

## Athletics Feasibility Study Update

Written by Mike Flynn  
Tuesday, 12 April 2011 06:31

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Dear Appalachian Family:

We feel that it is appropriate at this time to update the Appalachian State University 'core constituency' on the progress of our athletics feasibility study. We are pleased with the feasibility committee's work so far, but much still lies in front of us. We want to update you by answering the most important questions being asked of us:

1. Has the committee reached a decision?

No. In fact, neither a vote nor recommendations have been taken. Our intent is to reach a consensus in late May and notify Chancellor Peacock. He will make his final recommendation to the ASU Board of Trustees, perhaps in June.

2. What is the purpose of this study?

Simply stated, Appalachian State University is transforming and we want a thoughtful, measured analysis of whether a change in our athletics program enhances that transformation. The average age of Appalachian's 100,000 alumni is 32. Five-out-of-10 alumni are 30 years old or younger. Half of the tenured faculty on campus is within five years of retirement eligibility. The University of today is not the Appalachian of tomorrow. For many reasons, this is a particularly significant time in the changing world of college athletics and Appalachian itself to study. We dare not let this opportunity pass without a close look. That "close look" includes examining opportunity costs, real and perceived. What would Appalachian gain or lose?

3. How do you know we'll succeed with a "move up"?

There's University success and athletic success (which, of course, usually go hand in hand). From the University perspective, we are analyzing whether an elevated program increases student enrollment from out-of-state, increases the value of the academic profile of prospective students, enhances the ability of athletics to attract first-time donors to other campus programs and improves the visibility and public relations of Appalachian.

As for athletics success, we would only make a move that would improve our competitiveness and, as you know, we are competitive already. Over the past 40 years as an NCAA Division I member, our football team has won 77 percent of its games and our men's basketball team has won 50 percent of its games.

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4. Since the University has to invest more money in athletics to elevate the football program, how would you pay for this without sacrificing the University's academic mission?

First of all, like all UNC system institutions, no state-appropriated revenues are spent on athletics at Appalachian, so athletics does not compete with academic programs or positions for state or campus funding. Athletics relies on self-generated revenues like ticket sales, donations, sponsorships and student fees for its main funding sources. We have declared that this effort can only positively affect the academic role of this University.

5. You have said that moving up in football would not be done on the backs of students. How are you going to accomplish that?

Many institutions that are have either recently started Division I football, announced intentions to start Division I football or changed classifications are using student fees as their primary funding source. This approach is not acceptable to our committee. A primary goal of our analysis is to determine if we can create a realistic, sustainable financial model of spending to achieve competitive success that is supported by increased revenues from ticket sales, fundraising, sponsorships, game guarantees and student fees. Furthermore, it appears that the single best opportunity for generating the money to support athletics would come from expanding our base of support through growth in student population and all other areas that would naturally follow a move to the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS). In fact, data indicates that schools that pay for athletics at the FBS level use a substantially smaller percentage of their total spending from campus allocations than those at the FCS level. A recent NCAA study found that institutional support as a funding source for athletics is approximately 20 percent in the FBS and 72 percent in the FCS.

6. Given the current State of North Carolina budget situation, why is the University focusing resources on this project?

The committee is spending no public resources on this study with the exception of the time from staff members of the athletics department. Our volunteer committee members are well aware of the economic climate in North Carolina but are united in the belief that "if you are not growing, then you are falling behind." When you are looking 10 – 20 years in the future, as we are, Appalachian's growth is too important to let current conditions dictate our planning and aspirations.

On behalf of the members of our athletics feasibility committee, we want to thank you for your generous interest and support of this endeavor. Please let us know any other questions you might have as the study proceeds. You can email your questions to [AppStateFeasibilityStudy@gmail.com](mailto:AppStateFeasibilityStudy@gmail.com) and/or attend one of the five remaining Yosef Club Spring Tour stops in Charlotte (April 13), Hickory (April 14), Raleigh (April 19), Winston-Salem (April 20), and Asheville (April 21). Thank you again!

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