

May 14, 2012

Dear members of the Faculty Executive Committee:

In the wake of the appalling news reported in the past week by the Raleigh News and Observer, you, the representatives of the Faculty in its summer sessions, must insist that there be a full, impartial, and preferably independent investigation of UNC's management of its student-athletes. Since the summer of 2010 the UNC administration has adopted a "few bad apples" theory of the cascading scandals we have had to confront, and the first priority has been to ensure the university community and the state that all misbehavior was anomalous, that all problems have been solved, and that we just need to "move forward." This party line was repeated just this week by UNC system president Tom Ross, UNC-CH chancellor Holden Thorp, and Faculty Athletics Representative Lissa Broome. Even the detailed report on the Afri/Afam department by William Andrews and Jonathan Hartlyn carefully limited responsibility for the malfeasance exposed there to two individuals now safely headed into the silence of retirement.

From a public relations perspective alone, this administrative strategy is no longer tenable, and it was never really defensible. Too much evidence of systemic failure has now been exposed—thanks to investigative reporting by the local newspaper and one bold but ill-starred lawsuit. The faculty must speak out, and the administration must act. The University's image depends on it.

Based on evidence so far made public, we know that one faculty member "taught" 75 courses in four years; we know that athletes made up 58% of the student population in said "courses;" we know that a department chair was able to assign himself summer school courses every year, teaching fake courses all the time, and that no one—not his SAD and not the dean of the summer school—ever bothered to ask questions about this unusual practice. Common sense tells us other things: that advisers had to be aware of, if not fully supportive of, this degrading and inexcusable scam; that a department chair served for twenty years in his role and was able to operate his office as an independent fiefdom; that people in the registrar's office must have noticed the unusual volume of Afri/Afam grade reports processed each summer; that athletes had ways of finding out that there were freebies to be had.

Those of us who care about academic and institutional integrity—and one would hope this would include every faculty member at this University—will not be satisfied until a candid and thorough investigation (carried out by impartial officials) yields answers to the following questions:

1. How did the football player Marvin Austin—a marginal student (special admit?) in need of a remedial composition course—discover that his best academic strategy, in preparation for his freshman year, was to take a 400-level summer Afri course taught by Julius Nyang'oro?

2. What did advisers tell athletes about their course selections in the years covered by the Andrews/Hartlyn report? Why did they participate in academic fraud, or, if they did not actively participate in the fraud, why did they not report the suspicious evidence they had to have seen? If they did report said evidence, why did their superiors remain silent?
3. What were the GPA's of the football and basketball players who took the fraudulent courses, and how did their overall GPA's compare to the grades "earned" in the fake courses?
4. Olympic sport athletes were also in on the fun; how much did their coaches know?
5. What patterns of course selection can be detected in athletes' course itineraries? We have been asked to believe that the ONLY suspicious academic behavior on our campus took place in a department whose chair was exposed BY ACCIDENT thanks to the Michael McAdoo lawsuit, which rendered documents public that would otherwise have escaped scrutiny. Unless a careful review is conducted, on what grounds should anyone believe there aren't similar shenanigans going on in other departments?
6. Why do current and former athletes from revenue sports report that they were "told" by their advisers in their first year at Carolina that they needed to take Portuguese or Swahili to meet their foreign language requirement? (Why did Tyler Hansborough choose the Swahili language, for example?)
7. What are athletes told on the recruiting trail?
8. In what circumstances are chairs allowed to assign themselves summer courses? Should there not be limits to self-dealing by chairs?
9. Why did the Andrews/Hartlyn report limit its investigation to four years? How far back does Nyang'oro's amazing record of "productivity" go? Extrapolating from the figures we have, one can assume that he has taught *at least* two hundred courses over the past twenty years. Why did no dean ask questions about this bizarre practice?

Other questions—many other questions—could be added to this list, but these are enough to demonstrate the need for a serious investigation. We have played whack-a-mole and three blind mice for long enough. Eternal optimists among us may continue to believe that—thanks to Michael McAdoo—we blindly stumbled onto the one and only unit where dishonesty and shameful hypocrisy have perverted the University's academic mission. And maybe, just maybe, that's the case. If so, the administration should show that it has the courage of its convictions and call for an outside investigation. Confidence in UNC-Chapel Hill will never be restored until such an investigation occurs.

Respectfully,

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