

**Questions About the Draft Strategic Plan
for the Panel at the University Faculty Forum on
Athletics and Physical Education - February 17, 1999**

- 1. Basic Premise:** The strategic plan starts with the "fundamental belief" that having successful athletic teams is a major advantage and that it will "pay huge dividends in increasing alumni. . .support." What kinds of changes in alumni support can be expected if Cornell's win/loss record improves as much as proposed, and what precisely would the cost to the University be in terms of necessary, additional financial investment?

Answers: First, let's address Cornell's historic intercollegiate results, in combination with the targeted improvement. Over the last decade, Cornell varsity teams have won 41% of their Ivy competitions. This compares with our year-to-date Ivy win percentage of only 26%. Because of the domination of Harvard and Princeton, a 50% winning percentage in the Ivy League assures an upper half ranking and most likely, a third place positioning. Accordingly, the Draft Strategic Plan, in aspiring to a third place ranking, targets on an overall 50% minimum Ivy win/lose record; that is, winning only as many as you lose.

With respect to alumni support, it is important to note that former athletes contribute approximately 38% of the annual undergraduate giving base, 7% of which goes to Athletics and 93% to our colleges, Plantations, performing arts center, fraternities and the like. This suggests a substantial leverage for the non-athletic parts of the campus. Right or wrong, winning teams do encourage more alumni, and not just former athletes, to give — this relates to both donor participation and an individual's level of giving. While the donor participation rate for former athletes is approximately twice that for non-athletes, this rate itself could double and not be out of line with some of our Ivy peers. Clear institutional support for athletics will also encourage more alumni support. The combination of improved athletic results and unequivocal institutional support for athletics has the potential of doubling current gifts in support of annual operations **without** reducing support for other areas of the university.

With respect to cost to the university in terms of "additional financial investment", over time, incremental revenue will more than offset the required incremental investment. The Trustee Task Force on Athletics addressed this issue and identified five different approaches or models to quantify the potential gap. Obviously, the ultimate answer will reflect specific plans to focus our efforts in improving selective intercollegiate success in the most cost effective way and **without** compromise to the quality of the student's academic and overall Cornell experience.

2. **Impact of Intercollegiate Sports Ranking:** How does the overall goal that Cornell intercollegiate sports rank in the top three in the Ivy League affect Cornell's educational and research priorities and what does it imply for the use of university resources?

In the race to make not only the Department third or better in the Ivy League, but each individual program as well, which programs are the most likely to lose/gain support from the University (as opposed to alumni, friends, boosters, outside agencies)?

Answers: The department's goal is to consistently **rank** at least third in everything we offer. This relates to our Physical Education facilities and programs, Outdoor Education facilities and programs, campus-wide fitness and wellness facilities and programs, intramural facilities and programs, new Student Support study areas and programs and intercollegiate athletic facilities and programs. In all but intercollegiate athletics, Cornell is judged "best in class" (this was confirmed by the Trustee Task Force on Athletics). In addition, the nine enterprises, (fitness centers, golf, tennis, bowling, equestrian, ice skating, summer camps, concessions and Moakley House), that the department operates are felt to significantly enhance the quality of life for the entire Cornell community. Therefore, the department's goal to raise, or maintain, the bar to consistently **rank** in the top three in all offerings should be viewed as a commitment to excellence in athletics, broadly defined, which is entirely consistent with excellence as a leading undergraduate research institution.

As stated in answer to question 1 (Basic Premise), the ultimate incremental "use of university resources" will be more than offset by incremental revenues.

Recent surveys (see slide) show that student athletes overwhelmingly select Cornell because of its academics and university reputation. **Athletic success** can only enhance the admissions process, as well as the student's experience at Cornell. Improved alumni giving and pride should be seen as a further bonus.

The Draft Strategic Plan's objective does not suggest that each intercollegiate program finish in the top three in the Ivy League. Rather, it targets on **ranking** third overall in Ivy Championships (that requires winning outright three or four championships out of 30 men's and women's sports uniformly sponsored by the Ivy League) and **ranking** third overall in Ivy win/loss standings (as already noted, this would require only a 50% win record). As the department moves to prioritize sports, some few will be singled out to "Perennial Powerhouses", athletics to "Forces to be reckoned with" and all to be "Competitive." This will be a function of admissions and financial support but **all** varsity programs will be supported and measured in terms of providing a very positive experience for their

participants. If we can't be competitive, we shouldn't compete! There is no reason to support a program or staff where the student athletes are not having a good experience. There are ten sports that are largely self-funded; the average annual cost of another fourteen sports is only \$60,000 per team. While the department intends to selectively sharpen its focus, we do not expect that most programs, on balance, will "lose/gain support from the University" from the level they're currently being supported.

- 3. Benefits of Successful Athletic Teams:** *Assertion:* "Compelling reasons for accepting and implementing this plan start with the fundamental belief [emphases added] that having successful athletic teams is a major advantage for a prestigious university. It communicates to the marketplace that Cornell students demonstrate excellence across a broad spectrum of academic and athletic pursuits. Competitive success will significantly strengthen the pool of all student applicants and will pay huge dividends in increasing alumni interest, pride and support." (page 4)

Question 1: What evidence is there that this fundamental belief is a description of reality? Can it be shown that winning teams -- while probably of some advantage -- are a "major advantage" and would strengthen the pool of all applicants?

Answers: In the Faculty Forum meeting, Carol McFadden presented an overhead entitled "The Sports/Admission Connection" where she discussed examples of **Northwestern University** (admissions applications up 30% and average SATs up 19 points the year after Northwestern went to the Rose Bowl, plus their licensing revenue on paraphernalia soared from \$59K to \$600K), **Duke** (admissions up 15% after NCAA basketball tournament in 1978 and another 19% after Duke's involvement in the same tournament in 1986) and **Georgetown** (admissions applications up 46% and SATs up 40 points after playing in NCAA basketball tournament). She went on to cite similar examples at U. Mass, Boston College, George Washington U., College of Charleston and Xavier. Ms. McFadden concluded by stating that "the sports/admission connection is "most prevalent among strong academic schools and most dramatic when the teams' success is a surprise."

We do not have any hard data at Cornell, regarding our pool of applicants being strengthened by winning teams, to corroborate these points but we have had only spotty athletic success over the last several decades. However, there is ample data to suggest that winning teams (even the expectation of winning teams) favorably impact alumni giving. Similarly, we have many examples of outstanding corporate and military leadership in later careers that have been attributed to

earlier athletic experiences at Cornell. Finally, the case may be strengthened by listening to presidents of other Ivy institutions; the presidents at Princeton, Yale and Brown have each openly declared that they will “make a difference” in their institutions through **athletics**.

Question 2: What about Columbia and Brown -- not usually thought of as athletically "winning" universities and yet they are the old and the new "hot" schools in the Ivy League? What about Syracuse, a heavy investor in sports? Has this investment directly increased its academic distinction or the competitiveness for undergraduate admissions?

Answer: We have no special information on Columbia, Brown or Syracuse except Gordon Gee’s open declaration of support for athletics as part of Brown’s “core curriculum”.

4. Cost of Improved Win Record: There is a call for a better win/loss record. How will this affect the present and future balance between intramural vs. intercollegiate sports? How much additional investment will be needed to attract a net improvement in alumni support? What is the current graduation rate (by college) for Cornell students playing on intercollegiate sports teams?

Answers: Please refer to answer to question 2 as it relates to the Draft Strategic Plan’s expectation for a “better win/loss record” (that is, losing no more than you win in the aggregate).

There will be no impact on the balance between intramural vs. intercollegiate sports in an environment that expects, over time, a better (intercollegiate) win/loss record. In fact, intramural competition will be improved by more available athletes because better intercollegiate teams actually require fewer athletes (e.g.: the number of recruited athletes has dropped by more than 25% over the last two years as the focus has been on more elite scholar-athletes).

As stated in earlier questions, we believe that “net improvement in alumni support” will exceed the additional required investment, as the program to improve Cornell’s intercollegiate athletic record evolves over time.

The following data has been supplied by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. University-wide data was taken from the *Sixth Biennial Report on Freshman Graduates Rates: Fall 1980 to Fall 1991 Entering Classes*, published May 8, 1998.

**Six-Year Graduation Rates of First-Time Freshmen
Fall 1989 through Fall 1991 Entering Cohorts**

| | Fall 1989 <u>Matriculants</u> | Fall 1990 <u>Matriculants</u> | Fall 1991 <u>Matriculants</u> |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| University Total | 89.6% | 90.5% | 90.2% |
| Men | 88.9% | 89.3% | 88.6% |
| Women | 90.5% | 91.9% | 92.0% |
| Recruited Student Athletes Total | 88.1% | 88.5% | 90.3% |
| Men | 86.9% | 84.0% | 88.0% |
| Women | 90.5% | 98.3% | 95.8% |

While the Department of Athletics and Physical Education monitors the academic progress of all student athletes on an on-going basis, no work has been done yet to study graduates rates by college.

- 5. Admissions:** The plan calls for the department to "advocate for dramatic admissions process changes which are needed to become competitive in the Ivy League." What changes are proposed and what kinds of results might likely be achieved if they were implemented? Why are special provisions for admission needed for "elite scholar-athletes"? What is the plan for dealing with the inevitable stigma associated with admission under special procedures? Are athletic scholarships anticipated?

Answers: "Dramatic admissions process changes" are advocated only to become competitive in the Ivy League - to operate on a level playing field. College admissions is a competitive process, not only for potential students but among other institutions as well. The admissions process, along with recruitment and retention of faculty, defines an institution. The quality and diversity of student body (as well as faculty) contributes directly and significantly to an institution's academic and social substance.

Theoretically, Cornell should have an easier time with admissions of student athletes than other peer institutions - we need less than one in ten students - compared to Princeton's 27%, Harvard's 23%, Dartmouth's 20% and Yale's 19%.

Cornell needs to be more competitive in the search for all students. New financial aid initiatives have clearly widened Cornell's disadvantage. Effective recruiting and admission of qualified student athletes has the potential of helping to close the competitive gap.

Nothing is proposed in admissions that is not now available at all other Ivy schools.

Significant progress has been made in the admissions process, including:

- cooperation on the part of the individual colleges has been outstanding
- the athletic admissions liaison program is working smoothly
- the Athletic Admissions Advisory Group is effective
- reinstatement of “round table” reviews is working and has been expanded
- faculty are regularly and effectively involved in the recruiting process; they counsel and take “ownership”
- the early credentials programs has proven to be a win/win situation for all constituents
- coaches’ training has reached new levels of effectiveness
- point-persons per college will make a huge difference
- 1997-98 yields reached a record high of 64% and can be expected to go higher

Timing is the area where Cornell is not competitive. As a result, we will:

- put more emphasis on early decision (we will approach 40% of total student athlete matriculants this year)
- recruit fewer athletes with higher admit and yield rates (the number of recruited athletes has dropped from 685 to 500 over the last two years, with the same yield of 240 student athletes); **everybody wins** in this favorable trend.

Admissions standards do not need to be relaxed and academic results will not be negatively affected. Athletic scholarships are not anticipated.

- 6. Other Costs:** *Assertions:* Under Admissions of prospective student athletes on page 13 the plan states that: "It is apparent even with recent progress that Cornell's recruitment and admissions practices must improve substantially to be competitive. Eight separate offices of admissions and inconsistent selection criteria [emphases added] present daunting challenges to coaches and prospective student athletes."

The inconsistent selection criteria are necessary and appropriate for the colleges' different academic programs. Thinking of them as difficulties (rather than increased options) for recruiting athletes has already resulted in a recent problematic and contested directive to remove decision-making for up to twenty athletes each year from the colleges (and the selection criteria and academic judgments appropriate to their programs) and lodge it instead with the non-academic dean of admissions and financial aid. It also informs the plan to "advocate for dramatic admissions process changes which are needed to become competitive in the Ivy League." (Number 6, page 28).

Question: Do we know the costs required to produce an enhanced program that promotes a sense of community and attracts fans? What additional pressures are likely to be made on admissions standards? (We are already experiencing pressures to lower admissions standards on behalf of athletics.)

Answers: “The costs required to produce an enhanced program that promotes a sense of community and attracts fans” has already been addressed in answers to questions #1 (Basic Premise) and #4 (Cost of Improved Win Record)

- With respect to “additional pressures likely to be made on admissions standards”:
 - Cornell has the lowest average Academic Index (AI) in the Ivy League. This does not help in recruiting elite students, nor does our historic relatively low media standings.
 - The gap between the average Academic Index for Cornell recruited student athletes and the non-athletes is the lowest in the Ivy League; the gap at Princeton is the highest.
 - The average Academic Index for an entering freshman student athlete is 4% below the university average for entering freshmen. With only 9% of the freshman class student athletes this has the effect of diluting our all-freshmen average Academic Index by less than 4/10 of 1%. More important, by the end of the freshmen year, the average GPA of student athletes is indistinguishable from the all-freshmen composite GPA. This, in part, due to coaches persistent academic monitoring of student athletes. At Princeton, the starting GPA gap of student-athletes persists throughout their college experience (i.e.: at Princeton, where 27% of the undergraduate base are student athletes, they accept their lower academic performance).
 - As has been previously reported, graduation rates are indistinguishable between student athletes and non-athletes.
 - The Ivy League has already established uniform criteria for admission of student athletes with specific limitations for men’s football, basketball and ice hockey. While these standards are regularly reviewed by the Ivy presidents, they are not expected to be changed.
 - **Bottom line, admissions standards do not need to be relaxed, and academic results will not be negatively affected.**

- 7. Participatory Programs:** More than three pages are devoted to "program functional plans" for intercollegiate athletics; a bit over one page, to physical education; one page, to outdoor education; one page, to recreational services. The needs of broad-based programs are not even mentioned.

Question: Why do the broad-based programs such as outdoor education and physical education receive fewer, less grand, and less particular recommendations than the competitive intercollegiate programs receive?

Answer: Happily, Cornell's broad-based programs, like physical and outdoor education, are already "best of class" and our objective is to continue to invest in order to maintain their excellence (e.g.: expand Helen Newman Hall, add more recreational space). The same can not be said for Cornell's intercollegiate athletic programs, where we rank in the lower half of the Ivy League. Therefore, our objective is to bring the success level of our intercollegiate athletic programs into the to half of our conference so those involved can enjoy a comparable experience to other students participating in the so-called "broad-based programs" and to do so without compromise to the broad-based programs. While raising the bar and performance of Cornell's intercollegiate athletic programs is ambitious, because the competition is intense and most of the other Ivies are actively working to improve their own programs, it is necessary to recognize Cornell's shortcomings and carefully document what needs to be done to position Cornell for an improved record. That is why there are more pages devoted to these "program functional plans."

- 8. Club Sports:** Those athletes who are in club sports participate in regional and national championships, and thus represent Cornell to the outside world. Their oversight is not by Athletics but by Student Activities and they are run on shoestring allocations from the SAFC, from alumni donations, and out of their own pockets. Strong intercollegiate club sports are consistent with the goals of this strategic plan, yet the document ignores them.

Question 1: Does the omission of club sports from this document signal a further deterioration of support?

Answer: Absolutely not; the omission of club sports from the department's Draft Strategic Plan simply reflects that the responsibility and accountability for club sports is vested completely with the Dean of Students, including independent insurance to satisfy risk management issues.

Question 2: If not, how can club sports be included in this proposal so that they too can enjoy the benefits of a renewed commitment to athletics?

Answer: While Club Sports, and their organizations, are not included in the plan, they will benefit from a "renewed commitment to athletics" by virtue of improved facilities, including outdoor playing fields. For example, preliminary plans for Precinct 9, off Pine Tree Road, anticipate construction of a multi-purpose field to accommodate rugby, ultimate frisbee, etc.

Question 3: In what ways could the athletic department support such clubs? For example, could the department provide members of such clubs access to the fitness centers without cost or else at a nominal fee?

Answer: The department already supports club sports by making many of its facilities available to them. Making fitness centers expressly available to club sports (without cost or at a minimal fee) requires additional funding from the university and approval from risk management (re.: independent contractor insurance). While careful consideration has been given to athletics assuming responsibility for club sports in prior years, there is no current evaluation to do so under consideration.

- 9. Time Demands on Student Athletes:** My advisee had a special conditioning session for women's lacrosse an hour before a bio prelim (morning, not an evening practice time) and a freshman in my class said the women's swimming coach required 4 hrs of practice 6 days a week (24 hrs/wk!).

Question: What's a reasonable expectation for time commitment for student athletes?

Answer: A reasonable expectation for time commitment is twenty hours per week, which is the maximum established by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The Ivy League establishes more stringent requirements (than the NCAA) for out-of-season practice periods and games and for pre-season games. While this disadvantages Ivy teams in competition with others outside our conference, we accept it. Still, safety, including excellent physical conditioning, is of paramount importance for our athletes.

As a matter of compliance, the department audits total practice hours per week per program, and we are satisfied that we are not violating the twenty hour limit. What can be misleading is when the student athlete counts portal-to-portal time as part of practice.

There is **no** evidence of practice abuses in the year-end anonymous student evaluation forms (each one of which is carefully reviewed by athletic administrators). Student athlete GPA data clearly shows that their grades are higher during season than out of season.

10. Access to Facilities: With the recent change in the fee for use of the squash courts, students are looking towards this as a trend of future eliminated fees in other athletic facilities such as fitness centers and physical education classes. Is the squash court example going to be a trend in the Department of Athletics and if so, what is the time frame to spread to other athletic facilities?

Answer: The squash court change in fee structure resulted from dropping the requirement for facility and eye safety oversight by virtue of each participant signing a liability waiver and agreement to comply with specific conduct standards. It should not be viewed as a trend to make either Fitness Center or Physical Education fee courses available at no cost. In fact, the cost of other facilities may increase, especially swimming as State requirements for lifeguards become more stringent.

11. Fees for Courses: Many physical education courses now charge fees. Since all undergraduates must complete at least two of these courses in order to graduate, charging fees limits some students' access to the range of possible activities and contributes to students recurring complaint that Cornell "nickels and dimes them to death". Has the department considered how it might finance the elimination of fees -- at least for students taking them in satisfaction of the minimal university requirement?

Answer: There are no-fee PE courses for credit and for no credit. Therefore, each student has the opportunity to take PE courses throughout their stay at Cornell without paying any fee. Our student rating of PE is in the 93% range with minimal negative feedback on the charging of fees. In fact, the department constantly upgrades its course offering (including fee courses) in response to student (i.e.: customer) feedback.

The department has no capacity to "finance the elimination of fees." As noted above, any student can satisfy her/his minimum university (PE) requirement by taking any one of a broad range of no-fee courses (including basketball, volleyball, swimming and jogging). In addition, the department has, in hardship cases, waived the fee to accommodate certain situations. Requests for financial aid may be addressed to either the Director of Physical Education or the Director of Outdoor Education depending on course interests.

12. Promote Employee Interest in Athletics: Employees with job and family pressures often cannot identify or bond with student sport teams. Employees who have participated in the Campus Hockey Tournament have enjoyed this activity and it appears to help employees appreciate our men and women's hockey teams.

Question 1: What other employee activities or tournaments can be created to increase the interest for employees in our athletic teams?

Answer: Employees are encouraged to participate in most intramural, recreational sports, Physical Education programs and wellness programs so the opportunities for employees go well beyond participation in club sports. Approximately 2000 staff members and their significant others are currently enjoying the benefits of Cornell's extensive fitness and group exercise programs through the Cornell Fitness Centers or Wellness Program. Employees and their significant others are welcome to participate in the 35 activities offered by the intramural program. There were a number of squash tournaments and free lessons until, at the employees request, this program was discontinued. Thousands of Cornell staff and their families attend men's and women's basketball games and football games run in conjunction with Cornell Employee Day activities. There are also employee nights and special programs where employees are selected as "honorary coaches" (and sit on the bench with the team). Coaches regularly conduct seminars for emeritus faculty and international students and staff to explain the sports and sports nuances; these could be expanded to include all employees. In fact, the department is open to any suggestions that would "increase interest for employees in (its) athletic teams."

Question 2: Would it be possible to provide a childcare center on campus during Cornell team athletic events to facilitate employee attendance at games and events?

Answer: This is an extremely valuable suggestion. The department will be pleased to investigate this. Our efforts to promote free squash lessons to employees' children (down to age six) were not successful but this suggestion focuses on child care so that employees can attend games and events.

13. Administrative Structure Change: There is a call for a modified administrative structure. Is this still an active issue? If not, skip the remainder of this question.

Answer: This will **not** happen. Any good strategic plan explores many options. In this context, various modified administrative structures were examined. Separating intercollegiate athletics from all other programs has some advantages but overall, does not serve the university well — and therefore, will not be undertaken.

14. Additional Resources: There is a call for additional resources: Where does this priority fit among the other university priorities?

Answers: University priorities are set by the Trustees and the Senior Administration. From an external point of view, one would conclude that Cornell has **underfunded** its athletics and physical education programs for decades. In the current fiscal year, university support amounts to 36.5% of total expense, compared to an estimated average support across the Ivy League of 68.0%.

From an internal point of view with respect to the student, there is a compelling case that these programs are part of the “core curriculum” — and should be supported that way. With the appropriate institutional support and commitment, alumni and friends can be expected to endow much or all of the potential gap relating to the need for “additional resources.” That is, as has been stated before, the incremental investment can be more than offset over time, by the expected incremental revenue.

15. Assertion: "Financial stability will be achieved by comprehensive restructuring; a thorough review of the university's allocation model, including student fees; a renewed commitment to facility maintenance; pursuit of new revenue-producing initiatives and critical additional funding from the university." (page 19)

Question: What will be the impact on the rest of the university?

Answer: As has been stated to similar questions, the impact will on the (rest of the) university will be **quite positive**. Not only will there be no net cost, over time, but the university will benefit from better students, better facilities, better marketing and media coverage, a better reputation and more supportive, proud alumni.

16. Impact of Athletics Fundraising: How will the increased fundraising for athletics affect general university development activities?

Answers: Increased fundraising for athletics will **help** general university development activities. There will be more donors and higher levels of giving with substantial leverage for the non-athletic parts of the campus (current athlete alumni, who contribute 38% of all giving from undergraduate alumni, give only 7% to athletics and 93% to all the rest).

Many athlete alumni start by giving to Athletics as their closest connection; later, they give to their colleges, performing arts center, Plantations, etc. In addition, publications like *Spirit!* sell Cornell — and sell our students and their parents.

17. Employee Time Constraints: Employees and students share the facilities at Helen Newman, Teagle, etc. The benefit is that this integration provides employees with an opportunity to meet and get to know our students, but the downside is that many employees who use the facilities are on strict time limitations, and this can deter an employee from using the facilities when they are crowded. While I don't think that employees want exclusive use hours or times, but employees would like to know what suggestions the Athletic Dept may have to address this issue?

Answer: The department gives priority to the students. However, recognizing the space and scheduling limitations on all constituents (mostly students and employees), the department has more than tripled its fitness space for non-varsity athletes and made the space available at prime time. The department is currently trying to develop additional practice and playing fields for the entire Cornell Community (Precinct 9) and is actively promoting the need to expand or replace Helen Newman Hall. The department believes that there is real value in integrating employees and students in both shared facilities and activities and will continue to promote this through improved facilities and scheduling.

18. Financial Aid: Princeton, Harvard etc. are providing more financial support to athletes (not as athletic scholarships, but as general support to all students), so that many athletes can attend these at a lesser cost than Cornell. What does Cornell propose to do (if anything) to re-level the playing field in athlete recruitment?

Answer: This is a matter for the Trustees and Senior Administration. In fact, it's recommended that the university take a leadership role in addressing the changed realities of the commitment to a "level playing field" given the newly emerging financial aid programs at several Ivy League schools. If the Ivy League is to remain a league where all institutions can compete fairly, some accommodations to the newly emerging recruiting and financial aid realities is required. In truth, the "level playing field" is gone, likely forever.

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