



A Presentation by

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**"The Thrill of Victory. . .
The Agony of Defeat. . .
and the Gnashing of Teeth. . .
as College Presidents
Attempt to Reform
Intercollegiate Athletics"**

**An Address
The Economic Club
Detroit, Michigan
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An Interesting Proposal

Let me begin by suggesting a modest proposal designed to improve the nature of college sports:

1. All universities would agree on a five-year moratorium on television broadcasting of all college sports. The media—and the public—would be chased out of the locker rooms.
2. During this moratorium, universities would determine the purpose and priority of college athletics on their campuses.
3. They would then develop, or realign, their intercollegiate athletics programs in a manner consistent with this “mission” or “vision” statement.
4. Because of the loss of television revenue, universities would have to learn how to live on a revenue diet by controlling the costs of intercollegiate athletics, scaling back their programs (and their aspirations) to more realistic levels. Who knows, they might even have to learn to live without athletic dorms, shoe contracts, and big time promotion. Further, they might have to learn how to treat coaches as normal staff and to treat athletes as students.
5. After this five-year moratorium, television, the media, and the public would be invited back to view college sports, but *only* on terms set by the institutions, in a manner consistent with the academic priorities of the institution: no late night basketball every night of the week, no football games in the gathering gloom of the late afternoon, no television commen-

tators shrieking in a fever pitch to hype up the action. . . .

In other words, my modest proposal is to take "show biz" out of intercollegiate athletics and to once again allow academic priorities to determine the nature of college sports.

(At this point your reaction to this proposal is probably similar to that of most of my fellow college presidents: "This guy must be crazy!")

The Thrill of Victory, the Agony of Defeat

Mention Ann Arbor, and the first image that probably comes to mind is a crisp, brilliant weekend in the fall, the walk across campus through the falling leaves to Michigan Stadium, and the tailgate parties. We remember the excitement building as we enter that magnificent stadium spread out before us with 105,000 fans thrilling to the Michigan Marching Band as they run on to the field with, "Hail to the Victors Valiant" playing.

Intercollegiate athletics provide some of the very special moments in our lives. There is the excitement of a traditional rivalry such as Michigan against Ohio State or Michigan against Notre Dame—number one versus number two—those special occasions such as a Rose Bowl or an NCAA basketball championship. Then too, there are the Cinderella stories of individual achievement; for example, the story of Steve Fisher's basketball team moving through an incredible series of victories to the NCAA championship; or the personal story of Rumeal Robinson, after being abandoned on the streets of Cambridge, becoming a star at Michigan and making the final two free throws to win the championship; or Jim Abbott overcoming his handicap to become the leading amateur athlete

in the nation and then going on to become a major league baseball pitcher. And there are the less familiar but nevertheless exciting stories such as Bridgette Venturi, a Michigan engineering graduate, who went on to win the American Gladiators competition on national television.

Sports have always been an important part of our civilization. Intercollegiate athletics continue a tradition from ancient times, in which the games allow athletes to test and develop their own abilities in competition with one another. They teach both the player and the spectator some of the enduring lessons of life: the importance of discipline, perseverance, and teamwork. And sports teach us all that the most important goals are achieved only through effort and sacrifice—and sometimes even these are not enough. And they provide a sense of excitement, of pride, and of involvement with our institutions.

The Dark Side of the Force

But of course there are other images of intercollegiate athletics that reflect the concerns that have risen in recent years: the quasi-professional nature of college sports and their apparent inconsistency with our academic priorities; the degree to which college sports are portrayed as taking advantage of our student-athletes; the concern about graduation rates or the awarding of meaningless degrees. Then too, there is a perceived pressure to win at all costs which leads to cheating and scandals; or images of misbehavior, such as when players taunt one another or coaches engage in tirades against officials; or the sordid story of drugs and crime involving college athletes.

And, there is the gross over-commercialization of college sports: the tendency to schedule events every night of the week; the media hype—perhaps best represented by the Dick Vitale syndrome; and the feeding frenzy of the sports press.

This phenomena is a familiar one in Ann Arbor. When Bo Schembechler resigned as the winning-est coach in Michigan football history, there were seventeen television camera crews to cover his resignation. It was reported with headlines somewhat larger than those which would have declared an invasion from Mars. Even on the University campus the University student newspaper, the Michigan Daily, devotes more attention to the sports page than it does to a call for revolution on its editorial page.

The pressures generated by commercialization are seen around us: the calls by the media for a national football championship play-off for NCAA Division IA schools, even when university presidents continue to resist this because of its dreadful impact on the academic programs of its student-athletes. There is the destruction and realignment of conferences, whether it be the addition of Penn State to the Big Ten or the switching of Arkansas from the Southwest Conference to the Southeast Conference—both efforts designed to maximize the bargaining power of these conferences with the television networks based upon greater market share. And then, of course, there is the greed surrounding the negotiations for distribution of the \$1 billion CBS contract for the NCAA championship.

There are many signs that college sports have lost their bearings and now threaten to overwhelm the academic priorities of the institutions conducting them. In many cases, our programs have shifted away from providing an important learning and recreational experience for students—and a unifying, community-building opportunity for spectators—to an intense competition for maximum revenue and exposure for the participating teams and institutions.

As the Knight Commission observed in its recent report:

“Within the last decade, big-time athletics programs have taken on all of the trappings of a major entertainment enterprise. In the search for television revenues, traditional rivalries have been tossed aside in conference realignments, games have been rescheduled to satisfy broadcast preferences, the number of games has been multiplied, student-athletes have been put on the field at all hours of the day and night, and university administrators have fallen to quarrelling among themselves over the division of revenues from broadcasting contracts.”

There is an old saying in academics that the modern university is a fragile academic organism, delicately balanced between the athletics department on one end of the campus . . . and the medical center on the other. Both can distort the institutions—athletics can destroy its reputation, and the medical center can sink it financially.

Signs of Growing Concern

Public concerns about intercollegiate athletics continue to grow. A recent Harris poll indicated that 78 percent of the public believe that “intercollegiate athletics are out of control.” A comparable fraction believe that television dollars, not the universities themselves, control college sports.

Almost monthly a new book on the “scandal” of intercollegiate athletics appears. Every major newspaper and columnist has taken a crack at bashing intercollegiate athletics, from the New York Times to the Washington Post, from David Broder to George Will. Even Congress wants into the act, with calls for

legislation dictating the reporting of graduation rates and taxation of athletic revenue. And with over one-half of all Division 1-A institutions receiving sanctions for violating NCAA regulations over the last decade, it is hard to blame them.

Calls for reform have triggered new activities in the public and private sector. The Knight Commission, chaired by Father Ted Hessburg, former president of Notre Dame, and William Friday, former president of the University of North Carolina, has been meeting for the last two years in an effort to draw up major reform agendas for intercollegiate athletics. Congressmen and legislators repeatedly attempt to introduce legislation that would constrain athletic programs. And, of course, the intense political battles within the NCAA, as best represented by the President's Commission to develop a reform agenda and by the so-called Conference of Conferences, the coalition of major athletic conferences in the country, which has been attempting to develop reforms.

Of course, there has been a very broad range of proposals associated with reform effort. At one extreme would be calls for adopting the so-called ivy model of amateur play—although the Ivy Leagues themselves acknowledge many of the problems that plague intercollegiate athletics nationwide. On the other extreme, many—primarily among the media—call for a professionalization of college sports with payment to the players.

In an effort to respond, the NCAA has implemented wave after wave of rules and regulations governing the conduct of college sports. Indeed, as the Knight Commission noted, the "NCAA manual more nearly resembles the IRS Code than it does an guide to action" . . . and NCAA Conventions resemble a gathering of tax attorneys attempting to make the rules even more complicated. It is also interesting to note that this complex maze of

regulations really involves only the "athletic" side of the student-athlete, almost ignoring that these individuals are—or at least should be—first and foremost students.

What is the Problem?

What is the problem? Is it simply the usual human frailties? Greed? Fame? Arrogance? Ignorance? All of these are certainly contributing factors. I believe that the real problem lies in the very nature of intercollegiate athletics in America today.

College sports have become a major source of public entertainment in America. Coaches and players have become media celebrities. Dollars from television have distorted institutional priorities. The media has created a feeding frenzy in which sports columnists have replaced gossip columnists in their efforts to pander to public curiosity. They have taken intercollegiate athletics from an extracurricular activity to a form of show business.

My hypothesis is simple: as long as colleges continue to allow the media, whether electronic or print, to promote and pressure college sports to become an entertainment industry, there will be little progress on true reform. Until colleges insist on the primacy of academic objectives and values over those of athletic competitiveness, visibility, and financial bottom line, true reform is impossible. My fear is that few universities and athletic conferences and athletic associations have been able to withstand the tremendous pressure and rewards of "big time athletics," not to mention their alumni, public, and governing boards. Few institutions have insisted on the dominance of academic principles over financial and entertainment objectives.

The Evolution of College Sports in America

One can distinguish three different stages as college sports evolved in this country. The first stage might be called the classical or amateur model. From ancient times it has been recognized that athletics are an important ideal for teaching values of character, motivation, endurance, loyalty, and striving for one's personal best—all qualities of great value in citizens. The model was the scholar-athlete. The objective was the education of the whole person. Athletics were viewed as an extracurricular activity. This particular model continues to be regarded as the ideal by the Ivy League, but even here, it is really only an ideal. As Cornell's President White observed when his students wanted to play football against Michigan, "I will not permit thirty men to travel to Ann Arbor just to agitate a bag of wind."

Earlier in this century in many larger institutions, college sports evolved from a participatory to a spectator activity. Athletic events increasingly served to bring together the complex campuses characterizing the American university: Clark Kerr's "multiversity," where people who were connected only by a common heating plant or a need for parking became connected as well by identification with major sporting events and athletic activities. This continues today since many of the most stolid alumni and faculty nevertheless take pride in the success of an institution's athletic teams. However, such events tended to promote the institution, giving it visibility and assisting with its enhancement. And, as Chief Justice Earl Warren observed, "At the breakfast table I always open the newspaper to the sports pages first. The sports pages record people's accomplishments. The front page has nothing but man's failures."

In the 1960s and 1970s such spectator events turned into entertainment on a national scale. Of course, television was the principal

reason. College sports represented a very attractive opportunity for television since most of the costs of production were borne by the institutions themselves—at least subsidized by spectators. Furthermore, television found that by promoting and marketing college sports such as they would promote other commercial activities—generating great media hype, hiring sensationalistic broadcasters, urging colleges to arrange more spectacular events—they could build major nationwide audiences.

While the dollars paid by television for college sports today seem excessive—witness the \$1 billion CBS paid for the NCAA basketball tournament or the \$200 million ABC paid during the early 1990s—the degree to which these sporting activities and their participants were regarded as entertainment rather than competition was of major significance. Coaches and players rapidly assumed celebrity status surrounded by their own cadre of “groupies” and subject to all of the associated temptations and pressures. Conferences began to be run more like professional organizations—the Big Ten became increasingly similar to the NFL in its governance and operating structures.

The lure of television and the desire for visibility began to distort the nature of college sports further and further. Some conferences agreed to completely restructure their schedules, including one that even agreed to start its games at midnight in order to accommodate one of the major cable sports networks. Advertising pervaded athletic facilities, even for products that seemed antithetical to the objectives of higher education, e.g., beer commercials.

It has become clear that during this third stage—the “big time show biz stage”—television in particular and the media more generally have seriously distorted the nature of intercollegiate athletics. It has distorted schedules by leading to excessively long seasons and by pressuring for post-season play and confer-

ence tournaments, which in the end trivialize seasonal play. It has transformed players into celebrities, through media hype. It has generated pressures on coaches and players—pressures to cheat. As was noted in a recent book, College Sports Incorporated, intercollegiate athletics have “ become a huge commercial entertainment conglomerate with extremely well-paid coaches, elite athletes, gleaming facilities, and enormous media coverage. And in the process the institutions, their academic programs, and the academic objectives of their students have not been well served.”

Myths and Realities

The myths surrounding college sports are rampant. It seems useful to look in some detail at several of the more popular myths in order to understand what the real issues are.

Myth 1. Colleges make lots of money from college sports.

Don Canham, former athletic director at Michigan and regarded as one of the premier athletic directors in the history of college sports, noted that over 99 percent of the schools in this country do not balance their budgets in athletics. Indeed, the University of Michigan provides an excellent model: In 1989 the University of Michigan won the Big Ten football championship, the NCAA basketball championship, and the Rose Bowl; appeared in seven national football telecasts; played before a stadium averaging 105,000 fans at six games; and had essentially all of its basketball games televised. It still managed to lose almost \$2.5 million.

Continuing this example, Michigan's entire intercollegiate sports budget amounts to roughly \$24 million, which sounds large, but which is just slightly over 1 percent of its total institutional budget of roughly \$1.8 billion a year. (When I was Provost, Coach Bo Schem-

bechler once noted the enormous pressures he faced to keep the Michigan Stadium filled. He pointed to the losses that we would face if stadium attendance dropped 10 percent. I pointed out that while this loss would be significant, it paled in comparison to the loss we would experience with a 10 percent drop in bed occupancy in the University of Michigan Hospitals—an income loss of almost a factor of 50 larger than that experienced in football. Hence, even athletic revenue has to be placed in perspective.)

The University of Michigan, as one of the most successful athletic programs, generates one of the largest levels of gross revenue in intercollegiate athletics. And yet, the University itself these days barely manages to operate in a break-even stance, with expenditures now for the first time in its history beginning to exceed revenues.

The problem is rather simple. The business culture for intercollegiate athletics is wacky. The striving for athletic competitiveness creates revenue-driven management models. The philosophy is to generate more and more dollars and then to spend them all, without ever really paying any attention to expenditure control. The belief is that the team that spends the most, wins the most.

It seems clear that until intercollegiate athletics begin to operate with as much of an eye on expenditures as revenues, universities will continue to lose increasing amounts of money in their athletic activities, regardless of the lucrative nature of the television contracts that they negotiate.

Myth 2. Winning Teams Stimulate the Alumni to Make Contributions.

Of course, some alumni are indeed moved to give money to the University when taking great pride in winning athletic programs.

Unfortunately, these generous alumni generally give only to athletic programs and not to the University in general. Development officers have known for many years that the most valuable support of a university generally comes from alumni and friends who identify with the academic nature of the university, not its athletic prowess. (A good example here is evidenced by Northwestern's spectacular fund raising ability—which clearly is unrelated to its athletic prowess.)

Myth 3. Television is Making Colleges Rich.

The staggering sums associated with recent television contracts, such as the \$1 billion contract with CBS for televising the NCAA tournament, suggest that television revenue is the goose that lays the golden egg for intercollegiate athletics. Yet, for most institutions, ticket sales are still the main source of revenue. The real payoff is through gate receipts, not television revenue. Indeed, there is recent evidence that television has begun to actually decrease overall revenues of many athletic programs by overexposing athletic events and hence eroding gate receipts. Further, erosion of attendance by television has been particularly harmful to those institutions and conferences that do not receive television exposure, since many of their respective fans stay home from their games in order to watch televised events involving other institutions.

There is some evidence that the additional costs required to mount "TV quality" events tend to track right along with increasing revenue in such a way that the more one is televised, the more one must spend. Hence there is little actual financial incentive for excessive television exposure. It is clear that while exposure can convey good news and promote the university's visibility, it can also convey "bad news," particularly if there is a major scandal or mishap with an event.

If the financial and visibility impact of television is not necessarily that positive, then why is there such a mad rush on the part of college athletics to push for more and more television exposure? Speaking from the perspective of one of the most heavily televised universities in the country, my suspicion is that the pressure for such excessive television exposure is not coming from the most successful and most heavily televised institutions—the Michigans, Ohio States, USCs, and UCLAs. It is instead coming from the “have not” institutions, those who have chosen not to mount competitive programs and who have become heavily dependent on sharing in the television revenue generated by the “big box office draws.”

Stated more bluntly, the television revenue-sharing policies of many conferences or broader associations such as the NCAA, while implemented in order to achieve equity, are in reality having the perverse effect of providing strong incentives for those institutions that are not attractive television draws to drive the system toward excessive exposure of popular events. While they share in the revenues, these institutions do not bear the burden of providing television-quality events. In essence, the revenue-sharing itself has created a situation in which there is little feedback that might lead to more moderate approaches to television exposure.

Myth 4. We are exploiting college athletes—we should give them professional pay.

The argument usually goes that college sports is golden—witness, for example, the \$1 billion from CBS for the NCAA tournament or a \$6 million pay-out for each team at the Rose Bowl. And yet, the athletes don’t even get pocket money. Look how much Larry Bird and Magic Johnson make in the pros. Shouldn’t we pay those college athletes who generate all this money?

Well, there are several realities that clarify this particular myth:

Reality 1: What do universities really make from athletics?

Let's take the University of Michigan as a good example. This past year Michigan made \$1.8 million total from television. That's the entire revenue from football, basketball, Rose Bowl, NCAA tournaments, and so forth. Of course, the University generated far more than this, but it was split with all other Big Ten teams. In any event, the \$1.8 million total, spread over the 150 football, basketball, and hockey athletes who generate it, amounts to about \$12,000 each per year. Of course, if we want to consider total revenue generation then it would be about \$18 million for total gate receipts, but this would be spread over 700 varsity athletes and about 200 coaches and staff—amounting to about \$18,000 per athlete per year. And, of course, we haven't said anything yet about expenses. These at Michigan, as at every other university in the nation, are generally larger than revenues. Hence, the net revenues, that is the profit, is zero!

Reality 2: What do the players get from the university?

At Michigan the typical instructional cost of our undergraduate programs is about \$20,000 per student per year. When we add support for room and board and incidentals to this, it amounts to an investment of about \$30,000 per year per fully tendered student-athlete—or between \$120,000-\$150,000 per athlete over four or five years of studies. Of course the actual value of this education is far higher, since it provides the student-athlete with an earning capacity during his career that is far higher than the earning capacity provided by a high school education. The lifetime career earnings of a student-athlete with a college education will not only be far beyond that of someone without a

college education, but they will be far beyond the earnings of a professional athlete—even beyond the earnings of the greatest superstars. And, of course, only a few student-athletes will ever achieve high-paying professional athletic roles. Most do not make the pros, and those who do are only moderately compensated.

Reality 3: Is such a “show biz” approach really appropriate for college athletics?

Those who call for professionalizing college athletics by paying student-athletes—and these are generally members of the media—are once again approaching college sports as show business, not as part of an academic enterprise. It is only in show business where the star makes obscene amounts. In academics the Nobel Prize winner doesn't make all that much more than any other faculty member. In the corporate world the inventor of a device which earns a corporation millions of dollars will make only a small incentive from his discovery. The moral of the story is that one simply cannot provide the perverse reward system characterizing the entertainment industry to college sports—unless of course you truly believe college sports should be show business.

An aside here: A recent U.S. Department of Education study, headed by Clifford Adelman, attempted to determine what the impact of their education was on 8,000 college students, including 200 athletes, over a period from 1972 to 1986. By age thirty-two, athletes were found to have the highest rate of home ownership, the lowest rate of unemployment, and earnings 10 percent above the mean. Despite having somewhat poorer high school records, test scores, and preparation for college, athletes tended to graduate at rates only slightly behind those of students at large. Of course, the reason for academic success involved both their strong financial support through scholarship and the academic support and encouragement through programs not available to students at

large. In a recent column criticizing college sports, even David Broder had to acknowledge that, "This study suggests that college did not fail—or ruthlessly exploit—these jocks." Of course, Broder goes on to say, "whether the care and resources the college invests in the few hundred players who draw such huge crowds and produce such vast revenues is consistent with the overall educational mission is another question altogether—to which my answer is a resounding no."

But, of course, the real argument against professionalizing college sports and putting athletes on the payroll has to do with the fundamental nature of the university itself. Professional athletics have absolutely nothing to do with education—and hence should have no role in a university.

In summary, then, the mad dash for fame and profits through intercollegiate athletics is a fool's quest. Recognition on the athletic field or court has little relevance to academic reputation. UNLV can win all the national championships it wishes, and it will never catch fair Harvard's eye. Indeed, athletics fame can be a two-edged sword, since it can attract public scrutiny revealing violations and scandal. So too, experience has shown that expenses always increase somewhat more rapidly than the revenues generated by college sports. And, as the intensity and visibility of big-time athletics build, the university finds itself buffeted about by the passion and energy of the media and the public who identify with their athletics programs.

The Michigan Way

It is clear that among the many important traditions that make the University the place it has become, the role of intercollegiate athletics is the most visible and most important. The University, its alumni, its students, and even its faculty and staff are proud of its athletic

programs. The University is unique in its ability to combine world-class academic programs with a winning tradition of athletics. Indeed, if you compare the two top-ten lists—top-ten universities in academic quality and the top-ten athletic programs in major sports such as football, basketball, and hockey—you will generally find only one name on both lists: Michigan.

Yet as important as it is to win, the University is also proud of the integrity of its programs. And, of course, the University has long taken great pride in attracting many of the nation's leading coaches.

But perhaps most important of all is a fundamental Michigan belief that athletic competition can play an important role in its total mission of education. I suppose there is something in the very nature of the University that causes us to continually ask questions about our values, our goals, our priorities. What are we? What do we strive to become? Interestingly enough, I suspect that if one were to go through one of the talks given to our teams in the locker room with a highlighter, we would develop some pretty good ideas. Words such as pride, sacrifice, dedication, courage, confidence, leadership, integrity, honor, and honesty abound. It is clear that intercollegiate athletics have the capacity to provide students with a marvelous opportunity to develop these qualities so important in later life, particularly when led by inspiring and committed coaches.

Of course, these programs can also do more, because they serve as models not simply for the university community, but for others throughout society. How many youngsters, because they dream of someday playing in the Rose Bowl or the Final Four, learn from others the qualities necessary to get there? And how many of us as adults tend to identify with these teams, sharing their thrill in victory and suffering with them in defeat. All of intercollegiate athletics is a game, to be sure, but it is also in

many ways a remarkable model of life. And those factors which lead to a program's long-term success are also the factors which prepare young men and women for life itself! While it is important that we always keep it in perspective, that we always place primary emphasis on the first word in the term "student-athlete," it is also important that we acknowledge that the lessons that our coaches teach to the young men and women who don the maize and blue at Michigan are some of the most important lessons of life—lessons every bit as important as those we teach in the classroom, the library, and the laboratory.

It takes great dedication and commitment to balance the demands of intercollegiate athletics with the demands of a Michigan education. Education is challenging enough without the additional pressures of participation in some of the nation's leading athletic programs. But I suspect that later in life most of our student-athletes will look back on their experience at Michigan as providing an extraordinary education, in the most complete sense of the word. It has sometimes been said that the purpose of a college education is to learn the art of life. And in this goal, our student-athletes may have a certain edge, since most of them will benefit from a full range of experiences on our campus—from the intellectual, to the athletic, to the cultural.

The value of athletics, when combined with a Michigan education, becomes all the more apparent when meeting former Michigan student-athletes who have gone on to great success—indeed leadership—in their careers as teachers, executives, doctors, lawyers, engineers, and even Presidents of the United States.

Michigan plays a particularly important role in intercollegiate athletics. Over the years it has mounted some of the most successful and visible programs. It has been characterized by a long tradition of playing strictly by the rules.

Indeed, Michigan athletics are really the envy of many universities. That gives the University a unique responsibility, because in many ways it stands for all that is good in intercollegiate athletics—integrity, quality, class. This responsibility provides the University with an unusual opportunity for leadership. It also provides it with an unusual opportunity to lead in the effort to restructure and better align intercollegiate athletics to the academic priorities of higher education.

Fundamental Principles

It is my belief that the key to realigning intercollegiate athletics with academic priorities is to first establish the fundamental reasons why an institution wishes to conduct competitive athletic programs. These reasons will then determine the philosophy and fundamental principles which govern these activities. Earlier I outlined several stages in the evolution of sports which suggested reasons for the conduct of these activities: i) to provide an educational opportunity for students beyond the classroom, and ii) to serve as community events which unify the campus community and those who identify with the institution.

The Knight Commission sets out a series of fundamental principles that make a good starting point for this effort:

1. The educational values, practices, and mission of the institution determine the standards by which intercollegiate athletics are conducted.
2. The responsibility and authority for the administration of the athletic department, including all basic policies, personnel, and finances, are vested in the president.

3. The welfare, health, and safety of student-athletes are primary concerns of athletics administration on campus.
4. Every student-athlete will receive equitable and fair treatment.
5. The admission of student-athletes will be based on their showing reasonable promise of being successful in a course of study leading to an academic degree—as determined by the admissions officials.
6. Continuing eligibility will be based on students being able to demonstrate each term that they will graduate within five years of enrolling. Students who do not pass the test will not play.
7. Student-athletes in each sport will be graduated in at least the same proportion as non-athletes who have spent comparable time as full-time students.
8. All funds raised and spent in connection with intercollegiate athletics programs will be channeled through the institution's general financial structure.
9. All athletics-related income from non-university sources for coaches and athletics administrators will be reviewed and approved by the university.
10. Institutions will conduct annual academic and fiscal audits of athletics. Changes are clearly required in intercollegiate athletics. Making these changes will require courage, determination, and perseverance on the part of all.

While these make a good starting point, there are some issues which need more thorough consideration.

The Treatment of Student-athletes

Here, I believe that programs should be guided always by the question of "what is best for the student." For example, in deciding on the admission of a student-athlete one must always ask whether or not the student has the capacity to benefit from an undergraduate education at the institution. Does the institution have the confidence that with sufficient support the student has the ability to pursue meaningful studies and to graduate. Only those students who have a high probability of graduating should be admitted.

In this regard it is important to recognize that the underlying principle of admissions policies at most selective institutions is to achieve a student body of unusual distinction and depth. Most institutions are aware that excellence is a multi-dimensional characteristic. It comes in many forms—in academic ability, artistic ability, and athletic ability. For that reason, few institutions today insist on blind, one-dimensional standards for all students, for example, those based on test scores or grade point average. Rather, they seek diversity in their student bodies, and it is this search for diversity which justifies in many ways the commitment to building successful intercollegiate athletic programs.

At Michigan we believe that the admission of athletes must flow through the normal academic structure. In most academic institutions, the chief academic officer, usually the provost or vice president for academic affairs, has the responsibility in the end for the quality, standards, and success of the academic programs of the institution. These responsibilities

include admissions, academic counseling, and academic eligibility. Hence, the final decision point on admissions and academic standing of student-athletes should rest with the provost and his or her designees. Of course, this should require a careful monitoring of progress toward degree by academic officers in addition—and not simply monitoring by staff in the department of intercollegiate athletics. It will also require the provision of sufficient academic support services to recognize the unusual pressures and time commitments of student-athletes.

Of comparable importance is the concept of academic progress. There should be careful monitoring to ensure that students are making real progress toward real degrees.

There should also be a commitment of adequate financial aid and support until students graduate—not just until they complete eligibility.

Of equal importance in commitments to student-athletes is the issue of fairness. During the 1970s and 1980s a major effort was made to provide women with opportunities equal to those of men. To the degree that intercollegiate athletics is justified in terms of its value in character-building and in education, it seems clear that women should be given the same opportunities as men who have access to such programs. Indeed, I would go further and suggest that, in those institutions which have primarily stressed spectator athletics, a major effort might be given to introducing a series of athletic programs designed primarily for student participation. Broad participation should be encouraged for all students, not just those involved in competitive or varsity athletics.

The Treatment of Coaches

Coaching of a modern college athletic program is a demanding and intense profession. The rigors of recruiting, of coaching, of working with student-athletes, of handling the enormous public attention—particularly that from the media—and of adhering to the complex rules governing athletes and athletics are challenging indeed. Coaching requires extraordinary commitment, long hours of work, and demanding travel schedules. And it yields frustration and disappointment. But it also yields rewards, not simply in winning, but more importantly in seeing the development and success of the young men and women in the programs. From this perspective it is my belief that coaches should be treated first and foremost as teachers, not as managers of athletic programs. If this philosophy would be adopted more generally, I believe it would lead to extended commitments by institutions to coaches, as well as more consistent methods of compensation from universities, e.g., avoiding the need for shoe contracts.

Financing

I have already noted my belief that a serious imbalance exists between the competitive pressures to generate revenues and inadequate expenditure control and cost containment. Far too many intercollegiate athletic programs are allowed to operate without sufficient university supervision. It is my belief that such programs must come under the general scrutiny and operational structures characterizing other university units. Furthermore, during periods in which higher education is being asked to carefully assess its efficiency in an effort to reduce costs, I believe that intercollegiate athletics must be looked at from a similar perspective.

Integrity

At Michigan we believe that there is only one way to play and that is by the rules. The right way is the Michigan way. The institution is not only one of the most visible but one of the most highly competitive institutions in the nation. Therefore, we believe that to play a leadership role, to honor our commitment to student-athletes and to our academic programs, we simply must implement adequate institutional control to insure that our programs, our coaches, and our players respect and adhere to the rules governing academic athletic competition. Each year I, as President of the University, meet with all of the coaches in order to stress to them the importance of the integrity of our programs. I take great pains to point out to them that in my many years at the University there has never been a coach who has been released from the University because of his or her win-lose record. However, if in fact coaches or staff are found bending or breaking the rules, then dismissal is almost certain.

Winning

How does one evaluate successful athletic programs? Win-lose records? Revenue (gate receipts)? Graduation rates of student-athletes? The number of athletes who go on to national recognition and professional careers? In most of our institutions we aspire to excellence in intercollegiate athletics just as we do in every other endeavor. Just as Michigan seeks to have the number one program in the nation in psychology or classical studies or engineering or law, we also aspire to leadership in football or swimming or softball. But, as important as success is, it is not the most important goal that we have. Winning must not come at the expense of other more important objectives such as the integrity of our program and the academic success of our student-athletes.

The Pros

Many of the most serious conflicts between athletic and academic priorities occur in those sports for which collegiate participation serves for a very talented few as a training ground for professional careers. It is certainly the case that professional football and basketball rely on intercollegiate athletics much as professional baseball and hockey rely on their own farm clubs.

If there is sufficient separation between college and professional sports, then who can deny the opportunities that the latter provides to athletes of exceptional ability. Unfortunately, in recent years, professional sports has become a far more intrusive and negative influence. The feeding frenzy of professional agents seeking out college athletes has led to serious abuse of academic and athletic standards. Professional teams take a "meat market" approach toward the professional draft: College athletes are expected to drop their college activities to participate in try-out camps designed to measure their physical abilities, and the lure of professional riches distorts the academic priorities of student-athletes.

Perhaps the most serious threat is that posed by the increasing tendency for professional sports to entice college athletes into professional careers—or at least into the professional draft—long before they have had an opportunity to complete their academic degrees. This trend not only represents the most cynical and abusive attitude on the part of professional teams and agents toward the well-being of student-athletes, but it frequently leads to the most tragic of circumstances in which students are encouraged to drop out of college to pursue the will-of-the-wisp of a short-lived professional career.

Unfortunately, despite the importance of college athletics to their future, the leaders of

professional athletics have yet to demonstrate either the interest or the sense of responsibility to develop guidelines which will protect the best long-term interests of student-athletes. Instead they—and many members of the media—call for even fewer limitations on the interaction between college and professional sports by allowing student-athletes to test the water by participating in the professional draft without jeopardizing their college eligibility.

However, in the spirit of tilting with windmills, let me offer a proposal that would enable professional sports to step up to their responsibility both to the athlete and to the institutions that have assisted in developing their athletic ability. The idea is quite simple: Whenever a professional team recruits student-athletes prior to the completion of their academic degree, the team would be required to place in escrow with the university an amount sufficient to fund the students' eventual completion of their degrees when they return during or after their professional career. Note that this would accomplish several objectives: i) it would provide an insurance policy for the students to allow them to complete their degree; ii) it would provide an incentive for professional teams to allow students to finish their studies before playing professionally, thereby avoiding the expense of the escrow account; and iii) in the event that the student did not return, the reversion of the funds to the institution would compensate it to some degree for the prior investment it had made in the student through its own grants-in-aid.

A simple enough concept, but probably unrealistic without a major sea change in the attitude of the owners of professional franchises.

Team Work

In any institution, and on occasion at the University of Michigan, a sense of isolation

develops separating athletic programs from the mainstream activities of the University. We believe it is terribly important that coaches work hand-in-hand with University administrators and faculty in order to integrate student-athletes into the mainstream of the University, to stress the fact that they are first and foremost students—and that coaches themselves play important roles at the University. Through such interactions universities can develop and most effectively integrate their athletic activities into their athletic programs.

Some Final Comments

In conclusion, it is my belief that intercollegiate athletics are indeed an important part of higher education. It is important as an educational opportunity to the student-athlete. It is important as a unifying force for the university communities and beyond. However, I do not believe that intercollegiate athletics has any obligation to be responsive to or important to armchair America.

Indeed, I believe that the key to control of intercollegiate athletics and to proper alignment with the academic priorities of the institution will be the effort of universities to strongly resist media pressure—whether electronic or print—to transform college sports into an industry. The academy simply must recapture control of college sports from the media or give it up entirely.

More specifically, universities must first establish their own priorities, objectives, and principles for college sports and then commit themselves to holding fast to these objectives in the face of the enormous pressure that will be exerted by the media and the public-at-large. In the end, athletics must reflect the fundamental academic values of the university. There is no other alternative acceptable to higher education.

Appendix

Recommendations of the Knight Commission

The New Model: "One-Plus-Three"

Presidential Control

University presidents are the key to successful reform of intercollegiate athletics. They are accountable for all the major elements of their respective universities, and they must be for athletics as well.

- 1) Trustees should explicitly endorse and reaffirm presidential authority in all matters of athletics' governance.
- 2) Presidents should act on their obligation to control conferences.
- 3) Presidents should control the NCAA.
- 4) Presidents should control their institution's involvement with commercial television.

Academic Integrity

The first consideration must be academic integrity. The fundamental premise is that athletes are students as well.

- 1) The NCAA should strengthen initial eligibility requirements.
- 2) The letter of intent should serve the student as well as the athletics department.
- 3) Athletics scholarships should be offered for a five-year period.
- 4) Athletics eligibility should depend on progress toward a degree.

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- 5) Graduation rates of athletes should be a criterion for NCAA certification.

Financial Integrity

- 1) Athletics costs must be reduced.
- 2) Athletics grants-in-aid should cover the full cost of attendance for the very needy.
- 3) The independence of athletics foundations and booster clubs must be curbed.
- 4) The NCAA formula for sharing television revenue from the tournaments must be reviewed by university presidents.
- 5) All athletics-related coaches' income should be reviewed and approved by the university.
- 6) Coaches should be offered long-term contracts.
- 7) Institutional support should be available for intercollegiate athletics.

Certification

- 1) The NCAA should extend the certification process to all institutions granting athletics aid.
- 2) Universities should undertake comprehensive, annual policy audits of their athletics program.
- 3) The certification program should include the major themes propounded in the Knight Commission Report.

