



PO Box 6917
Norco, CA 92860

951-898-0985
info@ncpanow.org
www.ncpanow.org
Twitter: @NCPANOW
Facebook: facebook.com/NCPANOW

EMBARGOED UNTIL 5PM PST ON WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 7, 2022

December 7, 2022

Office of the Secretary and Chief of Staff to the Regents
1111 Franklin St., 12th Floor
Oakland, Ca 94607

Re: Oppose UCLA's move to Big Ten Conference

Dear members of the UC Board of Regents,

My name is Ramogi Huma, I am a former UCLA football player and Executive Director of the National College Players Association (NCPA). The NCPA is a California nonprofit advocacy organization that has lead the college athletes' rights movement for over 20 years. The NCPA sponsored and co-sponsored several college athletes' rights bills adopted by the state of California including the "Student-Athletes Bill of Rights" authored by current US Senator Alex Padilla, and the Fair Pay to Play Act authored by California state Senators Nancy Skinner and Steve Bradford. The NCPA has successfully lobbied for college athletes' rights laws in over a dozen states and is the primary college athletes' rights voice in Congress.

The NCPA requests that you oppose UCLA's move from the Pac-12 Conference to the Big Ten Conference for the well-being of current and future UCLA athletes. This move is a short-sighted money grab and that will harm college athletes in several ways.

Academic Harm & Racial Exploitation

A UCLA move to the Big Ten undermines UC's educational mission. No matter how much money is generated, UCLA cannot spend its way out of increased travel times for its athletes that will directly reduce UCLA athletes' ability to keep up with their academics and complete their degree.

The Pac-12 published a survey showing that the average Pac-12 athlete spends 50 hours per week in their sport alone during the season. This exposes the NCAA's meaningless, unenforced 20 hour/week limit and underscores the need to prevent UCLA from requiring its athletes to spend any additional time on athletics.

The [NCAA's 2019 Goals Study](#) surveyed athletes across the nation and revealed relevant and disturbing facts. NCAA Division I athletes reported:

- A reduction of time spent on academics
- A reduction in time spent sleeping
- Approximately 35-45% cannot keep up with classes during the season

The NCAA's 2015 Goals Study revealed facts not inquired about in its 2019 study:

- 1/3 of NCAA athletes say that athletic time demands prevent them from taking desired classes
- Between 66-76% of Division I and Division II athletes would prefer to spend more time on academics
- 30% of Division I football and men's basketball players said they would have chosen a different major if not for college sports.
- 66% of all Division I & II athletes, including 75% or more of football, baseball, and track athletes, report spending as much time on their sport during the off-season as they do during the season.

According to UCLA's most recent report to the US Department of Education, UCLA athletes' "4-class average" federal graduation rates were 74% compared to 91% for all students. This is unacceptable. UCLA's top priority should be supporting athletes' academic success instead of undermining it in the pursuit of TV dollars.

The move to the Big Ten also reveals UCLA's utter disregard for the academic success of Black UCLA athletes whose talents and success are at the core of UCLA's revenue generation. Black UCLA football players' graduation rates were 47% while Black men's basketball players graduation rates were 50%. Graduation rates among all Black male athletes was only 50% compared to 73% among all Black male students.

UCLA's racial exploitation is made starker by enrollment numbers that reveal that UCLA's Black athletes comprise 28% of total Black male UCLA students while UCLA's White male athletes comprise only 2% of total White male students. Allowing UCLA to move to the Big Ten will adversely affect 28% of the total Black male students compared to only 2% of total White male students.

In addition to poor graduation rates among football and basketball players, UCLA baseball players' federal graduation rates were only 67%.

There is nothing that UCLA can do to justify the move to the Big Ten given this data. UCLA's move to the Big Ten is nothing but a money grab that will increase the longstanding racial exploitation of UCLA's Black male students.

Mental Health

UCLA's move to the Big Ten will be detrimental to UCLA athletes' mental health. Intense athletic and academic time demands will be made much worse with increased travel time demands. This is no secret and NCAA data supports this reality.

NCAA 2019 Goals Study:

- 25-30% of athletes surveyed “felt difficulties piling up so high that they could not overcome them in the month prior to taking the survey”.
- Approximately 40% of incoming first-year athletes indicated that they were “frequently overwhelmed” by all they had to do in the past year
- Between 55-64% of responding athletes report not being very satisfied with team or college personnel for mental health issues

The NCAA [also reported](#) that 22% of male athletes and 38% of female athletes reported feeling mentally exhausted constantly or most every day, and less than half would feel comfortable seeking support from a mental health provider on campus. This means that despite efforts from UCLA to try to mitigate a predictable decline in its athletes’ mental health, many athletes will not go to UCLA for help. This is not surprising because the NCPA has assisted a number of athletes whose mental health was harmed due to the abusive treatment they received within their athletic department – this includes UCLA athletes.

This move would also reduce the ability of UCLA athletes’ family members to attend games. This no small issue as family support is crucial for many athletes dealing with mental health challenges. It will hit the athletes from low-income homes the hardest because their families will not be able to afford airplane tickets and hotel stays to attend games that are on the other side of the country.

Selling Out Athletic Success for TV Dollars Benefit Only a Few

No amount of school spirit and belief will change the fact that if UCLA leaves the Pac-12 for the Big Ten, UCLA athletes will go from having a 1 in 12 chance of winning a conference championship to a 1 in 16 chance of winning a conference championship. It’s also notable that UCLA currently has one of the most talented football teams it has had in quite some time, but was unable to win a conference championship, nonetheless. As the statistics above show, UCLA athletes work hard year-round to maximize their athletic success. Stuffing these athletes in a larger conference that is still looking to add members undermines the athletic aspirations of the UCLA community – the athletes, campus community, the fans, and even the coaches. Coaches with a lower chance of winning a conference championship will face termination more frequently, which will ultimately absorb significant amounts of the new revenue supporters of this move are celebrating. For reference, UCLA’s previous head football coach Jim Mora was paid \$12 million upon termination for doing a bad job.

UCLA seems to suggest that nonrevenue sports could be cut if not for new revenue from a Big Ten move. However, the truth is that UCLA and other FBS schools spend much more than necessary to field a Division I program. The NCPA conducted an analysis and found that the average FBS college spent about \$34 million more than other Division I colleges *to field the same sports*. Jim Mora’s \$12 million payout is an example of this. UCLA spending [\\$5.4 million on football meals](#) (about \$65,000/scholarship athlete for one year) while carrying a \$19 million deficit is another. There are many more examples. Like many other FBS colleges, UCLA does not have a revenue problem, it has a spending problem. UCLA’s athletic budget deficit despite record high athletic revenues over the last 5 years reflects this. UCLA is fully capable to preserving all sports if it remains in the Pac-12. If the Regents are concerned that UCLA may cut sports if the Big Ten move is blocked, the Regents should block UCLA’s ability to cut sports instead of allowing UCLA to drag its entire athletic program to the other side of the country for games.

So, who does this benefit monetarily? Spending trends at UCLA and other FBS schools show that, without a doubt, this money will benefit the UCLA athletic director, head football coach, and head men's basketball coach tremendously. It will also lead to the additional hiring of an ever-increasing athletic administration staff. It will benefit construction companies who will build the next gold-plated facility. Other than that, no one else will benefit monetarily and no significant amount of the revenue will leave the athletic program for other parts of the UCLA. Throughout UCLA's dramatically escalating athletics revenue, UCLA submitted reports to the US Department of Education showing athletic revenues and athletics expenses were *exactly the same* over the last 10 years e.g. \$66,003,893 in revenue and \$66,003,893 in expenses (2010) and \$110,128,961 in revenue and \$110,128,961 in expenses (2020).

The NCPA applauds the Regents for taking time to assess this move and for taking efforts to solicit UCLA athletes' opinions. However, it is concerning that 38% of UCLA athletes report not having enough information to determine whether a move to the Big Ten is good or bad. I do not believe that UCLA athletes have the factual information contained in this letter, but I'm sure most or all heard UCLA's proclamation that the conference move is good. The Regents should consider this before making a decision.

Not all money is good money. The Regents should not let a handful of people sell the soul of the UCLA athletics program for TV dollars that will be spent on luxury boxes in stadiums and lavish salaries for a few. For all of the reasons stated in this letter, the NCPA strongly urges the Regents to block UCLA's move to the Big Ten Conference. The NCPA also encourages the Regents to set geographical limits on the intercollegiate athlete conference membership of its universities to prevent this situation from occurring in the future. Please let me know if you have any questions regarding the NCPA's position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ramogi Huma", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ramogi Huma
Executive Director,
National College Players Association