

Today, the Chancellor's Task Force on Academics and Athletics released its report. This document, the result of a comprehensive nine-month process, identified key issues and made recommendations to improve the conditions for student-athlete academic success on our campus. The findings and recommendations can be found [here](#).

Several months ago, when this Task Force convened to address the unacceptable student-athlete graduation rates, I enthusiastically answered the Chancellor's call to action and welcomed the opportunity to serve in my capacity as Vice Chair of the UC Berkeley Foundation. When I transitioned to my role as your interim Director of Athletics in July, I remained an engaged and invested Task Force participant, though I did elect – because of my responsibilities as AD – to abstain from voting on the recommendations.

When the Task Force began its work, we understood that the athletic department and campus community needed to come together, taking dramatic and immediate steps to better the climate for student-athlete academic success. We knew this was a complex problem. The solution – that our campus and athletic department develop an infrastructure to consistently provide conditions in which *all* of our student-athletes can balance Berkeley's academic rigors with Division I athletic competition – is one that, perhaps, can only be found at a place like Cal.

Throughout this process, many issues – some of which have already been addressed – came to the surface. Graduation rates and academic performance, overall, have not been up to Berkeley standards. In several instances, it was identified that many of our student-athletes feel poorly integrated into the larger campus community and are hindered from pursuing an enriching academic career. This finding, in particular, was deemed unacceptable.

The Task Force also confirmed some uplifting findings: the vast majority of our student-athletes are academically high-performing and experiencing a well-rounded collegiate experience. This is excellent news. In order to provide this same extraordinary experience to every student-athlete at Cal, our athletic department is prepared to embrace the recommendations that Chancellor Dirks puts forth.

I am proud to be an alumnus of the University of California, Berkeley and a former Cal student-athlete. I now serve this campus as a trustee, volunteer, donor and as your interim Director of Athletics. Like many of you, I believe in our great University and work tirelessly to ensure all of our current and future students have access to the world-renowned academic and cultural resources available at Cal.

In the time I have served as Director of Athletics, I have found the department staffed with dedicated, mission-driven professionals and coaches who are passionate about both their sport and developing their student-athletes. You should know, we have an exemplary team of individuals in place who will each be tasked with implementing these changes and reaching out across campus to enact these improvements.

As we move forward into a new era of athletics and academics at Cal, we have had many recent successes proving we are headed in the right direction. Last May, we graduated hundreds of student-athletes, who emerged from this esteemed institution as Berkeley alumni, well-prepared and eager to change the world. Currently, of our 850 student-athletes, many of them achieve at a high academic level, all while pursuing conference, national and international championships and taking advantage of the the cultural and personal offerings on this world-class campus.

Also, in May of 2014, the NCAA reported that eight of our teams had an Academic Progress Rate (APR) score of 1,000 for the 2012-13 academic year, while four programs received an NCAA Public Recognition Award for their outstanding multi-year averages. Our football program also saw a 46-point jump in its APR score, moving from 923 to 969. This can be largely attributed to a comprehensive effort between our coaching staff, student-athletes, athletics department resources and campus partners to address previous concerns.

Every day, I am proud to be a Golden Bear. I am proud of the aforementioned achievements and proud to be associated with this department. I have nothing but praise for the work done over the course of the past nine months by Professor Meg Conkey and my visionary colleagues on the Task Force. I also want to thank our donors, alumni, coaches, student-athletes and staff for their time, input and for providing honest and thoughtful feedback to this report.

I am committed to making the collegiate experience of our student-athletes at this world-class university as enriching as possible and I am honored to work with you and continue to serve this great institution. By working together with the Chancellor's office and our incredible partners on campus, we can and will ensure our student-athlete experience is nothing short of stellar and that we continue to move in the right direction, forever impacting the lives of these remarkable young people.

Thank you and Go Bears!

Mike Williams