91), one of extreme financial difficulty in the state-supported academic sector, the University Athletic Association transferred an extraordinary contribution of \$600,000 to the university. We are currently discussing other University Athletic Association support of the institution's needs.

As a result, at the University of Florida, we believe that a healthy, well managed intercollegiate athletic program not only supports itself, giving the university a virtually cost free program, but can generate a substantial contribution to academic programs on the margin. We believe that intercollegiate athletic activities should never take money from academic programs. We encourage the transfer of funds from athletic surpluses to academic needs, but we oppose the transfer of academic funds to support intercollegiate athletics.

The university also has a booster organization called Gator Boosters. As a *direct support organization*, it operates under the direct control of the president of the university. The bylaws of Gator Boosters clearly indicate its compliance with this mandate. Further, Gator Boosters transfers all funds collected in excess of operating expenses to the University Athletic Association for student support or capital expenditures for the program. Gator Boosters itself does not operate these programs directly; it simply raises funds to make it possible for the intercollegiate athletic program to be successful. The current configurations of Gator Boosters and the University Athletic Association have

evolved over the years and further changes are surely likely as the needs and environment for college competition evolves. The University of Florida has no truly independent support groups of any kind, including intercollegiate athletic support groups.<sup>10</sup>

Among the improvements the university has instituted in recent years has been a comprehensive 31 page coaching contract. Beginning with the contracts of the current head football and basketball coaches, the university has outlined in great detail the expectations, obligations, conditions, and benefits of the relationship between coach and institution. The contract covers such things as compensation, bonus for academic and athletic success of student-athletes, outside compensation and activities, grounds and due process procedures for termination, and renewal provisions. The contract includes provisions for the student life coordinator and recruiting coordinator to report to the athletic director, not the head coach. Coaches report their business relationships and outside earnings to the athletic director who must approve them and in turn report them to the president. The completeness of this contract helps make clear the university's expectations and provides the coach with a clear template for a relationship that all hope will be enduring and successful.<sup>11</sup>

#### Certification

While various forms of independent certification would appear useful, none currently exist at the national level. Nonetheless, in the state of Florida, the regents have a procedure for independent, regular, review of intercollegiate athletic programs in each of the nine universities within its area of responsibility. This review clearly meets the spirit and substance of an independent certification. The regents require a full self-study, a site visit by experts external to the programs, and a review team report to the regents with comments for improvement. This matches the process used to certify and review

bodies to increase their independence from one another to maximize the checks and balances of the system and enhance their effectiveness. However organized, these two groups serve to enhance the convergence of athletic goals and standards with the broader and more compelling goals of the university.

Finally, the president appoints a faculty athletic representative whose responsibility is to become fully involved with all aspects of the university's athletic program, advise the president on academic issues, report to the faculty on the athletic program, and collaborate with faculty representative groups in the university's regional athletic conference and the NCAA. The more effective the faculty representative, the better the president's understanding of important issues.<sup>6</sup>

The University of Florida belongs to the Southeastern Conference (SEC), a regional intercollegiate athletic organization that is controlled by its presidents. The university also belongs to the NCAA, an intercollegiate athletic organization that is not, *de facto*, controlled by its presidents. The University of Florida is prepared to initiate and support useful reform measures designed to convert the NCAA into a presidentially controlled membership organization. The NCAA President's Commission, while a worthy effort, clearly indicates that within the NCAA the presidents exist as but one special interest within the complex constituency that the NCAA regards as its own. In this respect alone, the University of Florida does not have presidential control over intercollegiate athletics.

#### **Academic Integrity**

At the University of Florida, the commitment to academic integrity is implemented through a variety of structures and programs. First, of course, comes the recruitment phase in which student-athletes must meet standards set first by the SEC and NCAA, and second by the University of Florida. These standards continue to evolve but have the

goal of ensuring that all student-athletes fit within the range of University of Florida students not involved with intercollegiate athletics. The ultimate authority for admission of student-athletes rests with the admissions office and the provost who review the recommendations of the athletic department with the admissions office and make the final determination of admissibility. The provost at the University of Florida not only reviews the admissibility of student-athletes in the current year but also sets the standards for admissibility for the subsequent year.

Because admissibility is only the first step, the university maintains a comprehensive counseling and advising service that supports student-athletes in their academic programs. This service is reviewed and monitored by university academic advisors, and we are currently revising this system to be sure that it continues to meet or exceed normal university standards for academic advising. The university does not maintain special majors for student-athletes and requires all student-athletes to follow the same academic programs available to other students of the university.

The ultimate test of a successful academic program is, of course, graduation. At the University of Florida, student-athletes graduate at rates lower than those of the general student body. Moreover, student-athletes in football and basketball and some other sports have even lower graduation rates. To reaffirm the goal and commitment to it, the university has placed a graduation rate incentive in the contracts of the football and basketball coaches to make explicit the expectations the university has for its student-athletes. Even with this incentive, the institution's graduation rates are not yet at levels most faculty would find acceptable. A gradual improvement in graduation rates indicates that with better recruitment and consistent attention to academic progress we will succeed in this goal. The University of Florida along with the other public universities in the state have been reporting graduation rates for some time.<sup>7</sup>



but only in sports do these issues attract constant and national media attention and discussion.<sup>1</sup>

The much publicized problems in the high powered sports programs of our major universities reflect a general social confusion about the balance between means and ends. While most observers would agree that competition and the pursuit of excellence it breeds are a good thing, most also recognize that winning does not justify the violation of ethical standards. Yet in areas as widespread as intercollegiate athletics and banking, biomedical research and the stock market, our generation has observed multiple instances where ethical and professional standards have been abandoned in the reckless pursuit of winning.<sup>2</sup>

We cannot eliminate all the circumstances that create the pressures to win at all costs, but we can create at the University of Florida a climate and an organization that resists those pressures and insists that we, at least, choose to pursue excellent performance within the boundaries of appropriate ethical and professional standards. That on occasion these boundaries will be exceeded we have no doubt. That on occasion individuals will succumb to the temptation to cheat to win, we expect. But the university has organized itself to make sure no one mistakes our commitment to discourage such inappropriate behavior before it happens and our refusal to tolerate such behavior should it occur.

At the University of Florida we have a long-standing commitment to intercollegiate athletics in a wide range of sports for men and women. We operate major revenue sports in football and basketball which together support the costs of all the other intercollegiate sports programs for men and women. These revenue sports, in addition, pay the costs of one of this country's best athletic facilities. Approximately 484 students participate in intercollegiate sports as athletes with another 540 students who participate in other roles related to sports as managers, band members, cheerleaders,

training coordinators, academic tutors, and the like. Over 675,000 spectators enjoy University of Florida sports events on campus (about 475,000 thousand for football alone), and many others enjoy Florida sports at contests away from campus and on television.

Given this major investment of institutional resources and prestige, and the university's commitment to a common standard of accountability and purpose for all university activities, academic, athletic, or administrative, the institution's arrangements for the management, control, and support of intercollegiate athletics deserve careful and continuing attention and review.

The University of Florida organizes its intercollegiate athletics program around the four key elements (recently discussed at length by the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics) required for a responsible program: presidential control, academic integrity, financial integrity, and certification.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Presidential Control**

Every observer of American intercollegiate athletics has identified presidential control as a key element in the successful management of these programs. Presidents possess no special wisdom or unusual expertise on athletic details, rules, regulations or competition, although some presidents may have all these characteristics. Presidential control clearly places the ultimate responsibility for quality program management with the institution's chief executive and reinforces the commitment to maintaining intercollegiate athletics within the institution's normal channels of authority.

If presidents have control of athletic programs, they also have the fundamental responsibility to see that the programs operate as required. When presidents must share authority and control with boards, athletic associations, booster groups, alumni associations, athletic directors, or coaches, then no one is fully responsible, and the