

**The Faculty and
Four Decades of Athletic Reform
at Rice University**

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When the Rice faculty undertook the university's first self-study in 1963-64, the institution of tenure was a recent innovation at Rice, having been formally adopted only two years earlier.¹ A governing body called "Faculty Council" existed, but it included, in addition to six elected faculty members, four deans, the Chancellor and the President, who served as chair. Young Turks grumbled about "inbreeding" and observed that although nearly all the faculty held PhD's, more of those degrees had been earned at Rice than at any other single institution. Rice was still tuition-free; although negotiations to change the charter were underway, only Caucasian students could legally be admitted. Athletes were recruited and admitted by the Athletic Department under a quota system that bypassed the Admissions Office altogether. There were special courses that only athletes were permitted to take.²

In spite of the frailty of faculty governance, the faculty registered its concerns about the athletic program in a section of the 1964 report titled "Faculty Morale and Attitude."

¹ Informal practices approximating tenure were said to already exist, but the exact meaning of this claim is unclear. *Self Study Report of 1964* (Fondren Library LD4711 R292 1964a) 43-46.

² *Self Study Report of 1964*, 43-48, 11-12.

A significant number of faculty members, perhaps a majority of that body, believes that 'big-time athletics' at Rice is a patent anomaly in view of the general objectives and the high academic standards of the institution.³

Having dared say that much, the report then hastened to commend "the exemplary fashion in which the administration has handled the entire athletic situation, granting the fact that the University is now, and for the foreseeable future will be, a member of the Southwest Conference and must operate under its rules."⁴ The report acknowledged that "some of the leading athletes in recent years have been outstanding scholars" and expressed hopeful confidence that "the caliber of the students who enter Rice under the athletic quota is being constantly elevated."⁵

Nevertheless, there is a persistent, but far from completely substantiated, belief that athletes are responsible for more disciplinary problems than an equal number of nonathletes and that certain courses have been and are [being] 'watered down.'⁶

At a time when the athletic program showed a net profit above all expenses of \$184,891, (an amount deposited in the general fund of the university "just as in the case of income from other sources") the faculty could do little more than applaud the trustees for not creating a separate dormitory for athletes and

³ *Self Study Report of 1964*, 47.

⁴ *Self Study Report of 1964*, 47.

⁵ *Self Study Report of 1964*, 47.

⁶ *Self Study Report of 1964*, 48.

welcome the verbal commitment of a new president, Kenneth Pitzer of Berkeley, to insure, as he put it, that "athletes are bona fide students."⁷

Anyone comparing the 1964 Self Study Report with the one that followed it a decade later will be struck by the rising trajectory of faculty competence and self-confidence. By 1974, Faculty Council had become the sixteen person elective body it is today. All across the country booming enrollments in the late 60s gave scholars of all ranks rare leverage in the academic job market. Counter-cultural currents merged with nationwide turmoil over civil rights and the war in Vietnam to foster a mood of iconoclasm and antiauthoritarianism. Local events such as the Masterson Affair also did their part to strengthen faculty resolve. In 1969, when the Rice trustees did not adhere to agreed-upon procedures in carrying out a presidential search, the faculty, together with a galvanized student body, marched in protest, held "teach-ins," and persuaded the trustee's selection (a well-known ex-member of the faculty named Masterson) to withdraw, having never occupied the office to which he had been appointed.

In the wake of the Masterson Affair, the presidency passed to a stern veteran administrator from the University of Texas, Norman Hackerman. In 1971, near the beginning of his term in office, a cheating scandal erupted that involved a group of athletes. When the Honor Council announced its decisions, the football coach, Bill Peterson, publicly assailed not only the Honor Council, but the very idea of an honor code. "I've been struggling with Honor Systems since I began to coach," he said. "You can take the fifth amendment; you don't have to tell them anything." Colleen Jennings, a senior then presiding over the Honor Council, was understandably disturbed. In her own words, the message was "beat the system . . . just don't get caught." After arranging a meeting with Peterson and

⁷ *Self Study Report of 1964*, 197, 48.

confronting him with what he was reported to have said, she wrote President Hackerman to explain what happened:

Coach Peterson emphatically denied saying anything of the kind, but went on to say a few minutes later "When I said that, what I meant is that Honor Councils are always out to get the athletes. They don't have a chance. The Honor Council will treat them differently because they are different from other students." We reassured Mr. Peterson that athletes received no unusual treatment, and that the Honor Council was not trying to destroy or run the Athletic Department as he had charged earlier in the conversation.⁸

A copy of Jennings' letter to the president was addressed to the Outdoor Sports Committee, predecessor of RUAC, the joint trustee-administration-faculty committee that today presides over the entire Athletic Program.⁹ On behalf of the Outdoor Sports Committee, Trustee James U. Teague replied to Jennings' letter, politely assuring her that he fully endorse[d] the honor system. "If it applies to any student, it must apply to all. . . .I hope in view of recent developments, this problem will not again arise."¹⁰ The "recent development" Teague had in mind

⁸ All quotations come from Colleen Jennings to Norman Hackerman 10 December 1971 (sent under cover of a note from Jennings to Hackerman dated 9 January 1972 which apologizes for late delivery necessitated by the holiday break.) Copy in possession of the author. Jennings' letter also mentions that Peterson called "students [presumably the complainants] down to the gym to ask them why they had gone to the Honor Council instead of dealing directly with him." She had to explain that that was impossible and left with the "distinct impression that "the whole honor system . . . was incomprehensible to him."

⁹ RUAC stands for Rice University Athletic Committee.

¹⁰ J.U. Teague (Columbia Drilling Co.) to Miss Jennings, 14 January 1972. Copy in possession of the author.

was presumably the resignation of Coach Peterson, who left Rice that winter to become head coach of the Houston Oilers.¹¹

For reasons that remain unclear [research pending], Hackerman in 1971 closed down the Commerce major, an undisguised shelter program solely for athletes, and inaugurated in its place Managerial Studies, an interdisciplinary program largely staffed by adjunct faculty, in which any student could enroll, but in which athletes remained predominant. Though no longer a stand-alone major, Managerial Studies remains a part of the Rice curriculum today and continues to draw a high proportion of athletes.

The first self-study of the Hackerman era took place in 1974. The *Self Study Report* of that year sounded the keynote of all subsequent athletic reform on this campus by singling out the poor academic preparation of the bottom quartile of athletes as the most worrisome and ethically dubious aspect of the program. The average college board scores of scholarship athletes, as a group, had remained almost constant since 1965, but the authors of the self-study recognized that the overall average obscured what was happening at the bottom of the distribution:

The average scores of the lowest quarter of this group ... have declined precipitously in the past few years. ... The group with extremely low CEEB scores has only a small chance of performing satisfactorily in their course work.... The Honor Council reports that athletes in academic difficulty account for about half of the reported violations of the Honor Code.¹²

¹¹ Colleen Jennings married Bill Batchelor, a Rice football player class of 1971 who now teaches engineering at Texas A&M.

¹² Emphasis added. *The Self Study Report of 1974* (Fondren Library LD4711 R292 1974) vol.?, 8.

Since fewer than one in ten students were athletes, this was a shockingly large figure, implying that athletes as a group were dramatically more likely to violate the honor code than regularly admitted students. When the Athletic Review Committee posed the same question in 1992, it found the same disproportion: half of all honor code violations were being committed by athletes. When the question was asked yet again in 2002-03, there had been no significant change. Athletes, who make up only 10 percent of the undergraduate student body, accounted for 45 percent of undergraduate honor code violations.¹³

The authors of the 1974 report called attention to yet another ominous tendency just then getting underway. Not only was the university recruiting athletes who were ill-equipped to compete academically in regular Rice classrooms, the athletic program was no longer paying its own way and had begun to compete with the educational functions of the university for resources. "The Athletic Department operated at a net profit before 1969, but since that time it has shown a net loss."¹⁴ Since Rice was by now charging tuition, the distribution of scholarship aid had become an issue. The 1974 Self Study reported that although athletes made up eight percent of the undergraduate student body, they received 26 percent of the total tuition scholarship aid. Counting tuition at its full current value, \$2100 per person, the authors of the report calculated that the athletic deficit had already climbed to \$600,000 a year. If tuition was taken fully into account, even football, the principal revenue sport, was already in the red.¹⁵

¹³ *Self Study Report of 1974*, [page ?]; Athletics at Rice: A Report to Faculty Council by the Subcommittee on Athletics [Davidson Report of 2002], 30.

¹⁴ *Self Study Report of 1974*, vol. 3, B-89.

¹⁵ *Self Study Report of 1974*, vol. III, B-89. The 1974 Self Study's discussion of the athletic deficit apparently proceeded on the assumption that all scholarship aid to athletes counted; since the 1992 ARC Report it has been customary to count only half of scholarship aid to athletes when talking about the deficit. See *Report of the Athletic Review Committee* [hereafter referred to as the *ARC Report*], 27.

Only once has Rice University polled its alumni about the wisdom of its commitment to big-time athletics. That elementary gesture of respect for alumni judgment was rendered by the 1974 Self Study, which surveyed a sample of 1000 Rice graduates. Thirteen percent of those who replied identified themselves as participants in intercollegiate athletics. The responses indicated that, other things being equal, alumni would prefer Rice to be athletically competitive. But when asked about academic admission standards for athletes, 55 percent of alumni said they should be "the same as for other students," while 34 percent would allow them to be "slightly lower." Only four percent would allow standards to be "a great deal lower." When asked how their own financial contributions would change if Rice de-emphasized athletics, 85 percent replied that they would "remain unchanged." Another five percent said their contributions would be "significantly increased."¹⁶

The Self Study of 1984, which came near the end of President Hackerman's term in office, reflects the continuing maturation of a faculty that by now took for granted its responsibility to exercise leadership in all dimensions of university life, including most emphatically the athletic program. The document is especially interesting for the candor with which it reports on matters that later Rice administrators would try to keep hidden, not only from the general public, but from the faculty as well. The widening gap between athletic department revenues and expenses, for example, is set forth in graphic detail for each year of the decade 1974-83.¹⁷ Zeroing in on the most disturbing ethical issue to emerge

¹⁶ Five key questions from the poll are reproduced together with full results in the *Final Report of the Faculty Council Committee on Athletics* (hereafter referred to as the *FCCA Report*) (30 September 1992), pp xiv-xv.

¹⁷ *Self Study Report of 1984* (Fondren Library LD4711 R292 1984 v.I, Appendix C).

from the previous self-study, the 1984 report traced a continuing decline in the mean combined SAT scores of the bottom quartile of athletes -- from 871 in 1974 to 707 in 1977. [[re-center these numbers for comparison]].¹⁸ In hopes of halting the slide, the authors of the 1984 report urged that the university adopt a "floor," a minimum combined SAT score beneath which exceptions would be granted only very rarely. The floor they had in mind, a SAT score of 1000, would receive strong support again in the faculty poll of 1992, but the administration has never been willing to establish that or any other floor, perhaps because the superstar athletes it takes to make a team competitive in division I-A seldom score that high.¹⁹

The faculty's growing concern about the bottom quartile of athletic admissions had been accentuated several years earlier by escalating tension between the Honor Council and the administration over an appeals process that in student eyes was becoming so lenient that it undercut the authority of the Honor Council. In August 1982, Honor Council chair Tom Pajewski warned of "increasing polarization of philosophies concerning the role of the Proctor and the President within the Honor System." He called upon University Council to appoint an investigative committee to look into "the ninety percent reversal rate that we have seen in recent years by the President."²⁰ Two faculty committees,

¹⁸ *Self Study Report of 1984*, vol ? page? [All SAT scores are un-recentered unless specified otherwise.]

¹⁹ *Self Study Report of 1984*, 207-208.

²⁰ Tom Pajewski to University Council, 25 August 1982, reproduced in *Reforming the Appeals Process of the Rice University Honor System: Submitted to the Faculty Council*, Keith Henneke, compiler (11 February 2003), appendix IV. There is no mention of athletes in Pajewski's letter, but in a telephone conversation on 15 March 2003 he informed the author that during his years on Honor Council athletes accounted for "more than half" of the caseload. Their cases, he said, tended to be collaborative, sometimes involving a half-dozen or more people. Penalties assigned to athletes, cheerleaders, and students whose parents were wealthy enough to hire lawyers were the ones most likely to be reduced on appeal.

one chaired by Sidney Burrus in 1981, the other by Bud Rorschach in 1982, met to address "recent stresses on the [honor] system."²¹ Similar worries about the apparent proclivity of presidents to re-try cases and undo the work of Honor Council would surface again in the mid-1990s, and yet again in 2002-03. These later episodes would be associated with widely publicized cheating scandals involving such large numbers of athletes that the council's case load became overwhelming, disrupting the its members' studies and threatening the integrity of the system.

Seven months after the Rorschach Committee submitted its recommendations for healing the breach between administrators and the Honor Council, the Rice Board of Trustees set out to strengthen the athletic program in a manner so peremptory that it galvanized faculty opposition and startled observers all across the nation. Apparently unaware that major universities everywhere have long taken it for granted that faculties exercise nearly exclusive control over curricular matters, the trustees tried unilaterally to make the Rice curriculum football-friendly. The Board issued a statement on 22 September 1983 declaring that "the intercollegiate athletic program of Rice University is an important component of its total program. It is not an ancillary activity." The Board said it wanted, not only athletes, but all Rice students to "have access to courses and programs which provide adequately for practicums as well as theory."

The full implications of the "practicum" project only became clear in November, when the university proudly publicized the acquisition of a new football coach with a splashy pay package of \$1.3 million. A *Houston Post* reporter summed up his interview with President Hackerman by writing that "part of Rice's football

²¹ Report of the Ad-Hoc [Rorschach] Committee on the Honor Council, Submitted to the University Council (7 February 1983), p. 3, reproduced in *Reforming the Appeals Process of the Rice University Honor System*, appendix V.

commitment is the creation of some practical courses that will enable athletes to enter the business world." Provost William Gordon explained to the *Houston Chronicle* that what Rice needed were courses of "a more practical bent," ones teaching students, for example, "how to read a business invoice." Confronted with pointed questions from reporters, the Provost responded with a heavily freighted observation: "If the curriculum is watered down," he said, "it will be watered down by the faculty, not the administrators or the president."²²

To reaffirm its authority over the curriculum, the Rice faculty circulated a petition over the winter holiday break. Although many faculty members were out of town, over 200 affixed their names to the petition, declaring that "we do not believe that that special curricula or courses should be introduced nor special admission standards maintained for the sake of the athletic program." Rejecting the Board's policy in the Board's exact words, the petition declared "intercollegiate football at the level of the Southwest Conference to be, *at most*, an ancillary activity of the university." On 17 January 1984, with President Hackerman presiding, the faculty assembled in a heavily attended session and formally repudiated the Board's new policy by acclamation, with only a few scattered "noes."²³

The public was, to say the least, bemused. A Houston sportswriter made light of what he labeled the university's "pretense" that "these youngsters are student-athletes." He rolled his eyes about schools that "want to be football factories but

²² In his *Houston Post* interview, Hackerman went on to say that "'three, four, or five courses would be added to the curriculum next fall. I don't foresee a lot more.' . . . 'There were no more than twelve courses total in the commerce studies [program] (discontinued in 1971), and the athletes had to compete with the other students in 28 other courses.'" *Houston Post*, 24 November 1983, p. 4c; *Houston Chronicle*, 24 November 1983, section 4, p. 3; Thomas Haskell, "Too Hot to Handle?" *Sallyport* vol. 40, no. 4 (April-May 1984), 22-23.

²³ Haskell, "Too Hot to Handle?" 22-23.

can't figure out how." In a more serious vein, speaking before the Houston Chamber of Commerce, Benjamin M. Rosen, President of the Compaq Computer Co., chided Rice for spending \$1.3 million to attract a new football coach when the university could have been promoting its image as a leading center of learning in fields of high-technology engineering. *Newsweek* magazine interviewed electronics magnate (and later presidential candidate) H. Ross Perot, who professed to be dumbfounded: "Are we in school or are we in show business? I don't think football has anything to do with education. If Rice were to drop football altogether, the sun would still rise in the morning."

The same Faculty Meeting that rejected practicums also took steps to closely monitor athletic and other special admissions on a continuing basis. It adopted a motion calling for the Admissions Committee to "review and evaluate the record submitted by every candidate for undergraduate admission and report, at the first faculty meeting of every academic year, on the previous year's admissions, including athletes."²⁴ In spite of much foot-dragging, occasional lapses, and at least one overt effort to derail the practice, this annual update on special admissions at the beginning of each academic year continues to this day and has become the principal means by which the faculty keeps itself informed about the academic integrity of the Rice admissions process.

The Admissions Committee's first annual report on special admissions was delivered the year after the practicum episode at a Faculty Meeting in December 1985. The committee chair, Professor Rorschach (a physicist and a veteran of the recent inquiry into Honor Council problems) presented much more complete data than the faculty had ever seen before on Rice's "special admissions" – that is, students admitted not by the regular procedures of the admissions office, but

²⁴ *Proceedings of Faculty Council*, 4 December 1985, 3, in *Report of the Athletic Review Committee*, appendix C, A-6.

under the special auspices either of the Athletic Department or the School of Music. In both cases, the committee distinguished between three categories of recently admitted students: those it regarded as "clearly admissible; those that were "weak, but [had] some potential;" and those it thought "inadmissible." Within a few years rising standards would make music students indistinguishable from regular students, permitting the Shepherd School to be released from the annual reporting requirement. But in 1985 music students were not significantly stronger than the athletes, forty percent of whom were regarded as "inadmissible" and only thirteen percent as "clearly admissible."²⁵

Before the eventful academic year of 1983-84 drew to a close, the university administration quietly took what appear in retrospect to be the first fitful steps toward putting athletic admissions at Rice on a respectable basis – a basis, that is, that could withstand public scrutiny. Up until this time athletic admissions were made by the Athletic Department without benefit of advice from either the Dean of Admissions or the faculty Committee on Admissions. In spring 1984, however, meetings were held between Athletic Director Augie Erfurth, Football Coach Watson Brown, Dean of Admission Richard Stabell, and Provost Robert Gordon to hammer out a set of minimum qualifications that prospective athletes would hitherto have to present in order to be considered for admission under the athletic quota.²⁶ Conspicuous by his absence from these discussions (presumably because not invited) was the current chair of the faculty Committee on Admissions, Professor Rorschach of Physics. Another decade would go by before faculty pressure would finally induce the administration to put the Dean of Admissions in charge of all undergraduate admissions and allow selected

²⁵ *ARC Report*, appendix C, A-10.

²⁶ Mark Scheid, "Report on Academics and Athletics at Rice University, 1986-1991" (18 February 1991), in *Report of the Athletic Review Committee*, 28 January 1992, Appendix C, A42-43.

members of the faculty Committee on Admissions a degree of advisory oversight regarding the admission of prospective athletes.

Although no member of the faculty was invited to take part in these important 1984 discussions, a very active role appears to have been played by a Rice PhD in English, Mark Scheid, who had just been appointed Rice's Academic Advisor of Student-Athletes. Using data prepared by his predecessor in that job (an ex-Rice football player) Scheid helped coaches and senior administrators craft a set of quantitative standards that with minor modifications has continued to shape athletic admissions at Rice ever since. He informed the ARC Committee in 1991 that as far as he could determine "there were no formal admissions standards governing athletic admissions" before the ones he helped draft in spring 1984. Scheid is currently functioning as Assistant to the President. In recent years, when star athletes are denied admission and the Athletic Department appeals the denial to the President, the first stage of negotiation is between ex-Dean Stabell and Mark Scheid. As Assistant to the President, Scheid also oversees the operation of the Honor Council. It is to him, acting on behalf of the president, that the Assistant Dean of Student Judicial Programs reports.

What Scheid and his co-discussants formulated in the spring of '84 was a tripartite scheme of quantitative eligibility thresholds defined in terms of GPA, class rank, SAT scores, and numbers of high school "solids." In the beginning, an athlete with scores satisfying any of the three thresholds was automatically admissible at the discretion of the coaches; since 1995 the process has become less automatic, as will be discussed below. Most athletes are admitted under procedure I, which requires a GPA of 2.8 or better, SAT scores of 1100 or more (nearly 300 points below the Rice average) and 14 high school solids (two less than the Rice catalogue says are mandatory for all applicants). Weaker prospects are admitted under procedure II, based on SAT scores as low as 1010 and

varying numbers of solids depending on class rank. But many of the most talented athletes can only be admitted as "waivers" or "exceptions" under procedure III. Exceptions need not satisfy any SAT minimum or specific GPA, as long as they have at least 12 solids and rank in the upper 40 percent of their high school class. Exceptions are allocated by sport: football is eligible for three to five waivers a year; men's and women's basketball for one to two each. Most other sports – even golf - get one a year.²⁷

In the spring semester of 1984, as the furor over practicums died down and the new eligibility thresholds were being formulated behind closed doors, the Board announced that President Hackerman would step down at the end of the next academic year.²⁸ The new president, George Rupp, previously Dean of Harvard Divinity School, would assume command of a university very different from the one that Hackerman had taken charge of fifteen years earlier. ²⁹

²⁷ This paragraph summarizes the three procedures, not as they were originally defined in 1984, but as they now stand after several minor modifications.

²⁸ Haskell, "Too Hot to Handle?" 22-23.

²⁹ At about the time Hackerman stepped down and Rupp took over, a priceless opportunity for reform of Rice athletics was passed up. To the best of my knowledge, no member of the faculty was aware at the time that the organizers of the University Athletic Association invited Rice to become one of the founding members of that organization. Given the reform momentum generated by the practicum project, it is likely that pressure would have been intense to take this invitation seriously, had the faculty been aware of it. The invitation is mentioned by William Bowen and Sarah A. Levin in their landmark study of athletics at elite institutions, *Reclaiming the Game*: "Three other universities were invited to join the initial discussion that led to the formation of the UAA in June 1986. " One, Cal Tech, declined outright, in part because of its location on the west coast and in part because it just was 'very different' [as was MIT, which was loath to let its students spend so much time off campus]. The other two, Rice and Tulane, indicated interest but declined to attend the initial meeting primarily for what Rasmussen [Executive Secretary of the AAU] calls "political reasons" related primarily to trustee views. According to Rasmussen, 'Administrators from Rice and Tulane indicated strong personal preference for athletic competition within a Division III context. Their current athletic programs were a financial drain, and they routinely faced conflicts between the academic and athletic interests of the institutions. But the sagas of their athletic programs, their alumni interest, ties to booster in the community and the state, and the ethos of bigtime sports in their area of the country formed what for them was an insurmountable hurdle to a change as radical as moving to Division III'" William Bowen and Sarah A. Levin, *Reclaiming the Game: College Sports and Educational Values* (Princeton

In response to insistent questioning at his first meeting with the faculty, President Rupp began his term in office by committing himself to a major inquiry into all aspects of the Rice athletic program. The time to convene the committee never seemed quite right, however, and it was not until February 1991, five years after his arrival, that Rupp finally gave the Athletic Review Committee its charge. He anticipated that the committee's job could be completed in a couple of months.³⁰ Chaired by King Walters, ex-Dean of Natural Science, the "ARC Committee," as it was colloquially known, included a representative of the Board of Trustees, a representative of the Alumni, two faculty representatives, and one undergraduate.³¹ Since Rupp neglected to consult with Faculty Council about ARC's composition and did not charge ARC with any specific obligation to make recommendations, Faculty Council appointed its own commission of inquiry, the Faculty Council Committee on Athletics (FCCA).

FCCA's mission was to examine and comment on the findings of the ARC committee. It was explicitly commissioned to make recommendations. FCCA's members agreed from the beginning to base their recommendations on a systematic poll of faculty opinion about athletic issues, the first ever carried out at Rice. They also agreed that the faculty could not respond intelligently to such a poll until fully informed about the facts of Rice's athletic program. So the FCCA report would consist of two parts: first, a *Preliminary Statement* that summarized the findings of the ARC Committee and would be distributed to all members of

University Press, 2003), 368fn35 (quoting Richard Ramussen, Executive Secretary of the UAA). In the opinion of Bowen and Levin, the UAA since its founding has done a better job of upholding academic integrity than any other conference in the country, including the Ivy League.

³⁰ See Minutes of the Faculty, 10 October 1988, in *ARC Report*, appendix C, A-24-c.

³¹ ARC Committee members included Evans Attwell, Trustee; Sarah Burnett, Faculty; Catherine Hannah, Alumni Representative; Duane Windsor, Faculty; and Spencer Yu, Student Representative.

the faculty; then, in September 1992, a *Final Report* that would incorporate the poll results and made specific recommendations for reform.³² It, too, would be distributed to all members of the faculty.

The timetable for completion of the ARC committee's work was thrown to the winds midway through the fall semester, when the university was rocked by the largest cheating scandal in its history. The violations occurred in a section of a lower level science course that was favored by athletes because it was taught at 7pm. Of forty-seven students enrolled in the section, thirty were accused of cheating on a multiple-choice quiz. An athlete interviewed by the *Thresher* confirmed that "most of them were athletes. Not all were football players, though - I think that some basketball players were involved, too."³³ Two of the accused were found innocent, twenty-eight were found in violation. Indubitable evidence of premeditation and collaboration made the infamous "case #6" unusually disturbing to students, faculty, and the general public alike. That spring - shortly after the publication of the ARC Report, but before the FCCA conducted its faculty poll - the faculty, concerned about the integrity of a Managerial Studies program that had always been extremely popular among athletes, voted to deprive it of its stand-alone status. Henceforth students would be able to graduate with a major in "Mana," only if they combined it with a second major.³⁴

After a full year of work, the ARC Committee published its report in February 1992. Nearly an inch thick and 117 pages long, the report is plainly the work of

³² Members of FCCA included Steve Baker, Randy Batsell, Tom Haskell (chair) Eva lee, Bill Martin, and Ron Sass. The *Preliminary Statement* appeared in March, the *Final Report* in September, 1992.

³³ *Rice Thresher*, 8 November 1991, 1.

³⁴ *Rice Thresher*, 6 March 1992, 1, 11.

people who held diverging views and subscribed to conflicting values. Although different readers will draw different lessons from its findings, it has the great merit of being by far the most thorough and most reliable collection of data ever gathered on Rice's athletic program. Unlike the periodic self studies required by the NCAA, which are for the most part carried out by the Athletic Department staff and aim at nothing more than nominal conformity to the NCAA's "one size fits all" nationwide regulations, the ARC Report took seriously the Rice faculty's longstanding concerns about the corrupting influence of big-time athletics in a small, highly selective university like Rice. Although the report lent itself to multiple interpretations, it could not be accused of sweeping embarrassing facts under a rug. In it one finds several potentially far-reaching recommendations.³⁵ One also finds a wealth of hard, detailed evidence – evidence about the gap between athletes and non-athletes in academic preparation; about the majors in which athletes cluster; about athletes' commendably high graduation rates and what they mean; about athletes' performance in foundation courses, in the English competency exam, in SAT testing, etc. Here, too, one can find detailed information about the ever-escalating athletic deficit and comparative data

³⁵ The *ARC Report* made six recommendations. Even though this was a joint trustee, faculty, alumni and student committee, none of its recommendations have ever been implemented. "(1) All freshman athletes [should] . . . be available for and encouraged to participate fully in Orientation Week activities. Freshman athletes should be exempt from scheduled practices during that period. (2) the Department of Athletics [should] not require or encourage any athlete to live off campus. (3) A comprehensive review of Rice's intercollegiate athletic program [should] be conducted regularly at five-year intervals in order to monitor competitiveness, academic issues, and financial impact. (4) Career development of scholarship athletes (indeed all students) following graduation [should] be monitored and reviewed periodically to help ascertain the value of their Rice education. (5) Additional resources [should] be provided for the support of club sports, which together with intramural sports, are an important part of the Rice experience for a large number of students. (6) Should Rice continue participation in Division I-A athletics, the committee further recommends that several Division I-A private universities known for their superior academic programs e.g., Duke, Northwestern, Stanford, Vanderbilt) be asked to share with appropriate Rice representatives confidential information on their academic standards and procedures for admission. Rice's standards should be kept at a level comparable to those of the most academically demanding Division I-A schools. The Rice Admission Office and Committee on Admissions should become more involved in athletic admissions, as is the case, for example, at Duke and Stanford." *ARC Report*, 9.

relating Rice's revenues and expenses to the experience of other schools. The *ARC Report* even makes a half-hearted stab at projecting the financial consequences of leaving NCAA Division IA for a less competitive league such as the University Athletic Association, where Rice would compete against schools such as Chicago, Brandeis, Rochester, Carnegie-Mellon, Emory, Washington University of St. Louis -- schools that resemble Rice in size, character and quality.³⁶

Taking its cue from the *ARC Report*, the FCCA Report began by acknowledging an unavoidable tradeoff between high academic standards and high athletic performance. *The Houston Chronicle's* editorial on the *ARC Report* made the same point: "One conclusion is inescapable: Big-time athletic competition and the highest levels of academic achievement are not complementary pursuits."³⁷ The FCCA agreed: "Except in rare, individual cases, the ideal of the 'scholar athlete,' which implies a happy coincidence of intellectual ability and athletic prowess, is unrealizable in the world of Division I-A athletics."³⁸

The centerpiece of the FCCA Report was the faculty poll taken in the spring of 1992. Extraordinary pains were taken to construct the poll in such a way that "all responsible parties to the debate would accept [it] as an accurate representation of faculty opinion." To insure anonymity and security, the polling procedures duplicated the elaborate multiple-envelope precautions routinely taken by the President's Office to insure the privacy of faculty members voting for their representatives on Faculty Council. An outside contractor with no conceivable

³⁶ ARC relied on projections of future revenues and expenditures that were prepared by an urgently interested party, the Athletic Department. The FCCA called attention to their implausibility. *FCCA Report*, ____.

³⁷ Emphasis added. Quoted in *FCCA Report*, iii.

³⁸ *FCCA Report*, iv.

interest in the outcome was hired to tabulate responses. Of 417 tenured and tenure-track faculty, 255 returned the poll, yielding a rate of return of sixty-one percent. In the world of polling, that is a very high return, making the results unusually reliable as a representation of faculty opinion. The participation rate in a Faculty Council election held a few weeks earlier had been 50 percent.³⁹

Confronting the same question tacitly posed nine years earlier by the Trustee's ill-fated "practicum" project – Just how important is Division IA athletics to Rice University? - the faculty's answer was unequivocal. Only 15 percent of the respondents considered the playing of intercollegiate sports at the level of the Southwest Conference to be "an important activity, worthy of strong university support." Eighty-three percent regarded it as "at most an ancillary activity" (58 percent) or "of no importance whatever" (25 percent). Only sixteen percent of the faculty found the current trade-off between athletic and academic priorities acceptable. In contrast, three of every four said "the academic qualifications of athletes should be improved, even if it means moving to a less competitive level of athletics."⁴⁰

Eighty percent of faculty respondents regarded as "unacceptable" the separate channel of admission for athletes that was then in place, bypassing the Admissions Office and the Committee on Admissions. A large majority (65 percent) also expressed deep concern about the clustering of athletes in a restricted range of courses. (At the time, 84 percent of all scholarship athletes were majoring either in Managerial Studies [57 percent] or Health Science and Human Performance [27 percent]). When invited to define a bottom limit below

³⁹ *FCCA Report*, 10.

⁴⁰ *FCCA Report*, 9.

which admissions should not sink, 44 percent called for a SAT floor of 1000; another 19 percent preferred a floor at 1100. [[convert to recentered scores here]] When asked to choose between various levels of athletic competition, the faculty overwhelmingly favored getting Rice out of Division IA and moving to a league that bans athletic scholarships altogether.⁴¹

The poll made it plain that faculty sentiment strongly favored redressing the balance between academic and athletic priorities. Faculty Council accordingly voted unanimously on 30 September 1992 to endorse a series of FCCA recommendations that were then put to a vote at a general meeting of the Faculty on 12 November. The result was an overwhelming expression of faculty support for ending the separate channel of admission for athletes. Nearly three decades after the faculty had first declared Rice's commitment to big-time athletics a "patent anomaly," the practice of allowing the Athletic Department to function as its own admissions office and admit one of every ten Rice undergraduates had come to seem intolerable

The faculty understood very well that putting the Dean of Admissions officially in charge of all admissions would not, in itself, guarantee any substantial change in athletic admission standards. So the recommendations the FCCA put before the faculty spelled out specific changes that would have to be implemented if the university was to regularize the admissions process and develop an athletic program that the faculty could support. The most important changes can be paraphrased as follows:

- A. The gap in academic preparation between Rice athletes and non-athletes would have to be substantially reduced.

⁴¹ *FCCA Report*, 9-11.

- B. The criterion for admitting athletes would have to be, not merely likelihood of graduation, but also ability to compete on a substantially equal basis with non-athletes in classes throughout the curriculum.
- C. The application and admission requirements stated in the university catalogue (e.g. the minimum number of high school solids) would have to apply equally to all students, including athletes.
- D. The proportion of minorities in the Rice student body would have to be maintained at current levels and not allowed to decline as a result of athletic reform.
- E. As long as Rice remained in Division IA, the admissions process would have to employ academic standards for athletes that at least matched those achieved by the most demanding schools in the division, such as Stanford.
- F. The practice of admitting student managers and trainers under the athletic quota would have to be terminated and the quota reduced accordingly.
- G. The report on special admissions that the Committee on Admissions delivers to the faculty annually would have to be updated and expanded to monitor the progress made toward each of the specific recommendations and goals specified above.⁴²

⁴² FCCA Report, 12-18.

Faculty Council released the *FCCA Report* on Thursday, 22 October 1992. The timing of the release had been closely monitored by, and coordinated with, the President's Office. When the day arrived, the members of Faculty Council were as surprised as anyone when George Rupp took the occasion to announce that at the end of the current academic year he would step down as president. "Rupp Stuns Rice with Resignation" read the headline of the *Houston Chronicle*: "President Quits Amid Funding, Sports Battles."⁴³

According to the *Chronicle*,

Faculty and staff said Rupp grew impatient with the board's resistance to his desire for an aggressive fund-raising campaign to meet Rice's needs and with its intolerance toward the faculty's investigation of whether the university can continue to afford athletics. At a news conference, board Chairman Charles Duncan and Rupp denied the charge But the disavowals by Duncan and Rupp did little to assuage the beliefs of most people on campus, who swore, expressed sadness or muttered 'bad news' when asked about the resignation....

Sources said Rupp is tired of mediating between a board that tolerates no dissent on its commitment to Rice athletics and the faculty's seeming openness to dropping athletics or at least moving to a lower level. They say it is no coincidence [that] Rupp's announcement came on the day the results of a May survey regarding athletics were released.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Houston Chronicle*, 23 October 1992. P.1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

The *Chronicle's* lead story closed with the words of an unidentified source: "Dr. Rupp was a strong, courageous president caught in a kind of cross fire in which he was unfairly accused by at least some board members of neglecting the wishes of the board in favor of the faculty on an issue that was complex and not fully understood by either the board or faculty."⁴⁵

In April 1993, as Rupp was preparing to leave for New York and the presidency of Columbia University, he called a meeting to discuss a list of nine reform proposals, more or less in the spirit of the ARC and FCCA recommendations. The list had been drawn up by Richard Stabell, Dean of Admissions. The April meeting was attended by three administrators and two representatives of the Board of Trustees. Conspicuously absent were any representatives of the faculty -- not even the chair of the faculty Committee on Admissions. Administrators who took part included Rupp, Stabell, and Director of Athletics Bobby May. The Board of Trustees was represented by Evans Attwell (who had also served on the ARC Committee) and J. D. Bucky Allshouse. Both Attwell and Allshouse were ex-Rice athletes. The April meeting's only significant result was agreement that undergraduate trainers and managers would no longer be admitted to Rice by the Athletic Department under the athletic quota. Though few students were affected, this change closed down the most flagrant of the abusive practices uncovered by the FCCA.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid. To understand what Rupp was up against, see the op-ed piece published in the *Houston Chronicle* 15 November 1992 titled "Rice could be more than some Ivy League clone." The author, Joyce Pounds Hardy, past president of the Association of Rice Alumni and a former governor on the Rice Board, worried that "in trying to become a clone of our Ivy League sisters, Rice is in danger of losing its unique personality and its Southern charm."

⁴⁶ Memo from Chandler Davidson, chair of Admission Committee, to Walter Isle, speaker of Faculty Council, no date, in the possession of Chandler Davidson. Not only were better qualified students being turned away for the sake of admitting young men and women who presented themselves as "trainers" and "managers" on the basis of high school experience, the FCCA was informed of one case in which the sibling of a star football player was admitted under the athletic quota after being turned down in the regular application process. For Bobby May's defense of

When the new president, Malcolm Gillis of Duke University, took charge in fall 1993, he inherited an agenda of athletic reform that had already acquired considerable momentum. On 14 October, Faculty Council presented him with resolutions calling for good faith efforts to implement the entire package of reforms proposed by the FCCA. In addition, Faculty Council called for the president to give the Dean of Admissions "authority over all undergraduate admissions to this university," and to establish a subcommittee of the Committee on Admissions to "read athletes' application dossiers and serve as a forum within which the Dean can seek advice." Faculty Council also took note of the absence of any faculty representative from the April meeting and made clear its expectation that the chair of the Committee on Admissions would henceforth be included in any meetings "called to evaluate admission methods and policies."⁴⁷

President Gillis responded by convening an ad hoc, blue ribbon committee that he himself chaired in the summer of 1994. Its members included Evans Attwell, Bucky Allshouse, Bobby May, and Dean Stabell. Faculty participants included Physics Professor King Walters, who had chaired the ARC Committee, Allen Matusow, ex-Dean of Humanities, Dennis Huston of the English Department, and Chandler Davidson of Sociology, who at the time was also serving as Chair of the Committee on Admissions. After several meetings, the committee reached agreement on two measures that put the admission of Rice athletes on what was, in principle, at least, an entirely new basis.

special admissions for trainers and managers and denial that the practice was ever abused, see his 30 April 1992 memorandum to Tom Haskell in Appendix A of the *FCCA Report*.

⁴⁷ Faculty Council resolution, 14 October 1993.

First, the Dean of Admission was for the first time given full authority over the admission of athletes. The eligibility thresholds established a decade earlier remained in place, but satisfying them would no longer suffice to insure admission. The Dean was now authorized to exercise his professional judgment and reject even prospects who would have qualified by one or another of the three quantitative "procedures" alone. Although Stabell's decisions remained subject to appeal to the president or his designee by the Athletic Director, the faculty welcomed this measure as an important step forward, for there was general agreement that Stabell was well qualified by long experience to evaluate the academic potential of all Rice applicants. The question in people's minds lay elsewhere: What could have possessed a university of Rice's caliber to wait as late as 1994 to give its Dean of Admissions the authority his title implied?

The second important change agreed to in the summer of 1994 was the creation of a three-person faculty subcommittee of the Committee on Admissions to review prospective athletes' applications and advise the Dean about which prospects to admit. Although the committee's function was to be merely advisory, this measure, too, was welcomed on the assumption that it could not be in any administrator's interest to recruit faculty members for such a labor-intensive task and then ignore their advice.

The faculty's confidence was misplaced. The first year's experience with the new admission procedures proved to be "deeply disappointing" to the three-member faculty committee.⁴⁸ After examining the applications of 130 prospective athletes, the committee unanimously rejected eighteen. Of those eighteen, the Dean of Admissions offered admission to eleven, even though all three members of the faculty committee had agreed that they were not capable of doing Rice work. The

⁴⁸ The initial members were Ed Cox, History; Chandler Davidson, Sociology; and Philip Davis, Linguistics.

committee's unanimous advice had been overridden more often than not. Even more aggravating, the overrides were not acknowledged until late in the recruiting process. When matriculation was complete, the chair of the Admissions Committee, Chandler Davidson, had to report to Faculty Council that "this year's athletes on the whole are no better prepared academically than last year's."⁴⁹

Gillis and Stabell assured Faculty Council that these disappointing results were inadvertent. They urged that the new procedures, revised to rectify problems revealed by the first year's experience, be given another year to prove themselves. Faculty Council responded by putting before the faculty a set of resolutions that "deplore[d] the failure of the Dean of Admissions to give due weight to the advice of the faculty committee appointed to advise him" and reminded all concerned that the faculty in November 1992 had enthusiastically endorsed a package of reforms that were interrelated and could not be expected to succeed if implemented piece-meal. "Abolition of the separate channel of athletic admissions is not an end in itself. Nothing will be gained by it if it does not enable Rice to raise admission standards and bring athletes more fully into the mainstream of student culture and academic life. . . The criterion for admitting athletes should not be likelihood of graduation alone, but also ability to compete on a substantially equal basis in classes throughout the curriculum."⁵⁰

With Malcolm Gillis presiding, one of the most heavily attended Faculty Meetings in recent memory (well in excess of 100 persons) approved these

⁴⁹ *Proceedings of Faculty Council*, 18 October 1995.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

resolutions with little debate and scarcely any dissenting votes. This would prove to be the high tide of athletic reform at Rice.

To be continued.