

## **VI. THE NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION REPORT**

Rather than summarize the NCA Report, the pertinent references to Chief Illiniwek are set forth verbatim.

### **V. THIRD-PARTY COMMENTS**

#### **A. Context for Third-Party Contents**

The North Central Association received over 100 letters, petitions, press releases, and newspaper articles protesting the continued use of the school symbol and mascot, Chief Illiniwek. The Commission also received a copy of Jay Rosenstein's 1997 public television documentary "In Whose Honor? American Indian Mascots in Sports," which focused extensively on the ten-year controversy surrounding The Chief. Team members subsequently received several email messages and letters from UIUC faculty, students, and other opposing The Chief. No letters in support of The Chief were received, and no letters on any other topic were received.

The team was told during its campus visit that the institution's position is that use of The Chief is not an accreditation issue, and so it omitted a discussion of the issue from its self-study. The institution informed those who requested its inclusion that the third-party process could be used instead. The team agrees that a school mascot *per se* is not an accreditation issue, but it does feel that educational consequences of the policy, tied to NCA criteria, are within the purview of an accreditation review.

During the site visit, team members met with opponents to the school symbol, those in favor of its continued use, the Board of Trustees, the President of the University of Illinois, and the Chancellor of UIUC. The first two groups included faculty, students, alumni, and community members.

*The Facts.* The facts as the team understands them are as follows:

(Paragraphs 1 thru 6 of the report relate in summary the history of the Chief and of the controversy)

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7. A letter from a distinguished member of the history department argues, as other writers do, that: 1) The Chief undermines the educational program of the university by distorting American Indian history; 2) The Chief seriously undermines the university's ability to recruit American Indian students; 3) The Chief undermines the learning environment of all students by humiliating American Indian students. Another letter was from the former president of another Big 10 institution, who wrote:

"I know how crucial it is for academic institutions to provide leadership in encouraging and affirming diversity. As a result, I am writing to urge the North Central Accreditation Association to

review carefully the negative impact which the current Illinois mascot has on building a diverse educational community. I am a lifelong supporter of Big 10 athletics. Nevertheless, Chief Illiniwek and similar racial caricatures are symbols of discrimination and ridicule. They are an anathema to good sportsmanship and to building cultural understanding and mutual respect. "

Many other letters and petitions present similar arguments about why it is time to retire The Chief.

8. Statements made by individual Trustees on the 1997 videotape following the 1990 resolution: 1) The Chief's dance and demeanor are dignified and inoffensive; 2) The Chief is not meant to be offensive and so therefore should not offend.

9. On March 9, 1998, the Faculty-Student Senate of UIUC passed a resolution to end the tradition of the Chief.

10. In March, 1998, the Anthropology Department wrote to the Board with these concerns:

"These effects [due to the ongoing presence of the Chief Illiniwek symbol] extend to all aspects of our scholarly lives: teaching, service, and research. Several critical areas deserve attention. The Chief: (i) Promotes inaccurate conceptions of the Native peoples of Illinois, past and present; (ii) undermines the effectiveness of our teaching and is deeply problematic for the academic environment both in and outside of the classroom; (iii) creates a negative climate in our professional relationships with North American communities that directly affects our ability to conduct research with and among Native American people; and (iv) adversely affects the recruitment of Native American students and faculty into our university and department. "

## B. Evaluation of the Third-Party Comments

The team followed the Commission's directive on Third-Party Comments: *Avoid trying to resolve the validity of individual comments; instead determine whether the comments raise substantive issues relevant to the institution's ability to meet the GIRs and Criteria.* The team wishes to emphasize at the outset, however, that it does not believe that the choice of a school symbol is an issue for accreditation. Nor is the existence of campus controversy necessarily an accreditation issue. Rather, the team sought to analyze all of the issues surrounding the controversy in relation to the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation. The team has found that the comments do raise substantive issues relative to communication and governance which are explicated below.

Regarding policy, in 1978 the University of Illinois Board issues the following statement:

"Resolved by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois that it reaffirms its commitment and policy (a) to eradicate prohibited and invidious discrimination in all its forms; (b) to foster programs within the law which will ameliorate or eliminate, where possible, the effects of historical discrimination. . . "

This statement is found in various University publications.

Another statement is found in the Commission's 1991 Statement on Access, Equity, and Diversity:

". . . regardless of specific institutional practices, the Commission expects an institution to create and maintain a teaching and learning environment that supports sensitivity to diverse individuals and groups. Further, the Commission expects an affiliated institution to . . . [teach] students and faculty alike to see in proper perspective the differences that separate and the commonalities that bind all people and cultures. "

Another principle is found in UIUC's strategic plan, *A Framework for the Future*:

"First, we invest in people: the people who constitute our campus community, at all levels, represent an increasingly diverse population. . . Diversity may challenge accepted wisdom, and may lead to the re-examination of long-held values. Such debates are welcome on this campus, for they are valuable features of intellectual life. We are committed to conducting them in ways that promote and preserve freedom and civility of action and speech. . . "

Certainly, the institution has the right and the responsibility to establish policy, including policies about The Chief. The team notes, however, that it also has adopted a policy against invidious discrimination. "Invidious" means "tending to arouse ill will, animosity, or resentment." This has been the hallmark of the controversy over The Chief. In reconsidering its policy on The Chief, the institution should take into account the fact that to be accredited means to be a member of the North Central Association, i. e. the policies of the Board should be generally consistent with the policies of the Association, including the Statement on Access, Equity, and Diversity.

Moreover, there is no doubt in the team's mind that the continued controversy is having a negative effect on the educational effectiveness of UIUC. Ample testimony was received from individual faculty and relevant academic departments about how their missions and programs were negatively affected by The Chief. The team did not find the evidence it hoped to see that the institution has plans to deal with the negative effects of The Chief on educational effectiveness.

Under its Criterion Five, the Commission speaks to institutional integrity. By "integrity," the Commission means that the institution adheres to its own ethical values as adopted through

institutional policies and procedures. The Commission does not seek to prescribe any single set of principles for all institutions. As was noted above, the institution has adopted a statement of ethical principles with respect to discrimination, and to the team's knowledge, has not articulated why its policy on The Chief is in keeping with this statement.

In summary, the considerable evidence on this subject leads the team to these conclusions:

1. The use of The Chief is an educational issue.
2. The controversy surrounding The Chief will not go away.
3. The institution appears not to be addressing the issue in a manner consistent with some of the policies and principles of its Board, its own strategic plan, the Commission.
4. It is the responsibility of the leadership of the institution to create the environment that will allow for resolution of the controversy in a manner consistent with the principles of the North Central Association and the goals of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The teams wishes to emphasize, however, that it is not advocating a particular outcome, nor does it believe that "resolution" means that all interested parties are satisfied with the outcome. The role of the team is to point out to the institution and to the North Central Association any discrepancies it has found between the way in which the institution is handling the controversy and the principles of accreditation. The team returns to this subject in Section VIII.

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## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS AND RATIONAL

Recognizing the exemplary quality of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and its many achievements, the recommendation of the team is to continue UIUC on a regular decennial review cycle (with two stipulations justified below), because it easily meets or surpasses the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation.

The team considered whether the issue discussed in Section V are of sufficient magnitude to overshadow the otherwise outstanding record of UIUC. As was stated earlier in this report, the team does not consider the use of The Chief, nor the concomitant controversy, to be accreditation issues by themselves. The team is concerned, however, about the governance of the institution in this respect and about the methods the institution has used to address the controversy. While these difficult issues ultimately must be solved internally, the team's role is to call attention to the need for urgency in changing the institution's methods of addressing the issues now. Without greater focused efforts to resolve the issue, the team is convinced that the University's laudable goals to create and maintain a diverse educational community will be difficult to achieve. Thus, the team recommends that a **progress report** be filed with the Commission by January 1, 2001, delineating the processes that the institution has initiated to prepare for a focused visit on the

issues surrounding The Chief. The team recommends that the **focused visit** be conducted in 2002-03.

During the focused visit, the team recommends that the institution present convincing Intra-institutional communication and shared governance: The institution should show that all relevant constituencies have been allowed to engage fully in discussion, and that the reasons for decisions reached have been fully articulated to all interested parties. In particular, the institution should address the educational impact of the continued use of The Chief.

Consistent policies. The institution should resolve what appears to many, both within and outside of the University, to be inconsistencies between its exemplary diversity policies and practices, and its policies regarding The Chief. The team emphasizes again that it does not believe that The Chief *per se* is an accreditation issue. It is incumbent upon any public institution, however, to articulate the rationale for its policies, especially when they are in apparent contradiction with each other.

In the progress report, the institution should show that it has defined and begun executing a process for addressing the issues surrounding The Chief.