

## **Usual Place, April 4th, 2023**

The meeting was convened at 6:00pm.

### **Items for the good of the Order:**

The fellowship starts with a congratulations to upcoming graduates and an announcement about OGB pins to wear at graduation. The cost is \$5 to the Alumni Secretary.

A Fellow inquires about the upcoming nomination process and eligibility for nominations.

The Warden reviews election logistics. Nominations are due next week, April 11<sup>th</sup>. Nominees must have been a part of the University for two semesters and demonstrated the Order's three charges.

The Warden encourages Fellows to consider running, or nominating others, for Warden and Chronicler.

A Fellow remarks that Fellows making nominations do not need to know a nominee directly, but may still nominate them. For example, if someone they trust has indicated to them that the person would make a good nominee.

### **Items for the good of the university:**

A Fellow remarks about a recent video circulating about a smack-down of a Stanford affiliate.

### **On the Topic of: "How does Athletics affect the perception of the University?"**

The Warden begins with a few thoughts including the ideas of unifying the terms "Berkeley" and "Cal," that athletics seems to come second to academics, the switch from Under Armor to Nike, the change in Pac-12 to Pac-10, Cal Spirit groups, NIL, varying degrees of support for men's/women's sports teams.

A Fellow acknowledges the outsider's perspective and how we are seen across the country. This Fellow poses the question of whether the brands "Cal" and "Berkeley" need to be merged. This Fellow also confirms that the football field does indeed just say "California," "Golden Bears," "Cal," and "This is Bear Territory," having no mention of "Berkeley."

A Fellow brings up some history of the University of California. This Fellow suggests that the faculty identify more with "Berkeley" and less with athletics. They also mention that they were interviewed by a Committee that is leading the consideration of reassessing our branding and that one of the interviewees turned out not to know anything about the history of our university's branding.

A school-spirited Fellow gives an anecdote of a time when a student shared with their class that the water polo team had just won the championship and that the professor brushed it off and moved onto the class topic, highlighting the disinterest of some of our faculty in university athletics.

A Fellow brings up how there are certain landmarks, shared experiences, etc. that are universal to the student experience, and how athletics is now less universal than it used to be.

A Fellow suggests borrowing an idea from a southern California school where students are encouraged to attend particular campus events and experiences in order to earn a medal that they can wear at graduation. This could revitalize student engagement in athletic events.

A Fellow explains how over the last 20 years, athletics has done a horrendous job of cultivating the gameday experience. They recall how in their time as a student, despite a horrendous football team, students would come just to hear the antics of the hilarious yell leader group. This is no longer the case as the Mic Men have been “muzzled.” This fellow shifts to also comment on how a demographic shift toward “nerdier” students has diminished our attendance at sporting events. They suggest that it is critical to get loyalty of fans during the time that they are students. This Fellow comments on the paid-ad feeling of the sports games these days and how it detracts from the student experience. Further, this Fellow recalls how in Cal Band, they used to attend every football, basketball, and volleyball game, plus practices, yet they are not given priority enrollment, and thus are sometimes unable to get their classes at a time that allows them to keep participating as such in Band.

A Fellow mentions that from the Spirit group perspective, the group’s own money and ASUC funds is all that is given, yet they have to bridge between Cal Athletics and students by putting on expensive events such as Bonfire Rally. They also mention that there are professors on this campus who ARE engaged with sports, such as a computer science professor for one of our largest courses who spoke at the last Bonfire Rally.

A Fellow says that Cal Athletics has their work cut out for them. They acknowledge that there has been a demographic shift and that the big challenge facing us now is to turn engagement in sports into a campus culture.

A Fellow comments on synergies and suggests that part of the solution is for the Athletics department to trust student spirit groups to speak to the student population.

A Fellow understands that the Athletic department must generate revenue. They emphasize how, while attending a basketball game this season, it was discouraging to hear students turn on rap music right after Cal Band struck up “Sons of California” during a timeout. This Fellow says that we need to do more to enhance the gameday experience for our students.

A Fellow explains the compounding effect of a good turnout and exciting student gameday experience. The team plays better and the spirit groups feel that it is more worth their time. This Fellow brings up the topic of timing of games and how it affects attendance. They suggest that students are prone to drinking too much and then either don’t make it to the game or leave earlier. They believe that little things like making water more accessible at games can go a long way.

A Fellow recognizes the importance of Athletics making a good experience for students. They acknowledge the effect of Covid. They explain how the first game back in August is critical for setting the tone for new students. They suggest that society has changed and people are more focused on bonding and social events and thus they prioritize other gatherings over athletic events. They suggest making advertisements through Tik-Toks and Instagram Reels and making giveaways be in tune with current trends as ways to engage students better.

A Fellow agrees with many of the previous speakers. They disagree with the notion that there is a linear relationship between students, student spirit groups, and Cal Athletics. They don't see Athletics interacting with the student body. Students don't know who the players and coaches are. Maybe if they did, there would be more attendance at games. This Fellow suggests that Cal Athletics should focus on marketing to students outside of Cal Spirit to increase the chances those people come back to attend games and donate too.

A Fellow brings up the topic of funding and the disparity between funding for student groups and funding for sports. They acknowledge that there is a feeling of Athletics being distant from the students. They want to see Cal Athletics more engaged with the students. They suggest that finding similarities between students and the players could get more people to attend. Bringing top fans as students on away trips can also be a way to boost engagement.

A Fellow acknowledges that there are a ton of great ideas that have been expressed tonight. This Fellow mentions how Covid has hit the budget, we've lost two years of student engagement, etc., yet these are not excuses for the areas in which Athletics can improve. There is hard work being done to revitalize sports at Cal. Athletics is already preparing for the Auburn game in the fall and is expecting a huge turnout from Auburn fans. This Fellow admits that our football and basketball teams are not where they need to be. There is a brand-new basketball coach, and Tik Tok is blowing up about it, including Tik Toks from Shaq. This Fellow admits that Cal Athletics has become a business and that the Chancellor has asked that the budget be balanced. There are strategic goals in the Athletic department, and integrating with the student body is one of them. Another goal is graduation rates for sports teams. Seven of our teams are top 10 in the country. Water polo, swimming, and gymnastics are doing phenomenally. Women's gymnastics just won their first regional championship. Athletics has bought pizzas and delivered them to the IFC in an effort to boost student engagement. This Fellow says that there are many things that Athletics is doing well, but admits that student integration is not one of them. This Fellow mentions that they do not envy UCLA in that they have graduation rate around 57% whereas ours is 93% and now, they are going to be traveling across the country to compete since they are switching conferences. This Fellow mentions that they love NIL and the new transfer portal that allows transfers to start playing immediately. This Fellow closes with appreciation for the feedback in the room.

A Fellow offers three suggestions: 1) early enrollment for spirit groups, 2) involving the Cal Spirit groups in the Cameron Institute, and 3) getting staff who are familiar with the history of Cal involved in the planning for the upcoming Auburn game.

A Fellow remarks about SEC football culture and how we can engage the students with our teams that are doing well such as men's water polo. This Fellow brings up opportunities for Athletics to advertise outside of just the bus stops. They emphasize the importance of getting the word out for our games.

A Fellow mentions the Chancellor's emails and @UCBerkeleyOfficial Instagram have little mention of sports and that this lack of Athletic presence is apparent. They mention how at their online master's program at CU Boulder, the Chancellor is very into sports and even mentions sports news in their emails to students.

A Fellow begins by thanking the Athletics representatives present in the room. They point out there are professors who have been here for 20 or 30 years who refuse to engage with athletics as they feel that there is a funding disparity. Being familiar with Cal Band this Fellow explains how there was talk among Band members about how we got new video boards, but no new Band instruments. A Fellow explains that Cal Band alumni like Athletics staff but have an overall negative sentiment toward Athletics as an organization. They explain how Cal Band has voluntarily started going to more sports games like volleyball. They explain that Cal Band is an ally to Athletics, but rarely has Athletics reached out to Cal Band in an effort to improve things. "The Band is at a breaking point." They remark about the student to faculty ratio. This Fellow mentions UC Davis and Stanford and how those cultures "were put on autopilot," but then were brought back and now have two dedicated staff members paid by the University. This Fellow feels like Athletics department keeps putting Cal Band aside and always has some other project or something going on.

The Warden mentions that there are about 15 minutes left in the discussion.

A Fellow suggests that we hire student interns to do social media for Cal Athletics. This Fellow remarks about how Rally and Games Board meetings used to be. This Fellow explains that in these meetings, Cal Spirit used to be told what to do, and now they are just asked what to do. The Mic Men used to have 20-30 minutes to do cheers and go over things with the students. This student encourages funding the Rally Committee.

A Fellow builds on previous comments from earlier tonight. They agree that spirit events are a good way to get students involved, but also the use of student athletes is a fantastic way to engage students. When we think about a "golden age" of athletics, it is usually associated to an athlete, such as "Jason Kidd" or "Marshawn Lynch." This student thinks there is no harm in calling us "Cal Berkeley" if it helps people understand who we are.

A Fellow opens with a quip about the high price of water at football games. This Fellow suggests putting a bottle filler at the stadium and the positive effect this small change could bring. This Fellow suggests putting Cal Athletics' seven goals in the Daily Cal so students know about it and can keep Athletics accountable. They also suggest going to the freshman dorms to get students hooked. This Fellow suggests inviting entire dorms and welcoming them on the video boards. This Fellow suggests that we ask the students what they want to receive as swag. They mention that students in spirit groups

sometimes cannot get key card access to the facilities they need. They mention that the students who play Oski and the Stanford Tree get along, yet they aren't allowed to go near each other.

A Fellow agrees that eras are defined by student athletes. They mention that Matthew Bradley left for San Diego State and almost won a national championship, Jayda Curry just left for Louisville, etc. They ask: "What are we doing to give our athletes sponsorship opportunities," "What is the value proposition of Cal to our recruits," and "How do we keep these student athletes at Cal?"

The Warden closes with appreciation for the suggestions from the discussion tonight and expresses positivity and excitement for what is to come. They offer their personal thoughts about how to improve things. They suggest getting student athletes to meet and be friends with non-athletic students. This could be achieved by making student athletes room with non-athletic students. The next discussion topic is TBD.

Discussion adjourned at 7:30 PM.

The Meeting closed with song, and notes were compiled by the Acting Chronicler.