

# UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

Chicago • Springfield • Urbana-Champaign

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April 27, 2005

B. Joseph White  
*President*

Mr. Ronald Stratten  
NCAA  
1802 Alonzo Watford Sr. Drive  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206

Dear Mr. Stratten:

I am pleased to forward to you on behalf of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) the University's response to the NCAA questionnaire concerning the use of American Indian "mascots, nicknames and logos," a matter being reviewed by the NCAA Executive Committee. In this letter, I offer several overview observations that are reflected in our questionnaire responses.

While the University does not have a mascot, we comment in our responses on Chief Illiniwek, a tradition of nearly 80 years in UIUC athletics. Chief Illiniwek appears and performs for approximately four minutes during halftime or intermission of home football, basketball and volleyball competitions. During the Chief's appearance, many fans join arms and sing the school song. During the rest of the competition, Chief Illiniwek is not on the field or the sidelines.

With regard to nicknames, "Illini" is a term associated with the UIUC campus for approximately 130 years. The term "Illini" came into general use at least 50 years before Chief Illiniwek was introduced. It was created by students who began referring to themselves as "Illini" in recognition of the name of the State of Illinois. Campus history suggests that community members understood that the name was associated with an American Indian people. Over the years, the name spread to alumni and athletic teams. "Fighting Illini" is a nickname associated with UIUC intercollegiate athletics programs for over 80 years.

With regard to logos, there is one UIUC athletics logo that depicts Chief Illiniwek. The intercollegiate baseball and wrestling programs use the Chief Illiniwek image in their printed materials.

The UIUC community has debated the Chief Illiniwek tradition earnestly, diligently and exhaustively since before 1990. On many occasions and through many channels, people representing a wide variety of opinions have exercised the opportunity to express their views. These years of examination and discussion are thoroughly

documented as evidenced by the appendices to our questionnaire responses. These materials reflect vast community input over many years and served as a primary source in the preparation of our responses. For this reason, we did not create a special steering committee in connection with the questionnaire and we did not request community review of our responses.

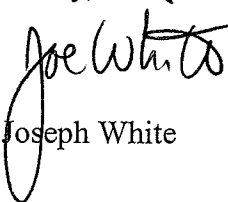
Supporters of the Chief Illiniwek tradition emphasize the value of and their pride in the tradition as well as their intention to preserve and showcase American Indian heritage and culture. Opponents of the Chief Illiniwek tradition emphasize that the tradition is an expropriation of American Indian imagery and culture which they deem to be insensitive, inaccurate and offensive. Both opponents and supporters of the Chief Illiniwek tradition cite surveys and other evidence to underpin their positions.

In 1990 the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois assumed exclusive ownership of policy concerning the Chief Illiniwek tradition. Today, the Board is striving to achieve consensus as reflected in a June 2004 Board resolution to "...seek a consensus conclusion to the matter of Chief Illiniwek..." The goal is to find a solution that best serves the University as a whole and not a particular constituent group.

Further, at its meeting in September 2004 the Board approved a resolution that states: "It shall be the policy of the University and the Urbana-Champaign campus that the State's heritage and its American Indian culture and traditions shall be preserved, affirmed and publicly celebrated." In March 2005, the Chair of the Board promulgated guidelines to be followed in achieving a consensus conclusion. At the time of this writing, the work to do so continues.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on this or any matter concerning intercollegiate athletics.

Sincerely,



B. Joseph White