

**“LEADERSHIP AND CHALLENGES:
THE ROLES OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS IN THE UNIVERSITY”**

State of the Association Speech
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In the first decade of the 20th century, General Palmer Pierce, Superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and the first president of the then newly formed NCAA, would stand before the delegates to the annual Convention, just as I am standing before you today.

General Pierce would open each Convention by reading to the delegates the purposes for the Association as set forth in its Constitution. He would read them as a reminder of why the delegates were gathered and why the organization existed.

He would read what has become known today as the Association’s basic purpose. It read then: “Athletic activities in the colleges and universities of the United States [shall] be maintained on an ethical plane in keeping with the dignity and high purpose of education.”

It would be amended a few years later to establish that “intercollegiate athletics are to be an integral part of higher education and the student-athlete an integral part of the student body.”

The message and purpose are the same and speak to us in the same way today.

It was no accident that General Pierce insisted on reminding the delegates to the Convention of the role of college sports and the NCAA within higher education. He understood and wanted to reinforce the idea that in America, colleges and universities connect athletics to education.

A century later, in the first decade of the 21st century, I am here to remind us all that – as the theme of this Convention notes -- the NCAA is a higher education association.

It is focused, naturally, on intercollegiate athletics. But the context in which it serves its members is clearly that of higher education.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association is dissimilar to the professional leagues. The critical difference is that those who participate in our athletics events are students, and students first. They undertake athletics training and competition in support of their education. The NCAA’s members are primarily universities, and as such the universities’ educational mission is controlling its athletics activities.

So, how are we doing? What are the issues and challenges we face? What is the state of intercollegiate athletics in 2008?

The relationship between intercollegiate athletics and the university is reciprocal. Intercollegiate athletics is dependent on the university. It could not exist in its present form without institutions of higher education.

But at the same time, the university gains advantages, oftentimes significant advantages, by the inclusion of intercollegiate athletics on campus. When all is working properly, the university and its athletics programs are made stronger by this reciprocity and interdependence.

Unfortunately, there are also issues and problems that detract from intercollegiate athletics maximizing its success and the university failing to take full advantage of its athletics programs. These issues and problems present challenges to overcome.

Athletics programs and universities themselves are accustomed to overcoming challenges – indeed, they are practiced and good at it. If these challenges are properly identified, and if there is genuine cooperation and effort in designing and implementing solutions, then the full advantages of a well-functioning and successful athletics program can be realized by the university and the university can advance on that basis.

Today, I want to focus on what I see as the four key roles that intercollegiate athletics has within the context of higher education. I will also articulate some of the concomitant challenges and point toward approaches that should yield resolutions. The four key roles of intercollegiate athletics in the university context are these:

- (1) Intercollegiate athletics provides educational value;
- (2) Intercollegiate athletics helps create community on campus;
- (3) The university is helped by college sports in meeting its obligations to engage the world beyond the campus; and,
- (4) Intercollegiate athletics contributes to social justice.

Let me begin by discussing how college sports provides educational value.

Athletics departments, in all three divisions, have the obligation to ensure that those who participate in intercollegiate athletics have a realistic opportunity to receive an excellent education at their university or college. There should be no barriers imposed by athletics participation toward being well-educated that cannot be overcome by careful planning and hard work by the student-athlete.

While there are time commitments imposed by travel and practice, an opportunity for academic programs of high quality is a sine qua non for any intercollegiate athletics program. The obligation of the athletics department is to provide a genuine opportunity for student-athletes to take advantage of the institution's academic offerings, and to motivate and incent a commitment to academics.

In truth, not every student-athlete – just as not every student on campus – fully applies himself or herself to academic study. The good news is that the vast majority of student-athletes do apply themselves to the task of becoming educated. It is for this reason that student-athletes on average graduate at higher rates than the general student body.

We have hard data for Divisions I and II. In Division I student-athletes graduate at 62 percent compared with the general student body rate of 61 percent; and in Division II, they graduate eight percentage points higher than the general student body. Clearly, intercollegiate athletics serves the mission of the university by encouraging and promoting academic success.

But the educational value of intercollegiate athletics goes beyond the classroom. An undergraduate education, most especially for traditional-aged students, encompasses more than the learning that takes place in the lecture hall, laboratory and library. Of course, that learning is at the core of a college education and it is the central reason to attend college; however, it does not exhaust the important learning that occurs during the several years a young woman or man attends a university.

A college education also prepares students for a successful life by guiding them in forming attitudes and life-plans that enable each of them to be excellent family members, productive contributors to their community and engaged citizens. A college education grounds young women and men by enabling them to internalize the values necessary for happy and fulfilling lives.

These skills for life include especially the drive to pursue excellence, knowing how to lead and to follow, respect for others even when they are competitors, the commitment to hard work; learning how to focus, learning how to persist despite obstacles, and knowing the importance of team and group effort.

Consider persistence in the face of obstacles. Most students who fail to complete their degrees are unable to overcome the barriers presented by the transition from high school to college. It is the first year, most often the first semester or the first six weeks, in which many students become alienated from their school and environment. They fail to develop supportive social networks and to become engaged in their academic coursework. It is not long thereafter that these students leave the institution.

By contrast, consider student-athletes. Some of them, no doubt, feel the same alienation when transitioning from home life to a seemingly impersonal environment. But their teammates and coaches, and advisors and administrators, are assisting these students in developing a support network; in identifying goals and helping them understand how to pursue them; and especially learning the personal values of persistence and pride in overcoming difficulties. Not only does that lead to continued enrollment, but it establishes a healthy pattern of behavior and commitment to values that has positive effects on character development.

There are, of course, other means than through athletics to learn these skills and attitudes. But intercollegiate athletics leads to learning these life skills as well as any other alternative on campus, and indeed better than most and with a significant rate of success. Extensive recent surveys of both currently enrolled and former student-athletes confirm the power of intercollegiate athletics to teach life skills and to have long-term positive effects for those who participate in sports.

Nonetheless, there are serious challenges facing universities in their attempts to maximize academic and life success for student-athletes. I will focus on Division I, and particularly the high-profile sports, where the challenges are most overt, though they are replicated in other sports and other divisions. This focus also reflects the recent approach to academic reform undertaken by the NCAA.

Creation of the Graduation Success Rate (GSR) and Academic Progress Rate (APR) are significant new tools to help athletics programs and member institutions in Division I determine how successful their student-athletes are in the classrooms. The Committee on Academic Performance (CAP) and the Division I Board of Directors have worked hand-in-hand to establish the “team” as the new unit of analysis – rather than only the student-athlete as in the past. The Board has put these new metrics in place and has determined sanctions when standards are not met.

In order to provide adequate notice of these changes in metrics, and to collect sufficient data, teams were given the benefit of the doubt through adjustments for four years. By late this spring, however, there will be adequate data and sufficient notice so that these adjustments can be lifted.

Overall, teams and athletics programs have responded well, and noteworthy academic progress has been made. That is not the case, however, for every team and every sport. Unless there are changes in the near future, several men’s sports will see substantial numbers of penalties. Wrestling, baseball, football and men’s basketball face the most sanctions.

Since the goal is to change behavior, to enable young men to achieve academically, and not to sanction and punish, the national office is working with many of these teams and their athletics departments to create plans for recovery. In a number of cases, though not all, there are circumstances that can be corrected within a reasonable timeframe that will eliminate the problems leading to academic underachievement.

Additionally, individual sports are addressing issues specific to them that lead to systemic academic underachievement. Baseball was the first to complete a self-diagnosis and make recommendations for change. Men's basketball is pursuing a similar course of action, and wrestling and football are also exploring similar options.

I am optimistic that significant progress can be made in many of these cases to reverse current academic underachievement.

But there will be sanctions.

Some teams will not meet the new academic standards. The Division I Board of Directors understands that change must be pressed, and it recently went on record to reaffirm its commitment to academic reform.

The need for competitiveness and the interest in winning must be coupled with a commitment to assist and encourage student-athletes to succeed academically. It is not competitiveness or academic success; it must be both.

Creating this balance is not easy, and it deserves continuing attention. The professional leagues have no parallel balance to create. For them, winning is everything. But our task in higher education is different, and frankly, more difficult.

Because of the increased expectations of academic achievement for student-athletes, a number of specific challenges arise.

We want to continue to recruit the students for our teams that we have in the past, provided that, with adequate assistance, they can be successful academically. As it is sometimes said, we do not want to change the "zip code" of those who we recruit. Our challenge is to make clear the academic expectations of our institutions to athletically talented young students early in their high school careers. Two sports in which this is especially pertinent are men's basketball and football. We need to help young men at an early age, and help their families and advisors, understand that admission and eligibility are dependent on both academic and athletics preparedness.

We are working with others, including the National Basketball Association, USA Basketball and the National High School Federation, to provide guidance and structure to youth basketball. It is a complex situation, and not one in which we can regulate outcomes. We must find a way to capture the attention of these young men in a crowded marketplace.

We must, at all costs, refrain from setting up young players for failure. It is exploitive to bring young men or women into college sports when they have little or no chance for academic success.

In sum, this is a challenging year in Division I for academic reform as the transition to the new requirements for academic achievement are put fully into place. Every team in every sport must make the grade.

I want to turn now to the second key role for intercollegiate athletics, helping to create community on campus.

Universities are diverse institutions. They include young men and women from many backgrounds with many points of view and faculty members and administrators with divergent histories and life experiences. Finding common ground among all these persons, not to mention the institution's alumni and friends, is not simple.

But it is crucial.

To be successful in creating a learning environment in which students can prosper requires a sense of belonging, a sense of community. While there are multiple focal points for campus community, there is one that has unusual power in creating and sustaining community. And that is athletics.

Earlier we spoke of the role of athletics in helping student-athletes bond to the institution, especially at the crucial early phase of their college careers. A well-functioning athletics program also has that effect for the entire student body, and often beyond the students to the faculty and staff. It even has this effect for the off-campus constituents, the alumni and university friends.

Intercollegiate athletics provides effective marketing of universities in all three divisions. There is no question but universities compete with each other for potential highly qualified students, faculty and friends and donors. They tell their stories – market themselves – in print ads, billboards, television and radio spots and in many ways.

In particular, athletics provides a good platform for universities to send messages to prospective students, and not just athletes and the public.

A well-conducted, visible athletics program attracts favorable attention. That is obvious when there is broadcast time for Division I sports. But it also works for Divisions II and III. When an institution recruits regionally for the general student body, a successful athletics program can provide marketing that the university could not otherwise afford.

Of course, a poorly conducted athletics program – one that has academic issues or rules violations – can have negative consequences in recruiting for the general student body. It cuts both ways. Thus, there is pressure on universities to have athletics programs that represent them well, not only for athletics reasons, but because of the marketing potential of these programs.

It is not necessary to have “big time” intercollegiate athletics to reinforce campus community. We see it in Division III, in institutions that have modest attendance at games and little media coverage. In a good number of Division III institutions, a significant proportion of the student body is directly engaged in intercollegiate athletics, sometimes more than a third of the student body. High participation rates generate common ground on which students relate to each other and to the institution.

However, it is possible to misread the role that intercollegiate athletics plays in creating community for the campus. Division II has read it correctly.

Division II is succeeding in positioning athletics so that it becomes a point of pride and engagement on campus. Through the leadership of the presidents and chancellors, these institutions are using athletics to provide identity on campus and in the surrounding community.

They stress that those who participate in intercollegiate athletics intentionally chose to attend the institution. Athletics becomes a positive cause around which to rally. Division II schools are using sports as a catalyst to build pride and loyalty. It is impressive to observe this movement in Division II gaining ground.

On most Division I campuses and certainly on the larger campuses, the proportion of students who participate in intercollegiate athletics is five percent or less. Those student-athletes enjoy the advantages of belonging to a community within a large university.

But the entire campus also gains this advantage. Indeed, this sense of association and bonding with the institution goes well beyond the campus, given the national media attention to athletics in these schools. Fans across the country are able to identify with the team and the university because of this broad access. Now, that access is available digitally on multiple platforms, from one's home computer to hand-held devices, the ability to follow and to identify with the teams and the institution is increasing.

American college sports fans are among the most avid in the world. There is little, if anything, in this country that produces feelings of affiliation with our institutions of higher education the way athletics programs does.

Some people feel uncomfortable about this role of athletics in the university, and would prefer that the fondness for the university would emanate from other, more academic sources. It is easy to understand this concern, and I can relate to it. Yet, the fact of the matter is that in a large number of cases intercollegiate athletics draws more attention to a university than anything else. That attention leads to bonding on campus and it drives local community, as well as stimulates virtual community.

The pace of contemporary life often makes it difficult to form and sustain community. Our sense of community has diminished even though our need for it has not. Aristotle said that persons are social animals, and that is no less true today than it was in Ancient Greece. But today we travel too far and too fast to enjoy the daily conversation in the town square.

Many find a sense of community on line, especially through social networks. Nonetheless, there remains a strong need to share the same physical space and bond directly with others. Coming together to cheer for the home team helps satisfy that need. College sports is often the magnet that brings the diverse campus population together. Intercollegiate athletics, conducted properly, can stimulate and reinforce community on campus. The larger the campus, the more there is the need for commonality. It is on the large Division I campuses, especially, that intercollegiate athletics has the role of creating community.

But Aristotle also said that virtue is the mean between extremes, that virtue requires balancing excesses. In the case at hand, intercollegiate athletics can create community through fan interest; but too much fan interest, over-enthusiasm, can lead to poor sportsmanship, or worse. It is not acceptable to have celebratory riots, to engage in behaviors that are harmful to persons and to property. That is a community that has devolved into mob behavior.

It is certainly more fun to win than to lose. But winning in the right way is essential. Popular culture makes heroes out of those who say that winning is everything. Some overzealous boosters hold the view that coaches who don't cheat aren't trying. Some will be so focused on winning that they will break the rules that are established to promote fairness. At worst, academic rules are broken in order to ensure that student-athletes remain eligible. Whoever does that, in whatever circumstances, commits academic fraud.

I put those who believe "winning at all costs" is just the price of athletics success in the same category as the mob that sets fires as a rite of celebration. Cheating and unsportsmanlike behavior should not be tolerated. Academic fraud violates the fundamental bond that links intercollegiate athletics to higher education and should be dealt with aggressively and harshly.

It is not a sign of weakness to follow the rules and act with respect for others; [Pause for emphasis] it is a sign of moral commitment.

The NCAA and all its members and constituents must articulate and reinforce fair play and respectful behavior surrounding our games.

Unsportsmanlike behavior destroys the community that intercollegiate athletics naturally builds. It creates discord and acrimony. Our challenge at the local and the national levels is to promote sportsmanship, to eliminate destructive fan and participant behavior, to find the right balance between over-enthusiasm and apathy.

The desire to win can also lead to less dramatic but similarly unfortunate circumstances when a university over-expend in athletics. Budgetary decisions about athletics, as in any area in the university, in the final analysis, is the province of the president and his or her board. Almost every university subsidizes intercollegiate athletics. There is nothing wrong with such subsidies because intercollegiate athletics has educational value. But the amount of subsidy should not exceed the benefits that the athletics program generates for the university, educational and otherwise. That is the equation the president and the university board must solve.

The danger is that the enthusiasm that yields campus and alumni community can become overwrought and lead to expenditures that are not prudent and detract from the academic mission of the university. The report last year by the Presidential Task Force on the Future of Division I Intercollegiate Athletics addressed this issue, and recommended steps that would ameliorate the problem. In particular, it recommended, and the Division I Board of Directors approved, changes in the accounting for revenues and expenditures, together with transparency in the aggregate, so that presidents and their boards are in the best possible position to make informed financial decisions.

The national office has been collecting institutional financial data in the new format and reviewing it for accuracy. We will shortly release to institutions that information, including trend data, what we have come to call “dashboard indicators.” The collection of this data and its appropriate categorization will remain a work-in-progress for several years, as we refine our accounting definitions and data collection process.

The overall goal is for institutions to carefully review their rates of expenditure increases and make sound financial decisions for the future of intercollegiate athletics and their campuses.

In sum, intercollegiate athletics provides striking opportunities to build community on campus and, in some cases, regionally and nationally. This is clearly a worthy goal.

But this community, built on the desire to see one’s team do well, can become destructive if it is not balanced. It can lead to celebratory riots by students, recruiting violations by alumni and friends, academic fraud on campus, and over-expenditures on athletics, all to the detriment of the university’s mission and goals.

Besides a sound regulatory environment and proper enforcement, the best approach in this area, as well as others in intercollegiate athletics, is to focus on balance. Intercollegiate athletics at its best advances the values and goals of higher education, but at its worst it harms its host, the university, and its athletics department.

We have seen that intercollegiate athletics has educational value in preparing student-athletes for leadership and sound citizenship. We understand and appreciate that college sports can create community for the campus and understand our responsibilities in that regard.

What role does intercollegiate athletics play in helping higher education meet its obligations to engage the world beyond the campus?

Contemporary American universities and colleges have evolved distinctive features that set them apart from their brethren abroad and from their predecessors. Arguably, this distinctiveness emerged strongly with the passage of the 1862 Morrill Act. In it, the federal government provided a grant of land in exchange for states' establishing universities for the common man.

Prior to that, American universities and colleges tended to follow the pattern of England in focusing higher education on the clergy, the law and other areas of interest to the wealthy class. The Morrill Act incited programs in the A and M fields, that is, agriculture and the mechanical arts, meaning engineering.

Over the years, this orientation led not only the public institutions, but also the private ones, to enroll students from a broad socio-economic band. As a result, higher education in America is far more accessible than it is in other countries, and a greater proportion of high school graduates receive at least some postsecondary education than elsewhere in the world.

Because of this population, American higher education began to reflect the interests and diversions of its student body. These common men, and eventually women, enjoyed sports, including football, baseball and track, and in the nineteenth century, athletics came to the college campus.

Another result of this distinctively American approach to higher education is that the boundaries between higher education and the broader community broke down. Universities may have been separated physically by ivy covered walls, but the expectations of these institutions by the surrounding population were such that they must engage the world beyond.

Two additional changes began in the last half of the 20th century that reinforced engagement. First, urban universities grew in importance. No longer were the rural, agricultural forms of engagement the only way for higher education to participate in the life of the community. They now had central roles in our cities, including working with low-income populations.

The second change is even more profound. Over the past half century, many of America's social institutions came under criticism, often justified. The business community was accused of excesses; the church experienced loss of moral authority because of misbehavior by its clergy; the military, while highly respected, was placed in awkward and unwinnable positions; and our political leaders did not perform to the electorate's satisfaction.

But during this same time, universities and colleges were prospering. Though some faced challenges, by and large, they grew in prestige, recognition and expertise. American higher education emerged as clearly the best in the world. As a result, many began to ask and expect universities to compensate for the loss of leadership and social service from America's other declining social institutions.

Many of our colleges and university leaders understood these changes well and moved our campuses toward even greater engagement. One obvious approach adopted by many is to become directly involved in discovery and then partnering to commercialize products; good examples came from the information technology and the healthcare industries.

But engagement also involves reinforcing connectivity through college sporting events.

There are two aspects of the engagement obligations of universities satisfied by sporting events, promotion of community and support of economic development. As mentioned earlier, the modern world, with its accelerating pace and its impersonality exacerbated by new technologies, generates a sense of alienation that

requires the counterbalance of community. Unfortunately, there are fewer and fewer opportunities to build and sustain community.

The spirit and purpose of college sports help fill this lacunae. Here are young men and women – in the midst of preparing themselves for life – giving their full efforts to win the game for their home college. How can anyone resist identifying with that?

Thousands in the stands feel directly connected, and millions of others feel connected virtually through broadcasts. Onsite experiences can be strong and lasting, but broadcast experiences can be addictive and lead to similar feelings. This is clearly one good way for universities to raise the spirits and the sense of community. Not everyone enjoys intercollegiate athletics; but an incredible number of people do, and as a result the university enhances the community's sense of self-worth.

Moreover, local events generate considerable new monies for local merchants. Nationally televised games generate economic activity in the broadcast and advertising industries. When all of college sports are added together, a rough but conservative estimate of the economic impact from college sports reaches \$10 billion annually, including direct expenditures by the institutions themselves.

Universities themselves, of course, do not reap all these benefits. They accrue, rather, to local and national businesses, and that is fine. Universities have an obligation in the contemporary world to assist with economic development, and sports proves to be one good way to do so.

The obligation to engage beyond the campus, financially and otherwise, is not the overriding goal of the university. Nonetheless, American universities do have an obligation, even if it is secondary, to engage in activities that advance the well-being of their local communities and beyond.

To deny that is the case is to fail to realize the role of the contemporary university in American society, and perhaps to confuse these actual institutions with some idealic version that no longer exists, if it really ever did.

However, engagement through college sports, even when undertaken for the right reasons, presents challenges. We have already observed that the enthusiasm for the activity can create an imbalance, in that the primary university mission becomes blurred or worse. There are universities that have sometimes succumbed to these pressures. There are not many of them and they do not do so often – not nearly so many or as often as the critics of college sports would want us to believe – but it does occur. Unfortunately, these instances tend to influence a popular negative perspective of college sports.

Aristotle's Golden Mean of virtue being a balance between extremes is again appropriate. Too little engagement in the community fails to yield the positive effects and too much engagement detracts from the central academic mission of the university. Each university, in its own environment, must find the proper balance point.

Extreme positions on either side have no place in our deliberations. Informed and principled decision making is the order of the day.

Finally, I want to discuss briefly the role of intercollegiate athletics in helping the university meet its obligations for social justice.

Universities, not uniquely but certainly emphatically, are committed to social justice. It is part of the very fiber of universities, indeed, to promote fair treatment for all persons. That position derives from the role of higher education in American society.

Universities are committed to advocating for the benefits of hard work and taking full advantage of our natural abilities. No other social institution in America better provides for the growth necessary to take advantage of these traits than higher education.

There is nothing more productive that a young man or woman can do than earning a higher education degree in order to advance in life. Thus, in providing access to higher education, we open the doors to opportunity for all persons.

Intercollegiate athletics shares with the university as a whole its commitment to social justice and to opportunity. The most obvious way is to provide athletics grants-in-aid to young men and women to help pay for their college education. Over the years, literally millions of low-income students were able to attend college and receive a degree because of athletics support. The intellectual talent that has been enabled to flourish because of athletics support is nothing short of phenomenal.

Advancement in spite of class is but one way that college athletics has served the goal of social justice. Another way, even more visible, is by providing opportunities to women and ethnic minorities. But that took a while, and it is not complete.

In the case of opportunities for women, it was not until the passage of Title IX in 1972 that significant advancement occurred. Prior to that time, few women had the chance to participate in intercollegiate athletics and to gain the financial support and life-skills learning that accompanies participation.

But since the passage of Title IX, there has been a six-fold increase in the number of women playing college sports. Even more importantly, girls and young women now in high school take it as a given that, if they have the talent and work hard, they will be able to win a scholarship and play. Within a generation, the culture has changed.

The fight for opportunity and access to college sports has been even more difficult for persons of color. The struggles of the middle of the last century to open the doors of American universities to African-Americans and others of color were wrenching. The good news is that these battles were won; the bad news is that they had to occur at all.

But with the opening of the universities, African-Americans and other persons of color were freely able to participate in college sports. Indeed, a strong argument can be made that the desirability of African-Americans participating in sports accelerated the changes in our universities.

Intercollegiate athletics became a visible symbol of access. When the Texas Western basketball team consisting of all African-American starters defeated the all-white Kentucky team at the 1966 NCAA tournament final, there could be little doubt that change was occurring. Ability and hard work were becoming the guide posts.

In reality, however, these types of changes are not easily accepted, and resistance, overt and covert, remains to be overcome. There remain challenges to the full implementation of Title IX and from attempts to roll it back. African-American student-athletes compete well in college sports, making up 63 percent of the Division I basketball teams and 55 percent of the football teams. But there remain challenges for African-Americans in leadership positions, athletics directorships and head football coaches in particular.

There is work to be done to meet these challenges before we can claim that intercollegiate athletics genuinely demonstrates social justice. Among the challenges on which we must focus is the full implementation of Title IX. Women continue to be under-represented in terms of grants-in-aid for student-athletes, coaching

opportunities for women's sports, and leadership positions in terms of athletics director positions. Athletics scholarships, coaching positions and athletics directorships must, of course, be allocated on the bases of talent and hard work. But it is simply incredulous that the talent pool is so weighted toward men to produce this imbalance. The facts, as well as the history of past lack of female representation, point to a continuing problem of injustice.

Though different, the challenges facing African-Americans and other persons of color need immediate and strong action. The number of African-American athletics directors in Division I is modestly increasing, but not nearly at the rate that accurately reflects the talent pool. This situation is worse in Divisions II and III, where there is little evidence of even modest increases.

The lack of African-American head football coaches, frankly, is an embarrassment to all of intercollegiate athletics. The talent pool exists and it contains men who are ready and able to successfully lead these teams. But we are yet to see more than eight head coaches among the 119 teams in the Football Bowl Subdivision. And as bad as that is, it is worse in the Football Championship Subdivision and in Divisions II and III. Recognition of this problem has grown recently, and good leadership is emerging especially among the Division I athletics directors and others. But proof of change is in the actual appointments to these positions, and that has not yet occurred.

If intercollegiate athletics is to play its key role in higher education of helping promote social justice, as it should, then all of us, the NCAA national office and the over 1,000 universities it represents, must recognize the challenges and commit ourselves to meet them.

To take stock, I have been arguing that intercollegiate athletics is integral to and embedded in higher education. It is not an ancillary activity to which universities can turn for entertainment on Saturday afternoons or marketing at alumni events. Intercollegiate athletics, rather, is part of the university – for better or worse.

This is the same philosophy articulated by General Palmer Pierce at the turn of the last century. There is long-term consistency in the principles underlying college sports, even as universities and the external environment change and evolve.

In order to gain the advantages that intercollegiate athletics brings to the university, its roles must be well understood and promoted; and the challenges it faces in meeting the obligations that these roles generate must be met.

It is a great advantage for intercollegiate athletics to be woven into the fabric of the university. Without this significant intertwining, intercollegiate athletics would devolve into professional club sports or something similar that occurs in countries that separate athletics from academics. If that were the case, both universities and intercollegiate athletics would be worse off. But it is not the case: in America, universities and their athletics programs are joined together.

This is an extraordinary union and let us celebrate it!