

# Final Report of the Virginia 2020 Strategic Planning Task Force for the Department of Athletics

## Executive Summary

In December 1999, University of Virginia President John T. Casteen III appointed the Virginia 2020 Strategic Planning Task Force for the Department of Athletics. He directed this group -- made up of faculty, students, athletics staff and alumni -- to recommend future directions for UVA's Athletics programs.

The task force studied four areas: programs and facilities; academic and student life; compliance; and finances and fundraising. This report identifies the group's recommended goals, budgetary requirements and funding sources, and a management and monitoring structure.

The University of Virginia's 24-sport athletics program faces challenges common among National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I institutions: increased media attention that has led to more competitions, which, in turn, have resulted in more missed class time.

The growth of women's sports has placed added pressure on the NCAA and its member schools, particularly in meeting equity requirements of Title IX. Financially, programs across the country face increasing budget deficits. UVA's is no exception.

Two areas of particular concern emerged in the athletics task force's work: **department finances** and **academic performance of student-athletes**.

The NCAA reports the **average** expenditure of Division I-A schools in 1999 -- \$20 million -- represented a 16 percent increase from 1997 and exceeded the **largest**

expenditure by any school in 1985 -- \$16.6 million. The NCAA also reports that in 1999, 54 percent of Division I-A schools reported budget deficits.

The UVa Athletics Department has a relatively small but persistent operating deficit, projected at approximately \$200,000 for the 2000-01 fiscal year. The task force's most conservative financial forecasts predict that **annual** deficits will rise to \$10.4 million within 10 years, with a **cumulative** 10-year deficit of \$47 million, unless the University significantly reduces costs and enhances revenue.

To balance the athletics budget while meeting equity requirements, the task force recommends expanding the role of the Virginia Student Aid Foundation in funding operations, increasing student fees, and reducing funding for six men's sports. In addition, achieving a balanced budget would require the Athletics Department to raise funds to establish a \$100 million endowment.

To ensure continued compliance with Title IX requirements, the task force also recommends:

- Adding women's golf as a varsity sport, and
- Eliminating men's indoor track.

Because all male indoor track athletes participate in either cross-country or outdoor track, no male athlete would lose the opportunity to compete at the University of Virginia.

To reduce the funding for the six aforementioned men's sports, the task force recommends classifying all UVa sports into four tiers, with classifications to be reviewed annually:

- **Top-tier sports**, specifically football and men's and women's basketball, characterized by full funding of grants-in-aid "to compete at the highest intercollegiate level."

- **A second tier** to include programs supported by "full or substantial grants-in-aid and operating budgets to contend for a national championship." Sports recommended for such status are men's and women's lacrosse, men's and women's soccer, field hockey, rowing, and men's and women's swimming.
- **Third-tier sports**, to provide limited grants-in-aid or need-based aid, minimal staffs and operating budgets. They would include women's golf (if added), softball, women's tennis, women's cross-country, women's indoor and outdoor track and field, and volleyball.
- **Fourth-tier sports**, to receive only need-based financial aid. Teams would have a limited coaching staff and would undertake regional travel only, although they would continue to compete in the Atlantic Coast Conference. These sports would include baseball, wrestling, men's golf, men's tennis, men's cross-country, men's indoor track and field (if not dropped) and men's outdoor track and field.

To maximize the department's fundraising potential, the task force recommends creating the position of "senior associate athletic director for fundraising and external operations" to oversee fund raising, marketing, promotions and ticket offices.

Academically, rising standards in student-body demographics and more rigorous policies and academic programs significantly affect some student-athletes at the University of Virginia. The gap in academic preparation and subsequent academic success at the University is growing between the lowest 10 percent of the student body and the rest of the students in the University.

The dean of admissions claims this gap is not because standards have been lowered for students who fall in the bottom end of that range, but rather because of stronger overall credentials among the rest of the class, creating increased competition in

the classroom. Hence, students in the bottom 10 percent of the class are now at greater risk than students admitted a few years ago with similar academic preparation.

Numerous revisions to programmatic and course offerings have raised standards, coupled with changes in policies related to issues such as classroom use and priority scheduling. These actions have the unintended consequence of making it more difficult for student-athletes to meet degree requirements. They also may restrict options in selecting major fields of study.

To remedy the academic issues it found, the task force recommends:

- Redesigning academic advising and student support services for student-athletes;
- Improving communication between the schools, student-athletes, coaches and advisers;
- Increasing faculty members' and deans' involvement in recruiting and admissions for student-athletes;
- Requiring participation of at-risk student-athletes in the University's College Transition Program; and
- Examining academic and athletic scheduling requirements to maximize student-athletes' experience both in their sports and the classroom.

Through its deliberations, the task force retained the stated University goal of competing for a top-10 ranking in the Sears Cup and other rankings of athletics achievement.

The task force members believe that if it takes decisive actions immediately, the University of Virginia Department of Athletics will continue to be successful in competition, while achieving a balanced budget and retaining high graduation rates among its student-athletes.