

# **REPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO CORRIGAN COMMITTEE**

## **Introduction and Process**

In December 2004, the University at Buffalo engaged Mr. Gene Corrigan, former Athletic Director at Notre Dame University, former President of the National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA] and former Commissioner of the Atlantic Coast Conference [ACC], to conduct a comprehensive program assessment of the intercollegiate athletics program within the context of the University's on-going strategic planning effort, UB 2020. Mr. Corrigan was requested to provide a series of strategic recommendations based upon achieving competitive excellence within the Mid-American Conference [MAC]. In spring 2005, he completed his work and presented the President with his findings and recommendations. The Report identified existing barriers as problems that require resolution for UB to improve the competitiveness of its intercollegiate athletics program. It set the table for the new Athletic Director, in collaboration with University senior administration, to make significant changes.

In response to Mr. Corrigan's Report, President Simpson established a committee that would review the Report in its entirety and provide recommendations to the President and Athletic Director concerning any outstanding issues that remain unresolved. Nils Olsen, Dean and Professor in the UB Law School, was named Chair of the Committee, and Mr. John Walsh, III, Chairman and CEO of Walsh Duffield Companies, Inc., served as Vice Chair. Committee membership also included: Laura Barnum, Associate Athletic Director and Senior Woman Administrator; Dr. Charles Fournier, Professor in the Biological Sciences and the University's Faculty Athletics Representative to the MAC and NCAA; Marsha Henderson, University Vice President for External Affairs; Christina Hernandez, Assistant Athletic Director, Business Operations; Dr. Wesley Hicks, Professor of Otolaryngology and Neurosurgery; Dr. Marilyn Morris, Professor of Pharmaceutical Sciences and Associate Dean of The Graduate School; Dr. Peter Nickerson, Director and Professor, Pathology Graduate Program and Chair of the University Faculty Senate; Creighton Randall, Corporate /Relations Director of the Student Association; Barbara Ricotta, Associate Vice President for Campus Life; Barbara Rooney, Associate Director of the University Office of Admissions; Sean Sullivan, Associate Vice President for Academic Planning and Budget; and serving as liaison to the Committee from the Athletics Department, Jennifer Kentera, Intern.

The Committee has maintained an active deliberative process. Thirteen ninety-minute Committee meetings were conducted on November 13, November 27, December 11, January 8, January 22, January 29, February 5, February 19, March 5, March 19, April 2, April 16, and May 14. Comprehensive presentations to the Committee from the Division of Athletics included the following areas: Academic Services; NCAA Compliance including relevant NCAA and MAC regulations; Gender Equity; Budget; Facilities and Equipment; Student

Services; Marketing and Media Services; and Club Sports. In addition, the Committee conducted four sessions on January 11, January 19, January 20 and January 25 in order to provide private 30 to 45 minute meetings with every head coach within the Division. And, on March 19, the Committee met with Rick Chryst, Commissioner of the MAC, to learn of relevant conference concerns and developments, to gauge his perception of UB's performance within the MAC, and to evaluate possible building blocks and opportunities for further success within the conference.

Meetings were, of course, conducted with UB student athletes. On January 8, there was an informal session with the Student Athlete Advisory Committee Executive Board. On January 22, the Committee met for ninety-minutes with all interested student athletes. An anonymous e-mail address was also provided to student athletes such that they might share further concerns or questions with the Committee.

Understanding the importance of public participation in its process, the Committee conducted two public forums. The first was held on February 22 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm at the United Way of Buffalo facility with 27 individuals in attendance. Seven persons provided testimony to the Committee. On February 27, a second public forum was conducted in the Center of the Arts, again from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. Ninety individuals attended, with fifteen speaking to the Committee. In addition to the public forums, the Committee reached out to community members and athletic organizations through direct mail, e-mail, and telephone calls. A press release was released to the local media and an e-mail account, [corriganchair@buffalo.edu](mailto:corriganchair@buffalo.edu) was created for individuals who could not attend the meetings but who might wish to submit comments to the Chair, Nils Olsen.

During the process interested individuals and groups submitted a number of written proposals and detailed plans concerning potential UB sports to the Committee. These submissions have been carefully reviewed by the Committee and included the following sports: Men's Volleyball; Men's and Women's Lacrosse; Men's and Women's Ice Hockey; Women's Golf; and Women's Rugby.

On February 21, 2007, the Committee Chair presented a report of the charge and progress of the group to the UB Faculty Senate Executive Committee. Several questions concerning appropriate conference affiliation, past University history in Division I-A intercollegiate athletics and budget were presented and discussed. The Committee Chair and Vice Chair met with President Simpson and Athletic Director Manuel to review the above-described calendar and process and to determine if they had suggestions for additional outreach and information gathering. No additional overtures were suggested, and they felt the process appeared to be open, fair and comprehensive.

## Historical Background

As a background for the Committee's recommendations, we begin with a summary of the status and development of intercollegiate athletics at the University at Buffalo since the 1960's. Such history is reflected in an annual timeline as follows:

- In **1962**, the NCAA recognized the University at Buffalo as a “major”.
- In **1963**, UB became a part of the State University of New York system.
- In **January 1971**, UB announced that it was dropping football.
- In **1977**, UB declared Division III status, and football was reinstated at the Division III level.
- In **September 1984**, SUNY Trustees rejected, by an 8 – 2 vote, a resolution granting power to individual campuses to upgrade their intercollegiate athletic programs.
- In **February 1985**, then UB President Steven Sample gave “serious thought” to appointing an athletics board to form a multi-year plan to upgrade the intercollegiate program, to promulgate policy recommendations and to give guidance and recommendation on the annual proposed athletics budget.
- In **June 1985**, the Intercollegiate Athletics Board [IAB] was formed at UB.
- In **February 1986**, the IAB submitted a report to President Sample on required process and costs to upgrade UB's intercollegiate athletics program to Division I.
- In **March 1986**, the area legislative delegation urged the SUNY Board of Trustees to allow UB to upgrade its intercollegiate athletics program by allowing SUNY institutions to award athletics scholarships.
- In **April 1986**, SUNY Chancellor Clifford R. Wharton Jr. voiced his support for allowing athletic scholarships.
- On **May 28, 1986**, the SUNY Board of Trustees, by a 12 – 2 vote, lifted the ban on athletic scholarships at SUNY institutions. The Run to Division I is born.
- On **May 29, 1986**, President Sample requested that the IAB begin to develop a five-year plan to upgrade the UB intercollegiate athletic program to Division I

- In December **1986**, Nelson E. Townsend was appointed Athletic Director at UB and was charged with the responsibility to upgrade the University's athletic program to Division I.
- In **January 1988**, the NCAA accepted UB's application to upgrade its intercollegiate athletics program from Division III to Division II.
- On **May 9, 1991**, the NCAA officially upgraded UB's intercollegiate athletic programs to Division I. UB announced that it would join the East Coast Conference (ECC).
- In **September 1993**, the UB football team moved to the Division I-AA level as the new UB Stadium opens after serving as a home for the World University Games.
- On **February 9, 1994**, UB was invited to join the Mid-Continent Conference (MCC).
- In **June 1995**, UB accepted an invitation to join the Mid-American Conference (MAC).
- In **1997**, the Women's Crew team was upgraded from the club level and began competing as a varsity sport.
- In **September 1998**, UB joined the MAC in all sports except football.
- In **September 1999**, UB joined the MAC in football and began competing at the newly expanded 31,000 seat UB Stadium, rejoining Division I-A football for the first time since 1970.
- In **November 1999**, men's soccer player Steve Butcher became the first UB player in any sport to earn Mid-American Conference Player of the Year honors.
- In **fall 2000**, the Women's Soccer Team became the first UB team to capture a MAC regular season championship with an 8-2-1 record. Head Coach Jean A. Tassy became UB's first MAC Coach of the Year honoree.
- In **spring 2001**, UB's Baseball team began competing in the MAC, after returning to the Division I level for the 1999-2000 academic year, as a result of a conference core sport requirement. UB competed in the MAC in 19 of its 20 sports (with the exception of Women's Rowing, which is not sponsored in the conference).

- In **March 2002**, UB's Women's Diving Coach Kara Sixby was named MAC Diving Coach of the Year, after her divers improve by 56 points in the MAC Championship meet.
- In **March 2004**, Men's Basketball coach Reggie Witherspoon was named MAC Coach of the Year, after guiding UB to a nine-win improvement in MAC play and a 12-win improvement overall – tying for the second best turnaround for all Division I coaches nationally.
- In **October 2004**, Jenny Koeppel won the MAC Cross Country title and became the first women's Cross Country runner to compete in the NCAA Championships in UB's Division I history.
- In **February 2005**, Jennifer Brankovsky was named the MAC Swimmer of the Year for the second time in her career. She finished her career with six MAC titles and eight individual and three relay school records in her name.
- In **March 2005**, Turner Battle is named MAC Player of the Year, after leading UB Men's Basketball team to a school-record 23 wins and their first-ever Division I postseason appearance in the NIT. Battle is also named an AP Honorable Mention All-American and a second team Academic All American.
- In **June 2005**, Faith Thompson is named to the 2005 Academic All American Women's Cross Country/Track and Field First Team, the first-ever female Academic All American in UB history.
- In **June 2006**, Kathy Twist, Head Women's Tennis Coach, was named the MAC's Coach of the Year by her peers. With 71 career dual-match wins, she is the winningest coach in the program's history of more than 30 years.

### **Executive Summary**

Because of the charge of the Committee, the following Report is necessarily both lengthy and detailed. In order to ensure that the key conclusions of the Committee are not lost or diminished within the body of the Report, the Committee has elected to begin with a brief statement of its central conclusions. The crux of the situation with respect to Intercollegiate athletics at the University at Buffalo is this: We currently have the right leadership and administrative support at UB to develop a consistently competitive intercollegiate athletics program, and we can deal, and are dealing with, the issues that are internal to the University. The necessary administrative changes are either accomplished or can be done easily within the current supportive environment.

We are convinced that the ultimate key to success for the program is additional financial support – indeed many of the recommendations set forth in the Corrigan Report are about financial issues. While some of these issues are being addressed and resolved, several

important ones remain. The ultimate consistent competitive success in Division 1 athletics that the University administration seeks depends upon resolution of these financial issues. The Committee unanimously concludes that securing adequate financial support must be the result of an active and equal partnership between the University – which already has dedicated substantial financial support at a reasonably comparative level with other MAC Conference institutions; the public – which includes regular attendance at major sporting venues including football and generous annual and major gift support; and New York State – which includes providing viable finance options and support for the critically needed upgrade in facilities discussed in the Report. While the University support of its Intercollegiate Athletics Program is consistent and effective, it is critically important for the Western New York and UB alumni community and New York State to play important roles in this process. We remain excited and optimistic concerning the future of our intercollegiate athletics program.

### **The Corrigan Report**

The Committee was specifically charged to consider the issues presented in the Corrigan Report and to provide recommendations to President John Simpson and Athletic Director Warde Manuel to help inform their appropriate resolution. Throughout its extensive process, the Committee has consciously focused on the charge and declined to offer opinion beyond the issues raised in the Report. Those issues raised by Mr. Corrigan that have already been addressed by senior administration similarly were not reconsidered.

The Committee recognizes that, since joining the MAC Conference, the overall competitive record for the intercollegiate sports program of the University at Buffalo has not been successful. With few notable exceptions, detailed above in the brief history of the program, its teams' performances have been at or near the bottom of the Conference. The Corrigan Report was commissioned to identify the issues that need to be addressed if the program is to become consistently competitive within the Conference, and the Committee has considered each of the issues presented from this perspective.

*I. First Issue Raised in the Corrigan Report – UB must make a firm decision committing to Division I-A intercollegiate athletics and football program. “The University has to determine the value of NCAA Division I-A affiliation; .If UB, as an institution at the highest levels in higher education, wants to play at the highest grade of athletic competition, the Mid-American Conference is the right place to be.”*

- President Simpson has addressed this issue clearly and unequivocally. He stated during his June 1, 2005 press conference accepting the Corrigan Report: “I want to state very clearly, UB is firmly committed to Division I-A football, and we are equally committed to building a winning program in the Mid-American Conference.”
- Athletics, whether it is club or varsity sport, is the physical expression of the intellectual discipline that underlies higher education. The mental discipline to prepare for a marathon is no more or less demanding than

writing a sonnet or mastering differential equations. Our interest in understanding the role of athletics in the University leads us to the conclusion that the seamless integration of intellectual pursuits with physical endeavors is essential to University life. In fact, the separation of these disciplines in our view represents an artificial dichotomy that is ultimately not in the best interest of academic excellence and the University.

- The mission and vision of a Division I-A athletics program enhances the underlying mission of the University. It is dedicated to maintaining a highly competitive program, attracting the highest quality student-athletes and maintaining high standards in both academics and athletic competition.
- The UB Division of Athletics can play a key role in building and preserving the strength, vitality, and excitement of the Western New York region. A successful and competitive intercollegiate athletic program is a catalyst for economic development, a source of quality entertainment and recreation and is a beacon for hometown spirit and pride. A detailed media review revealed that the Division of Athletics generated 34% of all media reference to UB. National brand value of UB is significantly enhanced by a quality run and successfully achieving athletics program.
- UB athletics can play a vital role in the Western New York economy. A recent study of leading public institutions across the country revealed a very high correlation between sustained investment in intercollegiate athletics and regional economic prosperity.
- More than any other university activity, intercollegiate athletics is the magnet that draws thousands of alumni back to the campus each year and unifies the University with its surrounding community. While institutions throughout the nation participate in athletics at a variety of levels, it is Division I-A that sets the public institutions in the AAU apart from their counterparts. It is also these same institutions that have enjoyed increasing revenues from attendance at games, radio and television rights fees, corporate sponsorship opportunities, concession and parking sales and competition guarantees.
- The environment created on a Division I-A campus adds immensely to the quality of undergraduate experience and has often been known to have a positive impact both on a university's philanthropic pursuits and on efforts to increase highly qualified out-of-state enrollment.
- A well run, compliant, and competitive athletics program positively enhances faculty, staff, and student institutional pride, recruitment and

retention of students and faculty, and national institutional pride and support.

*Recommendations raised by the Corrigan Report that are relevant to the issue of competitive Division I-A athletics and the football program.*

1. *The University should consider investment and support for student athlete summer school and fifth year grant-in-aid.*
  - The MAC Conference identified this issue as a priority in 2005. Comparison with other MAC Conference schools demonstrates that UB is not out of line with the level of funding currently being expended for this important purpose within the Conference.
2. *The University should consider increasing its investment in coaching salaries and athlete recruitment investments.*
  - As discussed in more detail below, since his arrival, Athletic Director Warde Manuel has significantly increased both the coaching salaries and the recruiting budget for the entire program.
3. *The University should consider taking steps to facilitate the availability of appropriate student housing during the school year for its intercollegiate athletes as a recruiting tool.*
  - Under the direction of UB Athletic Director Warde Manuel, his staff has worked to enhance cooperation and collaboration between the Athletic Division and the University Office of Admissions. This has resulted in the completion of the admission process to the University for scholarship athletes in a much more timely fashion, making additional on-campus housing available. The perception of the recruit as to quality and convenience of housing is important. The positive cooperation between Warde Manuel, the Office of Admissions, and Student Housing no doubt will continue to address such additional needs as may emerge.

These three issues, which all address enhanced, targeted investments, are being appropriately addressed by the Athletic Director and senior University leadership.

- The Committee considers the process begun with the commissioning of the Corrigan Report to be a synergistic part of the on-going UB 2020 strategic planning process. Most programs within the University characterize themselves as being under-funded. While the planning process actively seeks to identify new sources of income (including, most notably for the Division, sizeable increases in alumni and corporate annual and major gift contributions, and significantly enhanced ticket, concessions, and parking revenue), a reassessment of priorities is

occurring, resulting in a shift of resources. By comparative MAC standards, while some targeted investments are clearly necessary, the performance deficit of UB's intercollegiate teams is not the result of significant under-funding by the University. The Athletic Director's recent success in addressing the shortcomings of the weight training facilities was the result of significantly enhanced donor support, a reallocation of Division resources, and modest increases in one-time University funding. This diversified funding base sets a model for future improvements.

- Similarly, Athletic Director Warde Manuel's comprehensive review of the Division's existing budget to ensure that programmatic priorities are being adequately funded through reallocation of existing funds has resulted in improvements. As part of this process, additional funds have already been allocated from the Division's budget to more adequately fund the issues raised in the Corrigan Report that are set forth above.
- Under the leadership of President Simpson, Provost Tripathi, and Interim Vice President for Finance Beau Willis, the Athletic Director is included with the Deans and Vice Presidents in the on-going University Resource and Budget planning process. University leadership is currently addressing the budgetary issues raised by each of the above-noted topics as part of the on-going development of a comprehensive, multi-year budget for the Division. Additional funds have, in fact, already been made available for these important purposes as a result of the on-going process. The Athletic Director's "seat at the table" recognizes that a successful, winning athletic program is integral to the success of UB 2020 as well.

4. *The University should seek funding for the construction of an indoor practice and competition facility.*

- The Committee believes that such a facility is a critical condition precedent, not only to foster a consistently competitive and successful intercollegiate athletics program, but also significantly to enhance and effectuate UB's commitment to comprehensive student and staff wellness and intramural and club sports activities. The ability to publicize and differentiate UB as a place where sound body-sound mind nutrition, physical fitness and recreation are championed and practiced is seen as an important campus-wide benefit and one which will enhance and complement UB's Intercollegiate Athletics program.
- Feedback the Committee received from all of the coaches, student athletes and administrators that appeared before it was consistent. The single greatest need facing the intercollegiate athletic program at UB is an indoor practice facility. Such a facility would clearly enhance

practice, conditioning and competition especially during times of inclement weather conditions. Uniform endorsement of the critical need for such a facility was independent of whether a given coach's or student athlete's team was or was not likely to be a priority user of such facility.

- The majority of MAC Schools that UB competes with have an indoor facility. Each provides a significant recruiting asset.
- The construction of an indoor practice and competition facility is the highest priority for President Simpson and Warde Manuel. The University and its Division of Athletics must continue to move forward with vigor and imagination to meet this need.
- The Committee recognizes that the construction of such a facility requires a close partnership among alumni, corporate supporters, the Central Administration of the State University of New York and the University.
- The Committee notes the necessity for providing new financial vehicles to finance athletics and recreation and fitness facilities, including independent bonding authority backed, in part, by fees and other recurring income. The Blue Ribbon Commission studying the needs of higher education in New York State, empanelled by Governor Spitzer, presents an excellent opportunity to consider best practices that currently do not exist in New York State and to jump start the process of significant legislative and administrative process.

*II. Second Issue Raised in the Corrigan Report – UB must resolve the Athletic Director Issue.* “Lack of commitment, direction and success in football may make it more difficult to search for an Athletic Director. The uncertainties of UB Athletics, such as football, the need to assess the number of sports and the possible future conference alignment make the job difficult to do well, particularly at the start. But permanent leadership is critical to providing program direction, and this program requires direction as soon as possible.”

- This issue addressed the fact that an Interim Athletic Director, William Maher, had led the UB Athletics Division for several years. While the Division made many advances under Maher's capable and dedicated leadership, the “interim” status of his position made resolution of the many hard issues confronting the athletics program much more difficult.
- This issue has been very satisfactorily resolved. On July 22, 2006, UB President John Simpson announced that the University had hired Warde Manuel to serve as its Athletic Director after an exhaustive national search process.

- Manuel had significant relevant experience in senior administrative positions at Georgia Tech and the University of Michigan, where he was responsible for the Football, Men’s Basketball and Men’s Ice Hockey programs.
- Manuel’s position is further enhanced by the decision of President Simpson to make the Athletic Director a full and equal member of the senior administrative staff. He meets with both the Provost and President, with the Deans and Vice Presidents, reports directly to the President; and he plays a full and equal role in the resource, facility and other planning efforts of the University.

*III. Third Issue Raised in the Corrigan Report – UB must create the right program at the right size.* “UB needs to consider a reduction in the number of its intercollegiate sports, focusing on sports with the best opportunities for success. The University should also consider adding sports that have a potential for success due to location, facilities, or expertise, such as hockey or lacrosse.”

- At the outset, the Committee’s deliberation was informed by several principles. First, it was observed that the existing program has not achieved consistent competitive success for its twenty intercollegiate athletic teams. This failure is due in part to the unusually large number of sports currently sponsored by UB and challenges in funding all at a fully competitive level. As a result, we have concluded that a responsible decision only adding new sports would be difficult in an environment that is focusing on competitiveness. Thus, both adding and possibly reducing the number of intercollegiate sports must be considered in tandem.
- The Committee also wishes to emphasize that its deliberations and recommendations are not being made in order to achieve gender equity. As a result of the dedicated efforts of the New York State legislative delegation and the commitment of the Division’s senior leadership, UB is a leader in gender equity within its current configuration of sports, as evidenced by its recent recognition as a national leader in gender equity by the Women’s Sports Foundation. Thus, the only relevance of gender equity to this consideration is the need to maintain comparative balance if the Division were to mount an additional men’s sport. Therefore, our focus upon adding and/or dropping sports primarily reflects issues such as recruiting opportunities, competitiveness, community support, cost, MAC Conference and NCAA mandates, adequate conference opportunities to schedule games, requirements concerning sports sponsorship and strength of existing facilities.

- As a starting point, the Committee considered the relevant and applicable sports sponsorship requirements of the NCAA and MAC Conference. The relevant NCAA mandates for Division I programs require that the University must:
  - Sponsor at least 16 varsity intercollegiate sports, including football, in one of the following three breakdowns:
    - ❖ Six all male or mixed sports including football and at least ten all female sports.
    - ❖ Seven all male or mixed sports and nine all female sports.
    - ❖ Eight all male or mixed sports and eight all female sports.
  - The minimum number of team sports is two all male/mixed and two all female.
  - Comply with a three-season requirement: The University shall sponsor at least one all-male team or a mixed team of males and females and at least one all-female team in every sports season. An institution can only use a sport to count if it has also met the minimum contests and participant requirements.
  - Satisfy additional financial aid requirements: The University shall provide an average of at least 90% of the permissible maximum number of overall football grants-in-aid per year over a rolling two-year period; and shall annually offer a minimum of 200 athletics grants-in-aid or expend at least four million dollars on grants-in-aid to student athletes in its intercollegiate athletics programs.
- The relevant MAC sports sponsorship requirements mandate that conference members must mount intercollegiate teams in the following sports: Football, Men's Basketball, Women's Basketball, and the other core sports of Baseball, Women's Softball, and Women's Volleyball. In the Committee's discussions with Rick Chryst, it was emphasized that the Conference, Athletic Directors and University Presidents are in a process of reassessment with respect to the viability and utility of requiring specific sports as conditions precedent for full Conference membership. Therefore, while recognizing the current landscape, the Committee has not considered itself constrained by the existing core sports requirements of the MAC.

- The Committee met individually with every head coach within the Division, carefully considered the comparative funding level for scholarships and recruiting compared to Conference competition, the current and historically competitive success for each sport within the Conference, and coaching budgets, travel costs and the availability of adequate competition within the MAC in light of increased sports sponsorship reductions by a number of Conference members. It is recommended that future right- sizing decisions by senior leadership similarly focus on these issues. This is particularly complicated by the outstanding array of coaches at UB, an impressive, loyal and uniformly dedicated group.
  
- Decisions to drop an intercollegiate sport are very difficult and have significant negative effects on student athletes, coaching staffs and the public that follows the particular program. They should only be undertaken with caution and only after a careful analysis of the factors set forth above.
  
- The only sport that raised concerns when examined from this perspective is Baseball. The Committee recognizes its standing as a core sport within the MAC, and offers its recommendation from this perspective.
  - In our discussions with the MAC Conference Commissioner, the Committee learned that the senior leadership of the Conference and the Conference Presidents are reconsidering the practice of identifying core sports as mandates for Conference membership.
  - As a result, the Committee recommends that the Athletic Director investigate options for continuing the University's participation in intercollegiate baseball, ranging from increasing funding to a level of support necessary to achieve the expectation for an annually competitive team or dropping the sport and realigning to the club level due to the past history of a lack of competitive viability at the intercollegiate level and the practical difficulties in mounting successful teams in Buffalo.
  - The Committee does recognize that the already increased support that has been provided as part of the Athletic Director's budgetary process, and the recent change in coaching, have led to a significant increase in the success of the program within the conference. The Committee strongly endorses continuing this enhanced level of support for the program prior to making any decision regarding the future of

Baseball at UB regardless of any future decisions as to core sports within the MAC Conference.

- In addition to dropping sports from its intercollegiate roster, the Committee recommends that, where appropriate, the Athletic Director explore the cost savings and competitive advantage or disadvantage of combining men's and women's sports where feasible.
  - Many competing teams within the MAC Conference and elsewhere within Division I, schools have combined programs in sports including Men's and Women's Track, Men's and Women's Cross Country, Men's and Women's Swimming and Diving and Men's and Women's Tennis.
  - This organizational and financial model can often achieve cost savings and efficiencies in coach's salaries, specialized coaching positions (such as diving and distance running), recruiting budgets, team travel (if teams may compete at the same venues) and administrative support.
  - The Committee recognizes that the Athletic Director has recently implemented this administrative model for Men's and Women's Swimming and that Men's and Women's Track and Cross-Country currently employ at least a partial coaching combination.
- The Committee also considered the associated question of adding additional intercollegiate sports programs to its roster. In undertaking this consideration, the Committee focused primarily upon the sports programs identified as possibilities in the Corrigan Report (ice hockey and lacrosse), but also those sports that were presented by the public at our two open sessions and in correspondence to the Committee.
- The sport that generated the most discussion and that made the best case for addition to UB's Division I program was Men's Volleyball. Speakers at the public forums included Mike Norton, Brian Freier, Walt Stefani, Dennis Gooch, Dale Freier, Clifton Bergfeld, John Hutton, and Robert Pierce. In addition to their prepared comments, the Committee was provided significant documentation including a detailed business plan and information concerning existing interscholastic and club programs and the recruitment pool in the Western New York area.
  - Compelling reasons supporting addition of Men's Volleyball are numerous and include: the minimal impact on gender balance and affordability (only 4.5 scholarships permitted);

strong community and potential financial support; significant opportunities to recruit Division I athletes locally (in the Mid-Atlantic/New York/New England area, the state of New York has the second most schools and the most athletes participating at the high school level (171 high schools and 3,627 athletes); possible synergistic effects improving the existing UB Women's Volleyball team; an existing strong and affordable competition base (including Ohio State, Penn State, etc.); the availability of one-time start-up funding of \$6,000; its status as an NCAA championship sport; the reasonably certain likelihood of fielding a nationally competitive program create; and it presents a significant opportunity to enhance the UB brand.

- The only reason apparent not to support addition of Men's Volleyball is generic: that there would be an additional call on the funding that is available to the Division to support its entire program.
  - The Committee recommends that the Athletic Director closely investigate and consider the case, both positive and negative, for adding the sport.
  - The Committee further recommends that this investigation include consultation with the strong and supportive Western New York Men's Volleyball community. Addition of any individual sport into UB's program will require significant community enthusiasm and financial support and will be strengthened by a working partnership between the Division, alumni, staff and students.
- Men's and Women's Lacrosse was included in the Corrigan Report as a sport that should be considered by the University for possible inclusion within its intercollegiate sports program. Vince Schiffert, varsity Men's Lacrosse coach at Niagara-Wheatfield High School and a member of the Iroquois National Team, spoke at the public session in support.
    - The Committee recognizes the central importance and relationship that Men's Lacrosse has with the Iroquois Confederacy. Many highly accomplished and skilled lacrosse players have emerged from the Confederacy. Indeed, the Iroquois Confederacy mounts a national team that has been competitive at the highest levels, and there are a number of Nation members who have performed at the Division I level and been inducted into the Lacrosse Hall of

Fame. *See, eg.:* <http://archives.cba.ca/IDCC-1-41-824-4915/sports/lacrosse/>.

- In addition to providing significant local recruitment opportunities, establishing a Men's Lacrosse team would also present the University with the means to enhance and strengthen its relationship with the Haudenosaunee.
- Challenges to adding the sport include the increased resources required in order to add both Men's and Women's lacrosse in order to maintain the existing state of gender equity.
- Betsy Ulmer and former professional golfers Cindy Miller and Patty Jordan presented the case for women's golf persuasively.
  - Advantages of adding women's golf include the lifetime opportunities for participation of athletes and the public's interest in the game of golf.
  - Disadvantages include the lack of a facility on the campus and length of season as compared to other golf hotbed areas.
  - Again, even if a case were to be made for the addition of a sport, the timing of such action in the context of reviewing budgetary allocation and possible consolidation or reduction of existing programs remains all- important in the Athletic Director's deliberations and evaluation.
- Men's and Women's ice hockey was identified by the Corrigan Report as a sport that should be considered for addition to UB's offerings.
  - Only one individual spoke on behalf of Ice Hockey at the public sessions, Tom Schrantz, an alum that played on UB's last intercollegiate Ice Hockey team in 1972-74. While interest in the community likely does exist, it did not manifest itself throughout the Committee's process.
  - The advantages of adding Ice Hockey are clear. They include the great popularity of the sport within the greater Western New York community; the level of competition and skilled players within Western New York high school varsity and club hockey teams; and the opportunity to recruit successfully from southern Ontario.

- The disadvantages are equally clear. The primary challenge is financial. For a new Division I-A program such as UB, the financial cost would seem prohibitive – nearly as much as is now being spent on football. Most critically, UB lacks the ice rink facility necessary for practice and competition. Purchase and operational expense or rental of facilities and ice time are financially significant, and a successful Division I team without its own on campus rink is increasingly rare. Financial resources required for scholarships, travel, coaching staff and equipment coupled with identifying a conference in which to play (the MAC does not currently include Ice Hockey among its sports) and the necessity to mount both men’s and women’s teams to maintain gender equity, combine to render this sport a difficult choice for UB at this early stage of Division I-A athletics.
- The final sport that was discussed as appropriate for adding was Women’s Rugby. The statement in support of adding the sport was made by Kristen Huber, coach of UB’s club sport team and Vice President of the NYS Rugby Union.
  - Advantages for addition of the sport include the tradition of strong club teams at UB and the fact that the NCAA currently designates Women’s Rugby as an emerging sport.
  - Disadvantages include the lack of adequate facilities, and the extremely limited number of Division I teams participating.

*IV. Fourth Issue Raised in the Corrigan Report – Identify and Provide Financial Support.* “Initial financial support for program improvements will not come easily from fundraising or ticket sales, as they are driven by sport success that UB has not had. Private support and student fee support will be essential for UB Athletics to succeed, given the limits on available state support.”

- The Committee acknowledges that significant additional funding for the Division I-A intercollegiate athletics program at UB: through ticket sales, development [major gifts and corporate and individual annual support], appearance guarantees, and television and other media funding is closely related to and dependent upon annual competitiveness and success of UB’s sports teams, both within the MAC Conference and in NCAA championship events. The market suggests Football and Basketball are particularly important in this regard: their winning success is a tide that can significantly lift all other teams in the UB fleet.
- Within the University, the Athletic Director reports directly to the University President. He is an equal representative of the President’s

executive cabinet and fully vested in the campus Resource Planning Process along with all other Deans/Vice Presidents. This represents a significant upgrade in position and is key to achieving appropriate access to compete for limited but necessary University resources.

- The Committee recognizes the congruence between University and Division objectives that permit leveraging of selected campus resources.
  - The University has a strong commitment and an initiative to increase the number of highly qualified out-of-state undergraduates attending UB. The Division has been very successful in recruiting academically strong out-of-state athletes to attend the University. The Committee recommends that University leadership consider providing the Division with an appropriate allocation of out-of-state scholarships currently committed to this initiative.
  - Similarly, the International Education program is nationally regarded. In sports such as Men's and Women's Tennis, Men's and Women's Soccer, and Men's and Women's Track and Cross-Country the Division has demonstrated an ability to recruit and enroll highly qualified and academically talented international athletes, adding to the University's high ranking in percentage of enrolled international students. Any initiatives to increase or maintain international student enrollment might be shared appropriately with the Division.
- Because of the infancy of Division I-A intercollegiate athletics at UB, the Division has assumed responsibility for costs that are typically funded centrally in other campuses, such as grounds keeping and maintenance, web site creation and maintenance and public and press relations. The Committee recommends that, as a part of the on-going multi-year athletic budget process, the University consider taking responsibility for such costs, permitting reallocation within the Division's budget for direct support of competitive athletics.
- The Committee strongly recommends that the Division and University Advancement seek to employ an experienced athletic advancement officer who will, in consonance with University priorities, significantly increase both large gifts and annual receipts for the athletics program at UB. It is further recommended that the University President and Vice President for Advancement continue to work closely with the Athletic Director to maximize such collections. An incremental increase of

annual giving receipts dedicated to athletics is needed and can help the Division of Athletics strengthen its relationship with the University.

- Addressing the administration and funding of club sports is not explicitly included within the Committee's charge. However, numerous student club sport athletes and their coaches spoke at the public hearings concerning the funding of their programs and their current inability to sport UB colors, logo and insignias in club competitions.
  - Under the current system at UB, club sports are funded by student fees and are administered primarily by the Student Association, with limited engagement of the Vice President for Student Affairs.
  - The Division effectively plays no supervisory or other role in student club sports.
  - The Committee strongly recommends that there be a clear line of responsibility for club sports and that they be integrated in part into the Division, with collaborative roles for Student Affairs and the Student Association as appropriate, in order to establish uniform health, safety, and other protections of our students who participate in such competition, and to permit closer integration of club sports into the UB athletic program.
  - The Committee notes that construction of a new intramural, fitness, and recreation facility is critical in order to retain the University's leadership in student physical fitness opportunities, to increase undergraduate enrollment of highly qualified students, and to enhance student engagement with and support of UB's intercollegiate athletics program. Under the leadership of Student Affairs, extensive planning for such a recreation facility has been developed. In a referendum, students have expressed their willingness to participate in the funding of such a facility through additional fees. It is recommended that the University begin conversations with SUNY Central and the Western New York legislative delegation to begin the process of finance and construction of such a facility.
- Addressing the need for funding and construction of athletic facilities remains a high priority.
  - Senior University leadership has established a process to ensure that this issue is effectively addressed by including the Athletic Director as a full and equal participant with the Deans and Vice Presidents in the on-going University facility planning process.

- As discussed above in the context of an indoor practice facility, funding for Division facilities must come from a combination of sources that include major gifts, SUNY Central and University participation. The Committee and the UB coaches and student athletes all see the creation of an indoor practice facility as a critical priority.
- The Committee recommends that, in order to most effectively meet the significant facility needs of its intercollegiate sports teams, the University, in collaboration with the Western New York legislative delegation and the State University of New York, seek the enactment of new and effective methods of finance.

*V. Fifth Issue Identified in the Corrigan Report – Pick Sports for Championship Support.* “Need to support a select a few key sports at the championship level to have a reasonable chance to success (Men’s Football and Basketball, Women’s Basketball, and another sport to be determined).”

- Because of obvious market and public interest expectations and reasons noted above, the Committee recommends that the University support Football and Men’s and Women’s Basketball at a level that is adequate to ensure that each sport will be competitive, not only within the MAC Conference, but also within the NCAA at-large eligibility process for intercollegiate sports championships.
- In considering and identifying any sports beyond Football and Men’s and Women’s Basketball that should be supported at this level, the Committee recommends that the Division consider factors such as student athlete welfare, quality of competition, financial considerations, international impact and probable competitive status.
- Consistent with NCAA and Conference requirements, gender equity will play a significant role in this process to ensure that UB maintains its current compliance. This will require continued maintenance of participation rates and care to ensure continuation of scholarship funding at a level to be within 1% or one grant-in-aid of our participation rates.
- In discussions with MAC leadership, the Committee has learned that the Conference is seeking to have Women’s Soccer and Women’s Volleyball teams perform at NCAA at-large levels. The University has had competitive success in both Men’s and Women’s Soccer.

VI. *Sixth Issue Raised in the Corrigan Report – Be Concerned About Academics.*

“Improve academic support and address the NCAA academic success issues recently identified.”

- The University at Buffalo, as a member of the AAU, is a comprehensive research University dedicated to academic excellence and educational attainment of its students. The University expects the same commitment and performance from its intercollegiate athletes.
- Many of the student athletes at UB achieve better academic success than the average attained by their fellow students.
- While still comparatively early, under the leadership of Athletic Director Warde Manuel, there is real optimism for improvement because of his background in academic support at both Georgia Tech University and the University of Michigan, his clear priorities and his direct and personal oversight of academic services.
- The Committee recognizes that, in the past, there may have been a lack of focus in some cases on athletic retention and academic support. To date, there has been significant new investment in this area, both in staff (interns) and in tutors for our student athletes. Additionally, there has been investment in the upgrading of student study space and the academic computer lab.
- The Committee embraces UB’s commitment to academic excellence as an AAU member institution. Academic programs consistent with our AAU membership may enhance the interest and success of all students and are important for UB to periodically review.
- The Committee recommends that there be continued evaluation of the NCAA’s new measures of academic success, APR and GSR rankings, for our sports. To date, there have been some improvements in these scores and in the retention of student athletes. Additional progress must be demonstrated continued evaluations of adequate funding for such vigilance will be required.

VII. *Seventh Issue Raised in the Corrigan Report – Two related concerns: Unambiguous Administrative Support and Increase Senior Administrator Awareness.*

- Clear support of the Division I-A intercollegiate athletics program is particularly important at UB, given the confusing reality of the University’s “in and out” history of participating in Division I–A intercollegiate athletics and in mounting individual sports such as Football and the resulting skepticism of the campus and broader communities.

- The statements and actions of University President John Simpson indicate unambiguous support of intercollegiate athletics at UB. These include: retaining Gene Corrigan to conduct a comprehensive review of the intercollegiate sports program; the President's unequivocally stated commitment to Division I-A athletics and a competitive Football program; his appointment of Warde Manuel as Athletic Director; the hiring of Turner Gill as head football coach; and the appointment of this Committee.
- The Committee recommends that this level of public support by senior University leadership continue. It is absolutely necessary if UB is to positively and consistently achieve a highly competitive intercollegiate athletics program within the MAC Conference and to continue to change the culture, both within and outside the University, regarding intercollegiate athletics at UB.
- It is important for University senior leadership to publicly emphasize and expand upon the key role that the intercollegiate athletics program plays in the University's on-going engagement with the local community, its place in the comprehensive UB2020 strategic plan, and its significant potential impact on student life and campus cohesiveness.

## **CONCLUSION**

After a lengthy and very extensive process, the Committee concludes with an optimistic belief in the positive future of Division I-A intercollegiate athletics at the University at Buffalo. The program is under the leadership of an extraordinarily experienced and able Athletic Director. He has, in a comparatively short period, instituted important changes strengthening academic support, adjusting the Division budget to more optimally support priorities, and, with the opening of the Morris Family Weight and Fitness Center, provided critical facility improvements. Senior University leadership has expressed a clear and unequivocal commitment to Division I-A intercollegiate athletics and to enhancing competitiveness within the Mid American Conference. Athletic resource and facility planning are now a central part of the University's UB 2020 strategic planning process, with the Athletic Director sitting at the same table as University Deans and Vice Presidents.

This Committee has been charged to address issues raised in the comprehensive assessment of UB athletics prepared by Gene Corrigan that have not yet been addressed. It has sought to comply with this charge by providing input for senior University and Division leadership to assist in their decision-making. The Committee has not attempted to offer solutions but rather to frame the issues fairly. In conducting its process, the Committee has, to a person, been very favorably impressed by the experience, thoughtfulness, and commitment of all of the head coaches, student athletes, and Division administrators who met with us. We are most grateful for the opportunity to better understand UB's athletic program and to make recommendations for its improvement.

The values President Simpson underscored in selecting Warde Manuel are critical to the characteristics, which an increasingly vibrant Intercollegiate Athletic program should have at UB as well. UB deserves student, faculty, staff and community excitement in the athletic performance of its teams; pride in the ambassadorship and academic strength of its student athletes; appreciation in its graduates for the quality of their UB education; a community which embraces UB as its university; and recognition that UB Athletics has helped promote the brand and is partner to the vision and excellence of UB 2020. We join the University and local community in anticipating steady improvement in the performance and competitiveness of all of the teams representing UB. Each of us is eager to help!

Respectfully submitted,

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R. Nils Olsen, Jr.  
Dean and Professor of Law  
On behalf of the Corrigan Committee