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from **THE COALITION ON INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS (COIA)**

<http://www.neuro.uoregon.edu/~tublitz/COIA/index.html>

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In a series of four reports beginning on March 16, 2008 the Ann Arbor News contended that the University of Michigan clusters athletes in programs that would put them on the easiest path to a degree and allows them to enroll in independent study courses that enabled them to pad their grade point averages. The University has denied any impropriety.

The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) has not investigated the charges; it is not our role to do so and thus we take no position on the merits and specifics of the allegations.

We point out, however, that we have previously taken note of similar accusations at other universities and have warned of the potential for such abusive practices in the absence of explicit policies and controls to prevent them. Specifically, the COIA has called for universities to collect data on enrollment and grading patterns of students in individual sports programs. Such data should be designed to reveal whether there are clusters of athletes enrolled in identical courses or in courses with identical instructors, unusually high class GPAs in such courses or from such instructors, or grades significantly higher than predicted for athletes as compared to others in such courses or from such instructors. Faculty and administrators should be charged with the responsibility for reviewing the data and ensuring that academic integrity is not being compromised. We now reiterate our appeal for universities to adopt our proposals.

The COIA has, in the past, supported the NCAA's efforts to enhance the academic experience of student-athletes. Notably, the NCAA has established a program that requires member schools to measure the academic progress of athletes and imposes penalties on both teams and individual athletes who fail to meet specified standards. We are apprehensive, however, that some athletic departments and their academic counselors may be concerned more with the athletic eligibility of students than with their education. Schools may be enhancing the academic progress ratings of their athletes by steering them to courses that are not necessarily in their best academic and vocational interests, encouraging them to enroll in independent study courses that are not, in fact, consistent with the spirit and rationale for individualized research and scholarship, and by directing them to majors and programs that are designed mainly for athletes.

The current controversy involving the University of Michigan once again underscores the importance of faculty and administrative vigilance over academic practices as they pertain to athletes. It points to the urgency of the reforms proposed by the COIA.

For more information on COIA's academic disclosure proposals, please refer to Section 1.2 (The Primacy of Academics) in our 2007 white paper: "Framing the Future: Reforming Intercollegiate Athletics" paper (<http://www.neuro.uoregon.edu/~tublitz/COIA/index.html>).

This statement has been approved by the Steering Committee of the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (<http://www.neuro.uoregon.edu/~tublitz/COIA/SC.html>)

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