

DATE: 25 September 2014

TO: Chancellor Nicholas Dirks

FROM: Margaret Conkey, Chair, Chancellor's Task Force on Academics and Athletics
(Class of 1960 Professor Emerita of Anthropology)

I am herewith attaching the Report of the Task Force on Academics and Athletics that you convened in January 2014. The Charge from you to this group was ambitious and inclusive, and the 20-person Task Force has been fully engaged with the multiple facets of our inquiry into "new means to ensure that our academic mission informs every part of our intercollegiate athletic programs". You asked that we submit a report that provides a "series of actionable recommendations to assist the campus in maximizing the academic performance of student athletes and the overall quality of their campus experience". You indicated you were particularly interested in our addressing the "issue of integration of intercollegiate athletics into and as integral to the full life of the campus". We believe our overall themes for our Report are congruent with your charge: integration, communication, and partnerships.

It is no secret that a key mobilizing force for the creation of the Task Force and your Charge to us lies in the unfortunate fact of the extremely low graduation rates of football and men's basketball, as measured by the NCAA metric of the Graduation Success Rate, for those student-athletes in those sports during the years of 2003-2006. Indeed, part of our task lay in taking a hard look at those data and the context within which those students were at Berkeley to better understand how those students did not graduate within the specified 6 year time period. We have communicated those observations to the Academic Senate committee authorized to review and revise admissions policies.

But the goals of the Task Force were necessarily more ambitious and we have indeed come up with a multiplicity of recommendations, some of which I mention below. But while we took as a starting point that there were deeply troubling situations regarding the graduate rates for several teams, we want to make it very clear that this problem does not characterize most of our now-30 teams. In fact, most teams and most student-athletes are graduating at a rate equal or greater than the campus average graduation rates. Numerous teams have graduation success rates of 100% and over many years.

But since the goal of the Task Force was not limited to identifying and "fixing" that situation, we were fully engaged in trying to better understand the impediments that student-athletes face to their having a meaningful educational experience. In that inquiry, as you will see, we identified a number of factors that challenge our student-athletes that are also at work for the wider student population, suggesting to us that what we have been able to identify among student-athletes are a harbinger of issues that are campus-wide, such as the challenges to finding courses that mesh with their schedules, or the many majors that are "capped". Some

campus-wide issues are exacerbated for student-athletes because of limited practice facilities and/or competition schedules (such as mid-week games involving travel).

We know that both the student-athletes and many of the non-athlete students have expressed a desire for more integration, and we have taken this seriously, with multiple recommendations for such things as a fully integrated orientation, more integrated residence hall assignments, and how to include the student-athletes in the revised advising program of the College of Letters and Science. We understand that the Academic Senate committee on admissions (AEPE) is formulating a revised admissions policy that will integrate our athletic admissions into the wider admissions policies and practices, while retaining the focus on holistic admissions and on the exceptional talent that many student-athletes will and do bring to the campus. We bring to you our continued concerns regarding aspects of the campus climate and culture that, themselves, work as impediments to not just student-athletes but to many other students as well. We would place the need to address these issues as one of the most serious courses of action that the campus needs to address, especially in the context of the current shifts and expansions of the campus demographics.

Above all, we have multiple recommendations that will articulate and enhance your fundamental philosophy that there are genuine pedagogical, social and cultural values to a robust program of intercollegiate athletics that strives for and achieves excellence. The twenty members of the Task Force have come away with much new knowledge and great appreciation from this nine-month engagement with our undergraduate educational mission, as well as from interaction with the many talented and thoughtful individuals who are concerned with every aspect of not just the intercollegiate athletics program but with the entire experience of all of our students. We must “keep our eye on the prize”, which begins with admitting student-athletes who have the best chances of succeeding here, to supporting all the campus ways to create cultures of achievement and student self-realization in a climate of partnerships, integration and effective communication and listening.

Again, we thank you for the opportunity to serve the campus and we are extremely pleased with your support, engagement and genuine attention to this issue with such a wide scope.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret W. Conkey". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.