Response of the Athletic Council to the
Report of the President’s Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics and
to the Response of the Athletic Director to the Commission Report

The Athletic Council received the report of the President’s Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics on November 14th and discussed the report and the response of Athletic Director Kevin Anderson to the report in a meeting on November 17, 2011.

The Athletic Council would like to thank Linda Clement and Barry Gossett, co-chairs of the President’s Commission for coming to our meeting to discuss the Commission’s report. We would also like to thank Athletic Director Kevin Anderson for coming to the meeting to present and discuss his response to the Commission report. In addition, we would like to thank the members of the Athletic department staff who provided answers to the Council’s many questions about the report. These answers informed our discussions of the report, and provided us with details of the hard work and effort that went into the Commission’s work.

First, the Council would like to echo the words of Athletic Director Anderson in his response. The Council does not wish to see any athletic programs at the University of Maryland eliminated. At our meeting, members of the Council spoke about the excellence of the Maryland student athletes as members of the University community and, notably, in the classroom. It will be painful to lose any of these impressive students due to the financial situation.

Nevertheless, the budgetary problems are real, and the consensus of the Council was to accept the recommendations of the President’s Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics provided the teams recommended for elimination and their supporters are given the opportunity to raise the necessary funds so that they can continue. The consensus on accepting the report of the Commission was not unanimous, as some members of Council did not support the elimination of the teams on the basis that the proposed elimination would be detrimental to the ideals of the University in addition to the lives of 166 student-athletes. There was essentially unanimous consensus on giving the teams the opportunity to raise the necessary funds to continue as outlined in Athletic Director Anderson’s response. The collective academic excellence of the teams recommended for elimination and the number of teams selected was noted with considerable regret.

The Athletic Council strongly supports the recommendations given in the Commission’s report: that all athletic scholarship commitments to current student athletes in these sports be honored through graduation, that affected coaches’ contracts be upheld for the duration of their contract periods, that while in transition, ICA provide the affected student athletes with support and assistance with transferring to other institutions should they choose to do so, and that new recruits for fall 2012 who have signed letters of intent have their scholarship commitments honored.

There was support for reinvesting the resources in the remaining teams to enhance academic support, fitness, and health care. There was also support for allocating
the necessary resources to fundraising. The 10% of funds raised to be “reinvested in development efforts” is considerably less than the national average of about 17%. The Council discussed the need to come together as a community to raise funds and to increase revenue.

There was concern that the rate of increase in revenues assumed in the report would be difficult to attain, as it was higher than what had been achieved in the past. Similarly, the growth in expenses was assumed to be slower than recent experience might suggest. Accordingly, while the Commission’s recommendations are achievable, they are also ambitious. The Council recommends the development of a detailed implementation plan with clear benchmarks and rigorous oversight. This plan should be prepared and be ready for review within three months of the final decision by President Loh on the Commission’s recommendations.

The Budget/Facilities Committee of the Athletic Council will be charged with developing a plan to meet the Council’s responsibilities for reviewing the budgets and audits of the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics (ICA) as detailed in the Athletic Council charter. The Budget/Facilities Committee will work with the ICA and the members of the President’s office to make the review process efficient, but necessarily thorough.

There was concern that the timing of the fundraising efforts would be awkward for the student athletes. For example, given admissions schedules, student athletes would have to decide on whether or not to transfer from the University of Maryland before the outcome of the fundraising efforts are known. A number of the members of the Council expressed serious concerns about the prospects for success of this short-term fundraising campaign. No matter how many staff will be dedicated to fundraising, the challenge of raising the $29 million needed to save all eight teams in six months is a considerable one, especially in light of our current economic situation.

Title IX compliance needs to remain important in deciding which sports the University can offer. With regards to the proposed fund raising, after the University accepts monetary donations, the funds become public money, subject to Title IX’s legal obligations in the funds' disbursement. Donors and teams should be informed that any money given to support a particular team cannot be used to support that team in violation of Title IX considerations.