

Mr. Tom Wendel – Fight Back!

July 30, 2012

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COMMUNITY

Comments 49

One Faculty Member's Position on the Current State of Affairs

I am getting sick and tired of listening to people say that Penn State has put football ahead of everything else and that this is part of the Penn State culture. That is HORSE MANURE!

As a Penn State faculty member, I have had athletes from practically every varsity sport in my classes and have never been asked (or has it been "suggested") that I make the slightest concession to anyone because they were a football player, or a member of any other varsity team. I cannot imagine Joe Paterno ever making such a request (nor can I imagine most faculty members acceding to such a request if they had ever received one – academic integrity is a pretty important issue at Penn State!).

On Monday, the same day that Mark Emmert of the NCAA was issuing sanctions and issuing his sanctimonious decree that Penn State should reform its culture and put academics ahead of football, the NCAA released the latest statistics on graduation rates of football players at large NCAA schools. Penn State is #1, and so far ahead academically of the next closest school in terms of graduating football players (and basketball players, by the way), including showing virtually no difference between white and black athletes, which the report noted was extremely rare, that Emmert's comments appear ludicrous. Maybe the NCAA would like to hold Bobby Bowden (the new leader in NCAA football wins) and Florida State up as their paragon of academic virtue. Bobby Bowden was a great coach and is maybe a great person, but FSU did not recruit athletes on the basis of academic excellence and FSU was lucky to EVER have a football player or basketball player graduate.

The claims of the Freeh report, the NCAA, ESPN, and others claiming to describe the "culture" at Penn State ignore, in no particular order of priority, (1) the recent (2011) Wall Street Journal poll ranking Penn State #1 among employers nationally in terms of where they feel they find the highest quality college graduates as employees, (2) Penn State's ranking as the # 1 government research institution in the United States, (3) the previously mentioned ranking of # 1 in graduation rate among all student athletes, specifically football players, (4) a 2011 or 2012 ranking by a Cambridge University study ranking Penn State among the top 100 academic institutions IN THE WORLD, and on and on and on.

It is long past time that Rodney Erickson STOP accepting criticism of the Penn State culture as being entirely driven by the football program. That is simply crap!

Rodney Erickson appears to have adopted the "rope-a-dope" strategy of just absorbing punch after punch, hoping that the media, the NCAA, and the other anti-PSU crowd will wear themselves out. I find his endless concessions, and acceptance of these pronouncements about our "football culture," to be a personal assault on my integrity and an assault on the integrity of everyone who is part of the Penn State family – faculty, administrators (perhaps other than Rodney Erickson), staff, and students. Everyone concedes that child abuse is a horrific crime. We don't need to be lectured on that.

One guy did it, and it is possible that a number of people (including, among others, Penn State administrators, various police agencies, child welfare agencies, various school administrators in Lock Haven and elsewhere, Second Mile administrators and board members, state prosecutors, etc.) screwed up in not following up as aggressively as maybe they should have (Whether this is actually the case depends a lot on what and who you believe. I think the Freeh report leaves a lot to be desired in terms of completeness, accuracy, and objectivity on this point.). The media has found something as appealing as Greek tragedy in this story and they will not let go. Someone needs to stand up and tell them that their description of the Penn State culture is a travesty, which it is! Erickson, and whoever he's listening to, don't seem to be the folks to do this.

From all indications so far, including reactions from newly elected trustees Anthony Lubrano and Adam Taliaferro, it appears that Erickson signed the NCAA consent decree without involvement or approval of the Board of Trustees. I don't believe that he has the unilateral authority to commit the University to this level of liability. If this is the case, he should probably be fired as quickly as the Board fired Graham Spanier. He has committed the University to what is estimated to be something in the range of \$72 million dollars in penalties, loss of continuing revenue from its football program (the least of our worries), and – most seriously – undisputed damage to the reputation of the University which could be forever in recovering. The damage he has done, in my humble opinion, is far worse than anything Graham Spanier ever came close to doing.

Sorry. Enough of my rant. This has been keeping me up at night thinking about the injustices done to so many people associated with Penn State. I don't want to lessen or condone the wrongs done by Jerry Sandusky, but the level of attacks on Penn State associated with this atrocity, and the damage done to the University, its students, its faculty, its alumni, and ultimately to the world community served by this great academic institution, are simply unwarranted.

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Tags: Athletes, class, Erickson, football, Graduation, injustices, NCAA< Emmert, Penn, rates, State, student