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Q: What policies and practices would reduce the possibility of academic fraud?

In response to the recent athletics academic fraud scandal at the University of North Carolina, The Drake Group issued the following position paper. The Drake Group is a national organization of faculty and others whose mission is to defend academic integrity in higher education from the corrosive aspects of commercialized college sports. Drake Group goals include: (1) ensure that universities provide accountability of trustees, administrators, and faculty by publicly disclosing information about the quality of educations college athletes receive; (2) advance proposals that ensure quality education for students who participate in intercollegiate athletics, (3) support faculty and staff whose job security and professional standing are threatened when they defend academic standards in intercollegiate sports; (4) influence public discourse on current issues and controversies in sports and higher education; and (5) coordinate local and national reform efforts with other groups that share its mission and goals.

The Drake Group Issues Guidelines for Academic Integrity in Athletics

Recent academic scandals related to the intercollegiate athletics programs at a number of the nation's most prestigious institutions of higher education reveal the absence of policy and practice that would ensure the primacy of academic study and the maintenance of academic integrity by institutions of higher education. The Drake Group believes that each of the following provisions should be embraced by any accredited institution of higher education and should be institutionalized by national athletic governance association rules and regulations.

1. Reporting Process and Protection. The institution should have an institutional process that allows any college athlete, faculty, administrator or staff member to report a coach, other athletics personnel, or other institutional personnel's alleged violation of institution policy or governance association rules with an assurance of "whistle blower protections" to those who disclose unethical conduct or Association or institutional rules violations related to the conduct of athletics programs.

2. Peer Review Certification Program. Each member institution's athletics program shall undergo a comprehensive national athletics governance association certification at least once every ten years, which certification process shall consist of peer review, external to the institution as administered and

funded by the governance association, of a campus-wide self-evaluation conducted by various committees assembled for that purpose. A majority of the members of these committees shall be tenured faculty members. Note: The NCAA certification program, which included a much more comprehensive examination of athletic programs elements than the traditional higher education regional accreditation agencies, was discarded within the last two years should be reinstituted.

3. Academic Counseling and Academic Support Services. Academic counseling and academic support services for college athletes shall be under the direct supervision and budgetary control of the institution's academic authority, administered externally to the athletics department and shall be consistent with counseling and support services available to all students. No academic counseling should occur by athletic department employees.

4. Athletics Eligibility. No athlete with a cumulative GPA less than 2.0 should be eligible to participate in athletics and should remain ineligible until the cumulative 2.0 GPA is achieved. Any athlete with a cumulative GPA of less than 2.0 should be restricted to a maximum of ten athletics practice or meeting hours per week. Any standard below a 2.0 does not place academic success as a primary institutional motive.

5. Freshman Eligibility. One year residency should be required prior to eligibility for athletic competition for all freshmen whose high school grade point average or standardized test scores are below one standard deviation from the mean academic profile of their entering class as determined by the certifying institution. Admitted athletes so restricted from competition should be eligible for athletics-related financial aid and four years of athletics eligibility. Athletes restricted from competition should be limited to ten hours of practice per week during the one year residency and should be required to participate in an institutional academic improvement plan designed to build academic skills.

6. Disability and Academic Ability Testing. The determination of learning disability and any accommodation for such disability shall be conducted by institutional authorities responsible for such determinations for all students.

7. Academic Conflict Policies. Institutions of higher education should adopt policies approved by their respective faculty senate to ensure that athletic contests are scheduled to minimize conflict with class attendance, that regular season contests during final examination periods are prohibited and that no college athlete is prohibited from taking any class that may be in conflict with athletics practices, meetings or competitions.

8. 'Athletics only' Facilities. Academic support study and computer centers, housing, dining, game room and other non-athletics locker room facilities should be prohibited because they isolate the college athlete from normal student experiences and in many cases bestow superior treatment and facilities on college athletes, a double standard that should not be supported by higher education.

9. Scholarship Awards. All athletics-related scholarship awards should extend to graduation (a maximum of five years) and should not be reduced or cancelled during the award period based on a coach's evaluation of athletic ability, performance or contribution to team success, illness, incapacitating injury or physical or mental condition. Such awards should only be cancelled if the recipient voluntarily withdraws from participation, fraudulently misrepresents information on any application, letter of intent or financial aid agreement or engages in serious misconduct warranting substantial disciplinary penalty.

The dollar amount or period of award for such aid should not be reduced or removed without the approval of the institution's Office of Student Financial Aid appeal committee. This appeal committee shall not include, either as a voting or ex-officio non-voting member, any athletics department representative. Rationale: The athletic scholarship should be an educational promise rather than employee-at-will agreement.

10. Transfer Policy. The institution should have a policy allowing any athlete to transfer to any institution with no institutionally determined penalty affecting their future athletic participation. Rationale: Institutions are now permitted to restrict an athlete's transfer to only those institutions specified by the original institution, thus removing a right afforded to non-athlete students.

11. Academic Oversight Committee. The institution should have a tenured faculty only Committee on Academic Oversight elected by the faculty senate or other highest faculty authority, which shall meet annually with the head coach of each sport team to review the academic progress of all athletes in that sport. The Committee on Academic Oversight should annually report to the faculty senate (or other highest faculty authority) on the academic progress and qualifications of college athletes and, when possible, to compare such data to non-athletes, including average SAT and ACT scores by sport, Federal Graduation Rates by sport, graduation success rates by sport, independent studies taken by sport, a list of professors offering the independent studies and their average grade assigned, admissions profiles, athletes' progress toward a degree, trends in selected majors by sport, average grade distributions of faculty by major, incomplete grades by sport, grade changes by professors, and the name of each athlete's faculty advisor.

12. Annual Public Report. The higher education institution should make public an annual report to include the following data:
a. certification status of each member institution per Section 2 above
b. graduation success rate overall, by sport, and for all athletes admitted with a waiver of admissions standards
c. federal graduation rate for all students overall, all athletes overall, athletes by sport and for all athletes admitted with a waiver of admissions standards
d. academic progress rate by sport for each member institution
e. number of recruited athletes required to complete one year in residency per Section 5 above
f. number of recruited athletes admitted to the institution with a waiver of published admissions standards compared to the number of students overall receiving such admissions
g. whether any team was ineligible for Association championships due to deficiencies in academic performance, disciplinary or other reasons

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If you are committed to academic integrity in intercollegiate athletics, please consider joining The Drake Group.

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