

Thank you to Allen Sack, Fritz Polite, David Ridpath, Jason Lanter and of course Jon Ericson, all of the Drake Group. Thank you also to my family, friends and colleagues who have come here today and have supported me with calls, emails, coffee visits and encouragement – the support has actually been overwhelming.

The Hutchins award and the University of Chicago are an interesting connection for me. In 1975, at the University of Chicago, I attended my first university commencement ceremony. My father received his MBA. I remember that day so clearly. The chapel, beautiful robes, fluffy hats, the processional was awesome. I wanted to know what it all meant – the different robes, different colors. I was told about accomplished learners with high level degrees, they had studied at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, UCLA, Michigan, and Carolina. Eventually, during college, the Jesuits taught me the joy of learning. They taught me to ask thoughtful and difficult questions of myself and others. I was privileged to have such a great education.

Now, here I am at Carolina, a public ivy, flagship, highly competitive, with a brilliant and well published faculty. Medical research and facilities of top caliber, public service, Moorehead Cain and Johnston Scholars – and now 223 years and we will have our first female Chancellor – wow. I have volunteered at the last 8 commencements here and have never stopped being astonished by the regalia, the pomp and the circumstance of the occasion. Most importantly I admire the learning that led up to the moment. Students of all ages and degree levels who will go on to innovate, make changes and lead others by example – and whom I truly believe will make this world a better place. Here at Carolina we expect critical thinking, and as one of my students told me just a few weeks ago – he has learned here to look at all sides of an issue.

Today we are here, thanks to the Drake Group and their mission, to discuss a problem that continues to threaten the integrity of our academic institutions – the partnership between the NCAA and the university collegiate sports system. Perhaps big money sport, and it is really big money, and academics just do not fit together. Apparently big money and truth telling do not fit together. They are not compatible. The separation of athletics and academics may happen in the future - but here at Carolina, we have just expanded the football stadium – and the fact is that game days are spectacular and part of our culture here and across this country.

I became a Tarheel in the fall of 2003 – I don't suppose that you will ever see me on the monitor at the Dean Dome, but I am a Tarheel. My job at the academic support program for student athletes was a lucky find – working with our talented and gifted athletes was very rewarding. Our athletes wear Carolina blue so proudly and represent this university well. Their families are very proud of them. Many say that the athletic program works – it is part of our culture, and it is possible to be successful in school and sport. Many academically prepared athletes receive distinguished awards for doing just that every year and it is something to celebrate. At Carolina we have around 800 varsity athletes, 400 are on the ACC honor roll or dean's list in any semester, 200 do okay academically and can choose a major, 150-200 are underprepared, seriously underprepared. As a Learning Specialist, I worked with 36 students during any given

week/semester. The gap in academic readiness between my group of 36 and their classmates is large. 40-50 athletes are enrolled in our lowest level composition class each year. This past fall, that class became an elective since the overwhelming majority (about 98% of our first year students) tested past or out of it. The athletes that I worked with struggled and I struggled right along with them. Literacy deficits affect learning – pretty obvious, right? Throw in a full time very physical job with travel – good idea? No. Imagine showing up here with reading, writing and vocabulary skills so below your classmates that nothing makes much sense. It would be like dropping me off on the football field, giving me a jersey and telling me to just figure it out. The jerseys do not even fit, never mind the shoulder pads and helmet. Impossible task, I am a little embarrassed to admit that I do not understand the game of football or know the vocabulary – something to do with X's and O's, I don't know. On game day, I just pretend that I know what is going on. What must it feel like for someone so academically unprepared for college to sit in class here?

I have never stopped working with students. I am a teacher, an educator and I love helping students figure out ways to tackle content or become more efficient learners. Having moved out of athletics and looking back – a unique position – and realizing that few with authority here seem to really understand the issue, I feel responsible to advocate for our profit sport athletes. The big money that they bring in, or that flows in because of their talents pays for all the other sports – 2 sports pay for the other 26 sports. I ask you to stop and think about the diversity of the 2 teams vs. 26 teams? Do you see underprivileged and privileged? I see oppressed and privileged. Race is the whale swimming just below the surface. Talking about the whale leaves us so vulnerable because we are called elitists, racists, traitors to the institution and whistle blowers.

Out of this fear of reprisal, which the NCAA is counting on comes secrets, silence, and defensive rationalizations. The secrets start with admissions – the front door letting in students who we claim are getting a chance – and FERPA – the abuse of which is manipulated and a gift to the NCAA and athletic programs around the country. The silence is our groupthink – dishonesty – how about blaming it all on 2 people? All the bogus systems of eligibility. In addition it is that athletic staff paperwork that came around at the end of every school year that we were required to sign; it stated “I did not see cheating.” That was a hot potato for me. On my desk, off my desk – they put it back, I would scribble my initials. So yes, I lied and cheated; I saw it, knew about it and witnessed it. I was part of all of it, afraid, silent for too long – and the defense or rationalization was me saying “well ok, at least our profit athletes are getting a chance.” I think that I helped some of those guys a little but I really know that they leave here without the one thing they need most in life – a real education. There is that scholarship agreement that tells athletes and their families “if you share your athletic talents, in exchange we will offer you an academic opportunity.” That agreement should not be signed unless we can offer a real academic opportunity; we could offer a real education and as a matter of fact we established a developmental program called the Academy at Carolina in 1795 that lasted for two decades.

Sometimes referred to as the prep academy or the grammar school, teachers helped the young men from our state right here on this campus to get prepared first for coursework. Imagine that – transparency.

Our academic fraud story broke in 2010. I stayed silent. I wrote a thesis about the gap in admissions between students and athletes. The NCAA clearinghouse academic standards are a farce and we just go right along with them. As a regulatory body they only offer us a book of riddles – can someone please explain special benefits? Imagine my first day on the job reading the manual while sitting in a tutor center built for the sole purpose of student athletes. Seems like a special benefit, and it sure is confusing. Let's be honest, the athletic scholarship is just a lottery ticket with room and board – or the golden ticket to win a tour here at our factory where by the way you might get injured or damaged. No insurance, no workers comp, no salary for all the hard work. The NCAA cartel owns us. They need us – do we really need them?

President Friday took the time to read my paper and to meet with me during the fall of 2010. I sent that paper to dozens of people on this campus and he was the only one who responded. He asked me tough questions, and even after, I remained silent. He he asked what did I think of the News & Observer and Dan Kane reporting (he thought you were doing a good job, truth tellers are not afraid of the media), he asked if I knew the young Professor Jay Smith? He was glad that you were speaking out and thought that others should join you. He asked me the tough questions: are they really students at all – these football and basketball players? do they really want to do any of their course work? I said the athletes that I worked with wanted to learn, but the deficits in college readiness were just too large. Many are great young leaders, the type of young men that this university was built for, the type of young men that might have once attended the academy so that they could get help to prepare for the challenging coursework. Some 200 years ago, there was a Pettigrew, a Bennehan, and the Mebane brothers who received help at the academy. I read about them in our university archives.

I can still see the faces of the young athletes that I worked with. They had real hopes and dreams for a better life. One athlete was artistically gifted and wanted to teach art while another wanted to coach middle school football back in his hometown. Their schedules in addition to their need for intensive academic support did not allow for either of these majors. Another wanted to build a YMCA in Bertie county – the Business school and school of Education were both out of reach. Yet another wanted to be a school counselor so that when like him, a 5th grade teacher told a young child that you will never learn to read or write, he could intervene. Because here at UNC, he did learn to read and write and realized that with proper instruction, he could have been learning all along. Not sure if it was enough though – for the right degree or grades to become a school counselor. Yes, many athletes told me what they would like to study. Instead, we directed them to an array of mismatched classes that have a very long history of probable eligibility. And, sadly, it is still happening today. Right now, this semester. I was told for almost 7 years on a regular basis that athletics was in charge of this university. As a person who loves learning and graduation – I refused to believe this and I still refuse.

I would invite them all back, any athlete who is still interested in pursuing their academic dreams - that is the right thing to do. I would like to re-open the academy – how about right here at the Friday Center? Let's be honest and do the right thing – meet our talented athletes where our K12 system failed them; meet them where they are at academically, and bring them along with direct instruction and measurable outcomes to close the academic achievement gap. Let's put a stop to educational inequality. I probably cannot kick a football but I would kick the NCAA and their rule book to the curb – a tax free nonprofit 6 billion a year business that makes this system of collegiate sport corrupt. When anyone or any group is oppressed, we are all oppressed. We need full disclosure and transparency from admissions, athletics and academics. No more secrecy, silence and cover up. We could have paid for an academy twice with all of the money we spent on consultants and reports.

We can fix this. The word courage comes from Latin – corde meaning heart – with the heartfelt spirits of Frank Porter Graham, William Aycock and Bill Friday, The Carolina Way could be the right way again and we could lead the way. I am a Tarheel. Richard Southall, Jay Smith, our Athletic Reform Group – and Dan Kane – thank you so much for helping me to find my voice. I share this honor with each and all of you. Robert Maynard Hutchins must have liked graduation as much as I do because he said that we must protect the academic integrity of the university in order to procure a moral, intellectual and spiritual revolution throughout the world, and I say, “Yes we can.” Thank you so very much.