

Strategies for Athletics

Charge to the Committee:

The TCU committee on “Strategies for Athletics” was charged with examining the strategic relationship of the Athletic Program within the overall context of the University. More specifically, the Committee was to examine strategic questions including:

- How does the athletic program contribute to the overall mission of the university?
- Considering recent success and growth, how will the athletic program’s future be defined?
- The university has made a substantial financial commitment to the program during this period. Should TCU be willing to continue and possibly increase that commitment to allow for sustained success?
- What is TCU’s commitment to continue building its women’s program? What steps need to be taken to more fully comply with Title IX? Is it feasible to consider adding one or more additional women’s programs in the near future, and if so, at what cost?
- Considering newly enacted NCAA academic reform measures, how will the university provide the necessary support for the academic success of TCU’s 400 student-athletes?

The Committee followed these questions (and others that arose during the discussions) through a series of interviews of key University officials. These individuals included:

- Eric Hyman, Athletics Director
- Ray Brown, Dean of Admissions
- Carol Campbell, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Business
- Rhonda Hatcher, Professor of Mathematics and Faculty Institutional Representative
- Intercollegiate Athletics Committee, whose members include:
 - Ronald Burns, Professor of Criminal Justice
 - Julie Byrne, Professor of Religion
 - George Gilbert, Professor of Mathematics
 - Marcy Girton, Associate Athletics Director and Senior Woman Administrator
 - Phil Hartman, Professor of Biology
 - Rhonda Hatcher, Professor of Mathematics and Faculty Institutional Representative
 - Barbara Brown Herman, Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean of Student Development Services
 - Kristi Hoban, Director of Alumni Relations
 - John Householder, Director of Admission Operations
 - Eric Hyman, Athletics Director
 - Deborah Rhea, Professor of Kinesiology
 - Gene A. Smith, Professor of History
 - Will Stallworth, Associate Vice Chancellor for Facilities
 - Richard Yantis, Information Services

The Committee also sought advice through the “Vision into Action” town meeting process. The town meeting was held on April 16 and was attended by more than 90 students, faculty, staff, coaches, athletic department officials and University officials. The Committee would like to thank those who attended the town meeting and, in particular, those who spoke at that meeting.

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Situation Analysis:

To frame the context for discussing future strategies for athletics, the following historic context is critical.

TCU's response to the collapse (in 1995) of The Southwest Conference is largely responsible for the subsequent resurgence of TCU athletics. Four former Southwest Conference institutions, Texas, Texas A&M, Texas Tech, and Baylor, left to join the Big 8 Conference in creating the Big XII Conference, leaving TCU and two other schools without a conference affiliation. TCU found a home in the new sixteen-school Western Athletic Conference only to see that new conference cut in half two years later when eight schools left to form the Mountain West Conference. At that point, TCU made a new philosophical and financial commitment regarding the future of athletics.

In 1998, the Board of Trustees made a commitment to fund and support an athletic program that could be competitive on the field, find a new and more stable conference home, and build an infrastructure that was needed for future growth. The hiring of Athletic Director Eric Hyman and Football Coach Dennis Franchione were key elements in this plan. A master plan for facilities was developed, and during the ensuing six years, the department has been allowed to solicit funds for much-needed venues. New facilities include:

- Garvey-Rosenthal Soccer Stadium
- Lowdon Track and Field Complex
- Lupton Baseball Stadium/ Williams-Reilly Field
- Morris Football Practice Fields
- University Recreation Center with new facilities for volleyball and swimming
- TCU Tennis Team Building funded by the Mary Potishman Lard Trust
- John Justin Athletic Center
- David E. Bloxom, Sr., Videoboard in Amon Carter Stadium
- W. A. "Monty and Tex" Moncrief Field in Amon Carter Stadium
- Artificial turf football practice field
- Ed and Rae Schollmaier Basketball Complex

The new facilities have made a major impact on recruiting and success of the overall athletic program. Additional funding has been provided to gradually build a staff infrastructure in the areas of academic support, strength and conditioning, marketing, sports medicine, and NCAA Compliance. TCU contracted with ESPN Regional to serve as its corporate sponsorship sales arm. Women's programs were upgraded in the areas of staff size and compensation, scholarship appropriations, operational support, and facilities. The football program started to win on a regular basis, joining other programs within the department that had enjoyed a longer history of success. In 2000, TCU accepted an invitation to join Conference USA, thereby giving the university exposure to areas of the country in which TCU was relatively unknown. With the hiring of Gary Patterson as head football coach, the football program established that it could maintain its progress while sustaining a leadership transition.

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While many TCU fans were disappointed that the Big XII did not invite the Frogs to join, that decision proved to be a very positive one, when viewed in the long-term. TCU was able to resuscitate its programs on playing fields that were more in line with its capabilities at that time. The football team has now been to six straight bowl games, one of only sixteen schools in the country to do so. Overall recruiting has improved, as has attendance in our four flagship sports (football, men and women's basketball, and volleyball). The athletic program rose as high as #51 in The Sears Cup rankings, an all-sport national competition among schools. The ranking placed TCU among the nation's elite athletic programs, and distinguished it as one of the leading private school programs in the country.

The success has not only been realized on the playing field. Thirty-five million dollars has been contributed for numerous capital projects and scholarships. The six-year graduation rates for scholarship athletes entering fall 1993 through 1997 have been 62%, 57%, 58%, 72%, and 70% respectively. These overall rates are close and, for 1996 and 1997, considerably higher than the total student body graduation rates. Graduation rates for female athletes were higher than other female graduation rates in all of these years. Clearly, the program has a new personality.

Most recently, the success of the 2003 football team and accompanying national spotlight, in combination with the move to the Mountain West Conference, now places TCU on new ground. Flirting with a spot in a BCS Bowl this past year brought national media attention to TCU and Fort Worth and with it a new set of dreams and aspirations.

Nevertheless, questions have emerged during this six-year period of growth and expansion, and answers to these questions will help shape the future direction and focus of the athletic program and have major influence on long-range strategic planning.

The volatility in conference affiliations across Division I may not be over, and the end point may be a "super-conference" or "super division" of universities that requires substantial investments. The capacity of private universities to sustain a presence at this level, if it develops, will be an issue.

TCU's move to the Mountain West Conference in the fall of 2005 represents a significant step for the football program. The MWC is considered one of the nation's top conferences for football and provides TCU with several opportunities and challenges. The schedule will become increasingly more demanding with the addition of BYU, Utah, Air Force, Colorado State, New Mexico, UNLV, Wyoming, and San Diego State. New rivalries will come from these teams and heightened fan interest can be expected. Future non-conference opponents include Arkansas, Baylor, Texas Tech, Oklahoma, Kansas State, and Stanford. This mix of former Southwest Conference rivals in combination with Big XII and Pac 10 powerhouses makes for the most challenging schedule the Frogs will have faced for some time.

While some additional travel costs will be incurred with participation in the Mountain West Conference, there is potential for increased revenue and additional national exposure. From an admissions standpoint, it also creates visibility among high school students in the Mountain and Western Time Zones, thereby further broadening TCU's reach and influence and helping to establish it as more of a national university in scope.

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Nationally, the Bowl Championship Series is being adjusted to reflect a more inclusive philosophy for all Division IA Football programs. The football strength of the Mountain West and its national reputation will provide TCU with a legitimate chance to break into one of the five “elite” bowls that now define the BCS. With this opportunity comes the possibility for new revenue streams and maximum national visibility.

In all universities, the issue of the appropriate balance between academics and intercollegiate athletics is an ongoing strategic question, but in smaller private universities the balancing of resource commitments makes this issue particularly acute. Providing appropriate support for student-athletes so that they have the opportunity to succeed academically, participate in the co-curriculum offered by a university, and compete athletically is a continuing issue.

The predominance of women in TCU’s undergraduate student body warrants special attention to women’s intercollegiate athletics. At the same time, an increased emphasis on men’s intercollegiate athletics could be helpful in attracting additional male students. Both are worthy strategic questions.

The business aspects of intercollegiate athletics are related to conference affiliation, but also relate to larger issues of market capacity and appeal within the Fort Worth-Dallas region. Philanthropic support has played a large role in the development of athletic facilities in the recent past. How to include athletics in the coordination and balancing of philanthropy for the general university must continue to be a critical management concern.

Key Assumptions Used:

The development of the Athletic program described above was clearly guided by certain key assumptions from the University, which the Committee recognized throughout its deliberations. These key assumptions include:

1. TCU has a commitment to remain a university with a major Division I athletic program and a Division I-A football program.
2. The Athletic Program at TCU should be an integral part of the University’s mission.
3. The University seeks to support a nationally prominent athletic program within the context of the overall University.
4. The University demands an athletic program with integrity that goes beyond meeting the basic legal structures and guidelines promulgated by the NCAA.

In reviewing these assumptions with University and Athletic Department officials, certain of these assumptions were translated into operating goals and guideposts for the Athletic program. These translations include:

1. The Athletic program will strive to produce successful teams across the board and achieve a top 50 position within the ADT (formerly Sears) Cup ranking.
2. The Athletic program will seek to annually place 12 teams in Post-season competition.

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3. All teams will strive to finish among the top 3 in conference standings.
4. Academic success of student-athletes should mirror that of the TCU student body.
5. Each team will be involved in community outreach.
6. The Athletic program should expect to provide positive experiences for student-athletes.
7. Being competitive on the field requires competitive facilities as recognized in the Athletic Department master plan.
8. Coaches are responsible and accountable for the success of their teams in athletic competition. Overall program integrity is included in the evaluations of all department officials.

The strategic questions, current situation analysis, key University assumptions and the operating objectives from the Athletic Department all played critical roles in the Committee's deliberations, findings and strategic recommendations.

Findings/Conclusions:

The Committee recognizes the overall success of the Athletic program at TCU in meeting and even exceeding University expectations in the years since 1998. At the same time, it also recognizes that the program accomplishments could not have been made without the strong support and financial backing of the University. The plans and objectives that the Athletic Department set forth in documents like the *Commission on the Future Report* provided a recognizable roadmap to meeting University expectations and advantaged the department in seeking University support. Equally important, the Athletic department's success and accomplishments in gaining national recognition and prominence strengthened their position for gaining University support. These synergies worked together to create the positive outcomes and position currently represented in TCU athletics.

The Athletic investment was accomplished during a time in which the University enjoyed significant improvement in its resource base. During the late 1990's and early part of 2000, the University endowment grew to an unprecedented level, primarily through substantial returns on its invested assets. These returns were, in turn, used to advance the amounts of funding available annually for spending. Additionally, the University undertook major improvements to its physical facilities, much of it funded through external debt. Undergraduate student growth and tuition increases that substantially exceeded inflation brought additional resources.

However, the current situation for Athletics and for the University has changed. For Athletics, the growth of program and facilities has been, for the most part, accomplished. Unless an additional sport is added to meet Title IX expectations, there is no major program expansion planned. Currently, athletic scholarships are funded at the maximum levels allowed under NCAA policy. The move to the Mountain West Conference leaves the University positioned to take advantage of playing field successes in new and exciting ways.

The conference move may generate additional travel costs, which, hopefully, will provide offsetting new revenues. The success of the football program and improving success in other revenue generating sports such as men's and women's basketball is allowing for some improvements in the overall athletic revenues without significant increases in expense. In other

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words, the Athletic department is now in a position to again determine, with the help of the University, a vision and new operating plan for its future—consolidating its most recent accomplishments, moving aggressively toward new goals and providing for many of its own resource needs.

Clearly the four key assumptions of the University for the Athletic program have not changed. The University is well positioned to take advantage of the national recognition that a prominent Division I program with a successful Division I-A football program can provide. Retaining high quality Athletic administrators and coaches with proven high levels of integrity must be a commitment in order to continue to take advantage of this positioning. Institutional recognition and management of overall performance of the Athletic program remains the critical step to ensure that the integrity level is maintained. The success of the Athletic program must continue to move beyond the playing fields.

It is also understood that the University may not be in a position to invest resources in the Athletic program at the same rates that it was able to in the recent past. The most obvious measure of this change has been the change over the last several years in the University's endowment value primarily due to changes in the equity markets. While the Committee would conclude that every effort should be made jointly by the University and the Athletic Department to fund the sustaining of the recent successes and consolidate the University's gain, this may require a new compact between Athletics and the University on how needed investments are to be obtained. As the University launches an important capital campaign during the next several years, access to donors must be understood to be part of that compact. While the department may play more of a secondary role from a fund raising standpoint in the next several years, there will certainly still be situations where donors direct dollars to specific athletic initiatives. The Athletic development emphasis may be directed to scholarship endowment while the past six years focused on capital projects. Whatever is to be accomplished in establishing criteria for this new compact, the discussion will require a new form of openness and candor shared within the University community, including the Athletic Department.

Strategic Recommendations:

- 1. The University needs to develop a forum or multiple forums involving interested University constituencies to discuss the future role and development of Intercollegiate Athletics.** In many ways, TCU has been able to develop a model athletic program for a moderate sized private university. The program has achieved national prominence on the athletic field while maintaining a high level of integrity. Our student-athletes graduate at rates comparable to or higher than regular students. While financial support from the university during the past six years has enriched the athletic program, an understanding of necessary funding to continue to operate a nationally competitive program will be important as future decisions are made in this area.

There are multiple constituencies concerned about the future role of athletics at TCU—faculty, staff, students, alumni, Trustees and the Athletic Department among others. Enhancing the integration of athletics, as part of the operations of the University is likely

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to be best served when these multiple constituencies are part of a shared discussion process. The discussion process needs to be characterized both by recognition of what has been accomplished and pride in that accomplishment, and by openness about the promise and issues for the future and the resources required to meet the promise.

- 2. The NCAA processes for enhancing institutional control over athletics should be monitored and adopted where they fit the TCU situation.** There are important discussions going on within the NCAA over institutional management of athletics. Some of these involve changes in eligibility requirements for student-athletes both as incoming students and for meeting academic progress requirements. Another area of interest has been the oversight of athletic academic advising. TCU, like many universities, has an Office of Athletic Academic Services. The office provides academic advising and tutorial services for student-athletes. Many universities, however, have adopted or are considering adopting an alternative model that places all academic advising and assistance programs under the supervision of the chief academic officer of the university.

We recommend that TCU adopt a model of dual reporting for the athletic department in this area. The retirement of TCU's Provost and possible change in oversight of intercollegiate athletics makes this an opportune time to consider such a change. With the new NCAA regulations on the progress of athletes and changing eligibility standards, monitoring the academic progress of athletes has become a critical institutional responsibility. Improvements in the reporting relationship will help to ensure that the TCU system remains above reproach. Many of the issues affecting student-athletes, such as academic advising, are found throughout the University student body. Consequently, a commitment of resources to deal with these important problems can be shared under the proposed change in reporting. Requiring the athletic academic services office to report to both the Director of Athletics and Provost or his designee, would enhance services to all students and maintain a singular standard for the University.

- 3. The University should continually seek ways to leverage the investments and on-going role of Intercollegiate Athletics in support of other University priorities.** As previously mentioned, the TCU community understands that continued financial support for the athletic program is essential to meet institutional goals and assumptions. Along with increased regional and national recognition, dramatically improved facilities and services, enhanced relationships with external communities, the Athletic program has also provided opportunities to increase the support for University goals beyond athletics. Although many efforts to provide this leverage have already been undertaken by the University, TCU should continue to maintain this strategy. With the move to the Mountain West Conference, new opportunities are likely to be available.

Some of these considerations might include:

- Strengthening admission and alumni relationships in key Mountain West cities, such as San Diego, Albuquerque, Salt Lake City, Denver and Colorado Springs.
- Sharing athletic facilities with other University programs and activities wherever feasible and appropriate.

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- Building special programs that use athletic events and activities to strengthen students, faculty and staff relationship with the University, especially where their participation enhances the audience at athletic events.
- Using non-conference schedules to sustain or enhance Texas institutional rivalries.
- Using athletic events as a key community relation's tool for outreach into Fort Worth and surrounding communities, especially minority communities.
- Continuing to build and enhance academic relationships with programs for which the athletic program can provide a high level training laboratory.

- 4. The University and the Athletic Department must continue to look for appropriate ways to enhance Departmental revenues that can offset necessary investments of general University resources.** The charge to the Athletic Department to enhance its revenue base in all appropriate ways is essential to both the development of the Department and to the future development of TCU. Hopefully, the joining of the Mountain West Conference will provide a major opportunity. The developments in the Bowl Championship Series for an additional bowl game with greater participation from conferences outside the current major conferences may provide additional means. A national and regional prominence obtained through continued competitiveness on our playing fields also provides opportunities. As these efforts are successful in increasing resources, the new resources need to be applied to offsetting University resources as well as enhancing the athletic programs. At the same time, revenue-raising efforts need to be sensitive to other University goals. These goals include enhanced involvement of the University community and its constituents in attendance at Athletic events, maintenance of a high level of integrity for all University programs and enhancement of fund raising for all types of high priority major University initiatives.

The Athletic Department has shown appropriate sensitivity to these issues in the past, but the future is going to require a balanced approach and sustained discussions of the appropriate balance across the University.

- 5. Sustaining the University commitment to meeting Title IX purposes should be a priority.** Over 60% of the TCU student body is composed of women. The TCU athletic program has made strides in the recent past to encompass the goals of Title IX in its decision-making and actions, and it continues to strive to meet the overall objectives of gender equity stated in the original passage of Title IX. TCU needs to continuing to address gender equity issues, and this continued progress is essential as future investments in athletics are considered.

This committee takes no position on specific sports or the make up of the overall sport program at TCU, but finding approaches to move toward gender equity should remain a strategic priority stated both for the University and for the Athletic Department.

Overall, then, the committee finds that this is an important time for moving toward enhancing the planning activities and outcomes that relate the Athletic Department and its programs within the context of the goals, resources and resource priorities for the entire University. The athletic program has achieved major successes over the last several years. These need to be celebrated

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by the entire University as not just achievements on the playing fields, but in the graduation rates for student-athletes and the overall integrity of approach to these successes. It is clear that the approach used by the Department, from the Athletic Director down to the individual coaches, recognizes that achievements on the playing field are only part of the overall task of succeeding within the mission of a major university.

Still the context for development of the University is changing and, thus, the context for the planning approach to the development of the athletic program must also change and be brought into alignment with the overall University goals. This kind of planning cannot be accomplished within the Athletic Department acting in isolation of other planning and resource allocation contexts for the total University.

High Level Resource and Policy Requirements:

The Committee recommendations do not provide a method to determine resource requirements. Our recommendations for consolidation of and retaining the current investments and position of the Athletic Department do not suggest significant additional funding, but do recognize that continued high rates of increases in tuition, for example, means that the rate of spending on student-athlete scholarships will have to increase at appropriately the same rate. However, retaining the current position should not require investments at the rate it took to get to the current levels.

The more important issue is gaining the University consensus on the future vision and mission for athletics. Standards for performance in areas outside of on-field performance will have ramifications for resource requirements as will on-field performance standards.

TCU's athletic program should be looked at as a model program for private universities of our size and scope. We have committed to successful on-field performance and off-the-field integrity. Our policies should celebrate both forms of success. However, neither of these expectations will be met without continually challenging our current program to ensure that overall institutional controls are in place.