

November 10, 2020

Dr. Dave Turnbull, Chair
WSU Faculty Senate
P.O. Box 641038
Pullman, WA. 99164-1038

Dear Dr. Turnbull:

I would like to provide a response to the recent resolution presented to the Faculty Senate by Professor James M. Krueger.

Background

Washington State University has participated in intercollegiate athletics for decades, originally as part of the Pacific Coast Conference and later as a member of the Pac-8 Conference, representing major public and private universities in California, Oregon and Washington competing at the NCAA Division 1 level. With the addition of the University of Arizona and Arizona State University many years ago, the Pac-8 became known as the Pac-10. Finally, a little less than a decade ago, the addition of the University of Colorado Boulder and the University of Utah brought the conference membership to 12 schools and the conference became known as the Pac-12.

The Pac-12 is one of five athletic conferences that are generally known as the Autonomy 5 or the Power 5 and includes the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), the Big 12 Conference, the Big Ten Conference, and the Southeastern Conference. The 65 schools that compete in these five conferences are all well-known universities who benefit from national recognition arising through competition at the highest level of intercollegiate athletics. Most of these universities are academic peers or aspirational academic peers for Washington State University and represent some of the most widely recognized institutions for higher education in the world.

The current members of the Pac-12 Conference are recognized as some of the premier universities in the world and include nine members of the AAU. Presently, the Pac-12 includes Arizona State University, the University of Arizona (AAU), the University of California, Berkeley (AAU), the University of California, Los Angeles (AAU), the University of Colorado Boulder (AAU), the University of Oregon (AAU), Oregon State University, Stanford University (AAU), the University of Southern California (AAU), the University of Utah (AAU), the University of Washington (AAU), and Washington State University.

In order to remain a member of one of the Autonomy 5 conferences competing at the Division 1 level, there are requirements surrounding the number of sports sponsored by each of the schools (currently set at 16 sports). There are also Title IX requirements surrounding participation rates and opportunities for male and female student athletes that must be maintained.

Benefits of Pac-12 Membership

Over the last decade, **many athletic conferences have more formally initiated the formation of academic leadership groups with their athletic conference counterparts.** The best example of this has been the academic partnerships initiated by the Big Ten Conference whereby members of the athletic conference convene on a regular basis to share ideas and initiate and foster academic partnerships.

In the last five to six years, the Pac-12 Conference has begun to have more meetings to expand its partnerships with conference members beyond athletic competition. The Pac-12 provosts meet on a regular basis, as do vice presidents for student affairs. Recently, faculty senate presidents from Pac-12 schools have also been meeting to confer and exchange ideas and best practices. For Washington State University, our partnerships with prestigious member schools provide an opportunity for consistent interaction across the entire university that we would not have otherwise; and as a result, **these academic relationships among Pac-12 schools are a major positive benefit from WSU's membership.**

Intercollegiate athletics is also **part of the educational experience for many of our students at WSU Pullman** and is one of several differentiators when recruiting prospective undergraduate students. Like our counterparts in the Pac-12, Washington State University seeks to blend an outstanding academic experience with competition at the highest level for intercollegiate athletics. This same philosophy is prevalent throughout the Pac-12 Conference at institutions with impeccable academic reputations, such as the University of California, Berkeley and Stanford University.

Intercollegiate athletics also **constitute a point of pride for many alumni and university supporters.** Many fans come back to the Pullman campus on regular occasions where they interact with students, faculty and staff. They infuse the local economy through shopping and dining out when they visit, and by providing our alumni with opportunities to return regularly to a small rural college town.

Additionally, intercollegiate athletics provides an opportunity to continue to **build a national brand for WSU.** Our logo is among the best recognized in all of college sports and many faculty, staff and students have met people associated with WSU when traveling abroad and hearing a "Go Cougs!". Often these conversations are not exclusively about athletics but are just as often about what is happening at the university. We would have to spend significantly more resources to have this type of branding and recognition on a national level.

Fiscal Impact of Intercollegiate Athletics

None of the benefits of membership in the Pac-12 is without some financial cost. Intercollegiate athletics at WSU has not been a self-sustaining enterprise for nearly a decade and significant investments were made in athletic facilities several years ago to improve our competitiveness in the Pac-12. As a result, Cougar Athletics has engaged in deficit spending for multiple years and has accumulated a large unresolved debt. However, with the hiring of Pat Chun as athletic director we have made significant inroads into balancing our budget for intercollegiate athletics and will continue to work towards this goal. We have been very open and transparent on our finances and will continue to do so into the future. The WSU Regents receive updates at each Regents' meeting to hold me personally accountable as president on meeting our spending and deficit reduction targets.

I also want to acknowledge that there is always some dynamic tension in higher education over the role of intercollegiate athletics at a modern research university. I am aware that there are some faculty members who are dedicated athletics fans and feel that intercollegiate athletics is an important part of the WSU experience. I also know that we have other colleagues who feel that we should not be competing at the Division 1 level and that any financial support for intercollegiate athletics are funds that should be utilized elsewhere. As president, I want to strike a balance between ensuring appropriate university support for intercollegiate athletics with a continued need to invest heavily in support of academic excellence.

Summary

I will continue to support WSU as an enthusiastic member of the Pac-12 Conference. I believe that membership in the Pac-12 aligning with other leading prestigious public and private universities is worth the investment we will continue to make. Additionally, I am supportive of us continuing to play football at a nationally competitive level and will always work with colleagues across the Pac-12 Conference to ensure a safe competitive environment for our student athletes. I will also continue to be transparent in our

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spending on intercollegiate athletics in the same way I have been during my tenure as president at Washington State University.

If I can provide any further information, please let me know.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kirk H. Schulz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Kirk H. Schulz
President