

Dear Members of the Trojan Family,

The NCAA has notified us of its findings and sanctions regarding the investigation of USC's athletic program. A press release [attached] outlines our official position, but I wanted to address you directly and in more detail on several points.

We will accept some of the penalties imposed by the NCAA Committee on Infractions and will appeal those penalties that are excessive. On matters related to the appeal, our spokesman is Todd Dickey, senior vice president for administration. Until this matter is adjudicated by the NCAA Infractions Appeals Committee, there is very little that can be said on the specifics of the case.

While we sharply disagree with many of the conclusions reached by the NCAA Committee on Infractions, the fact is that there were violations, and we must take responsibility for those violations. The process of self-scrutiny must involve everyone close to the university and the athletics department and ask: What went wrong? What should we do differently? How do we protect our university, our athletics program and our student-athletes from those who seek personal gain at our expense?

Compliance with the NCAA rules is a responsibility that everyone at the university shares. It is a central obligation for all associated with our athletics program: administrators, coaches, staff and student-athletes. In addition, like other universities that are competitive in athletics, we have a compliance office whose staff is responsible for making sure NCAA rules are understood, for answering questions about NCAA rules and for investigating charges that NCAA rules may have been violated. Because of the increasing complexity of NCAA rules, we have significantly increased the number of professional staff in the athletics compliance office in the last few years.

However, monitoring and regulating human behavior is complex at best, and even more so in a far-flung region like Los Angeles, home to a vast entertainment-sports enterprise. In this environment, we need to make sure that we are doing everything we can, at every level of the university, to protect our students, their families -- and ultimately the university -- from unscrupulous sports agents and others who seek to exploit our elite student-athletes or their families. To that end we have hired the Freeh Group, an internationally respected consulting group led by former federal judge and ex-FBI director Louis Freeh, to help us take a fresh look at how we can keep unscrupulous agents and sports marketers away from our student-athletes and the university.

At USC we are proud of our athletic accomplishments. Having a tradition of excellence in athletics binds the university community together. It builds pride amongst our students, faculty, staff and alumni. The visibility it gives USC has been a good recruiting tool not only for excellent students, but also for excellent faculty. But athletic success in and of itself has never been our primary goal at USC. Rather, our overarching mission is to continue to build USC into an academic institution of the first rank.

We made an uncompromising commitment to academic excellence years ago, and it has paid off in an extraordinary way. We have the same uncompromising commitment to compliance with the NCAA rules. This commitment is a vital complement to our academic mission. Our commitment to compliance with the NCAA rules is also central to the responsibilities we have to the 640 student-athletes who come to USC for an excellent education and for an opportunity to compete at the highest levels of their respective sports. We owe it to them to quickly identify individuals who threaten the integrity of the program, and to take action as soon as possible.

We fully intend to have the very best athletics department and athletics compliance program in the country. But let's not kid ourselves -- no amount of resources can guarantee that we can keep every unscrupulous sports agent or marketer away from our student-athletes and their families. All of us at USC will strive to do everything humanly possible to minimize the possibility of infractions occurring in the future. We can do better, we must do better, and we shall do better, but perfect we will never be.

Sincerely,

Steven B. Sample
President