January 2012
Senate President’s Report

Athletics Update I: The use of Toradol

While President Barker’s NCAA working group wants to increase local decision making authority in college athletics, the ABC Nightline expose’ on the culture of Toradol use in college football might have faculty shaking their heads in disbelief.

Toradol is generally prescribed for <5 days use as a post-operative NSAID to relieve pain and reduce inflammation. But, it’s also used to enable college football athletes to play without/through/in spite of pain. I urge faculty to read the ABC Nightline piece: http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/risks-college-football-powerful-painkiller/story?id=18114915#.UOY4f7aNuT.

I salute the University for stepping up and being one of just a few to acknowledge the use of this drug in our football program. Unfortunately, the NCAA (unlike the NHL or NBA or NFL) does not track or regulate the use of Toradol by its members. I.e., the centralized regulation, reporting, and tracking associated with our student athletes’ Toradol use is less than that required in the thoroughbred horseracing enterprise. Why?

Part IX of our Faculty Manual notes that we teach “not only by formal instruction but also by example”. That’s a tremendously powerful admonition. I believe the spirit of that admonition should hold for the Administration, the BOT, athletics—in fact, for all Clemson personnel. Each of us should take personal responsibility to lead and

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2012 Class of ’39 Award for Excellence: Windsor Sherrill

Windsor Westbrook Sherrill, professor of public health sciences, was nominated and elected by her faculty peers as the 2012 Class of ’39 Award for Excellence recipient. Dr. Sherrill was recognized at the dinner honoring the Great Class of 1939 including it’s honorary members on January 7th followed by a January 8th ceremony at the 1939 Bell Tower in the Carillon Gardens where her name is inscribed. As a recipient of the award, Dr. Sherrill will be inducted as an honorary member of the Class of 1939.

The Class of ‘39 Award for Excellence is presented annually to one distinguished member of the faculty whose outstanding contributions for a five-year period have been judged by his or her peers to represent the highest achievement of service to the student body, university, and the larger community.

Dr. Sherrill joined the Clemson faculty in 1999, bringing a decade of experience in health care management and a passion for health services teaching and research. She earned her doctorate in health policy from Brandeis University. Her research areas include: medical and

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Windsor Sherrill
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health management education, health finance and policy, the evaluation of health services and health education programs for underserved groups and is recognized for her pedagogical innovations in health services. She has led or collaborated on research initiatives garnering more than $1.5 million in external funding and resulting in numerous refereed publications, book chapters, professional reports, and scholarly presentations.

Dr. Sherrill has demonstrated a dedication to teaching throughout her career at Clemson. She teaches graduate programs and was a Faculty Fellow for the Calhoun Honors College Dixon Fellowship Program for ten years. She has been a leader in the development of the Creative Inquiry Initiative, an undergraduate concentration in health care management, as well as Clemson’s joint MHA program with MUSC. For her service to students, Dr. Sherrill has received the College of HEHD Award for Excellence in Teaching as well as Clemson’s Burtner Award for Student Advising and National Scholars Program Award of Distinction. Other service includes her three-year appointment as Faculty Representative to Clemson’s Board of Trustees. Dr. Sherrill also serves as Clemson’s Director of the Institute for the Advancement of Healthcare and is a South Carolina Liberty Fellow.

Dr. Sherrill lives in Clemson with her husband Jerry and three sons, Jay, Rivers and Arthur.

In Memoriam:
Jim Sweeny
’39, HD ’10
with Ben Sill (Emeritus Alumni Professor of Civil Engineering & Engineering Mechanics)

Jim Sweeny, a graduate of “The Great Class of ’39” was a central figure in the ’39 projects on Clemson’s campus. Jim chaired the Class of ’39 Golden Anniversary Committee motivating his class members to support three class projects including the creation of unrestricted University-wide scholarships benefiting each college, the introduction of the Faculty Award for Excellence and an endowment for the Botanical Garden. As chairman of the Class of ’39 Heritage Gardens Committee, Jim guided the completion of the Class of ’39 Caboose Garden, the realization of the Golden Tiger-Cadet Life Garden and the construction of the J.B. Montgomery Amphitheater. Jim was named Volunteer of the Year by the Clemson Alumni Association in 1998 and in 2000, he received the Alumni Association’s highest honor: the Distinguished Service Award.

Jim Sweeny graduated with a B.S. degree in electrical engineering and was honored in 2010 with an honorary Doctorate of Humanities. While a student at Clemson, Jim was battalion executive; associate editor of TAPS; a member of Tiger Brotherhood, Blue Key and Sigma Epsilon; president of Tau Beta Pi, AIEE and the Senior Class; he also served as chairman of the Senior Council. Upon graduation, Jim began his 40-year career with General Electric but was called into active duty with the Army Signal Corps in 1941 and stationed in New Delhi, India. He was discharged from active duty as a major in 1945. In 1976, Jim retired as a strategic business planning manager but was retained as a consultant.

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Jim Sweeny  
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Ben Sill on Jim Sweeny:
I first met Jim at the Monday night reception in 2005 when receiving the great honor of the Class of 39 Faculty Award of Excellence. Although we talked for only a few minutes, it was obvious that this was a special person—smart, articulate, witty, a gentleman, and “sharp as a tack.” During this brief conversation, we discussed some of our interests and I learned that we both were coin collectors, or numismatists.

A couple of years after that first brief conversation, we had time for a longer chat during the summer Alumni Reunion meeting. Out of the blue, when we first sat down, Jim started with, “Are you still collecting coins?” It was a shock that he had stored our earlier conversation away and recalled it. This time we had a chance to spend more time and it was quickly evident that this humble man was a very serious numismatist, having published several detailed and extensive books related to coin collecting. One of these, written with Robert Turfboer was a two volume set titled Tempus in Nummis. It described in scholarly fashion the history and fundamentals of dating in numismatics. After reading these two volumes, it was evident that this work would have easily satisfied the requirements of a Ph.D. dissertation.

Jim also collaborated on the first translation of an early Dutch book on numismatics (300 pages), published in 1732 and titled: Contemporary Numismatics, being a Treatise about the Origin of Money, the development and distinguishing features of Commemorative Medals; The nature of and methods of reckoning with Jettons; How the ancients did their calculations; The origin of Numerals, Magic Coins and Emergency Money (by Mr. Gerard Van Loon)

Jim was in charge of reproducing and formatting all the coin illustrations and the text and received a big “thank you” from the translator. “As Mr. Sweeny and I became more familiar with Gerard Van Loon and his book, we agreed that it ought to be available to a wider circle of readers. The computer-assisted copying of all the illustrations, and the highly complex ultimate formatting of the text, have been done by Mr. Sweeny, a consummate numismatist, advisor and (to me) computer “magician.” It very existence became possible only because he was there then. To him goes a heartfelt: Thanks, Jim!”

It is easy to see that Clemson was “right on” when in 2010 they honored this “gentleman and scholar” with an honorary doctorate. His ability to relate to others and unite many for a common cause has been the hallmark of his lifetime of devoted service to Clemson University. Among the strongest, most loyal Clemson advocates, Jim always spoke with pride and great heartfelt conviction about his beloved alma mater and the traditions it represented. His legacy will forever hover over our beloved Clemson University.

Please Your Palate and Support the Student Organic Farm

Shares in the 2013 Clemson Student Organic Farm are now available. For curious but hesitant who might be interested in inexpensively and deliciously exploring the Farm share program, we recommend the $120 Fruit-only option, which provides (on a shared risk basis) around 6 pints of blue berries and blackberries and 30 lb of peaches, which the Senate President has formally declared “wicked good”. You can pay via check or credit card. It’s first come, first served, so act now to reserve your share. For more info, point your browser to: [http://www.clemson.edu/sustainableag/csaprogram.html](http://www.clemson.edu/sustainableag/csaprogram.html)
The Policy Committee

The Policy Committee is chaired by Bill Pennington, Professor of Chemistry. This Faculty Senate Committee is concerned with general university policies, particularly as they relate to the Faculty: academic freedom and responsibility; faculty professional ethics; the appointment, tenure, and promotion of faculty; and faculty participation in university governance. The policy committee effectively functions as the keeper of the Faculty Manual as they continually strive to improve it. In that regard, input is always welcome to identify problems with any university policy or with any aspect of the Faculty Manual (billp@clemson.edu).

Their long-standing goal is to “ensure that all faculty are treated with the respect and dignity, and that they are provided the resources and support they need to succeed for the benefit of Clemson’s students.”

Bill Pennington graduated with a B.A. in chemistry from Hendrix College and received his Ph.D from the University of Arkansas. He has been at Clemson for the past 26 years, and started as a lecturer. He is the Director of the Molecular Structure and the editor of the Journal of Chemical Crystallography. He received the Award of Excellence for teaching in the Sciences at Clemson University in 2000 and the 2002 Governor’s Award for Excellence in Science Awareness. Bill has fun working in the lab with bright and enthusiastic students. He also enjoys spending his free time paddling on the Chattooga with friends and reports: “I also collect bottle openers and pithy comebacks, but rarely use the former since I drink bear from cans and only use the latter in retrospect.”

Other members of the Policy Committee include: Rob Baldwin, Forestry and Natural Resources; Scott Dutkiewicz, University Libraries Cataloging; Mary Beth Kurz, Industrial Engineering; Peter Laurence, Architecture; John Meriwether, Physics and Astronomy; and Megan Che, Teacher Ed. Dr. Pennington wishes us to note they are an “outstanding group of people.”

The Welfare Committee

The Welfare Committee is chaired by Diane Perpich, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Women’s Studies Program. This Committee of the Faculty Senate makes recommendations about policies that relate to faculty workloads, salaries, leave and benefit policies and such other policies as affect faculty welfare and morale. They encourage faculty to contact any committee member with questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding current or future work of the Welfare Committee. They are happy to try and help with individual or systemic issues.

A future goal for the welfare committees includes developing more consistent leave policies for faculty, especially as concerns parental leave. In that regard, they would be interested in hearing from new parents about they’re parental or maternity leave experience, especially how they handled teaching and service assignments during their leave (dperpic@clemson.edu).

Diane Perpich received B.A in Philosophy from Bryn Mawr College her M.A. and PhD from the University of Chicago. She is the author of The Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas. She is the co-editor of the Journal of French Philosophy and co-editing and translating a collection of writing by the French social movement, Ni Putes, Ni Soumises. She teaches colleges on gender, sexuality, philosophy and technologies of the body, social and political thought and contemporary continental philosophy.

The Welfare Committee also includes Susanna Ashton, English; Dale Layfield, Biological Sciences; Jay Ochterbeck, Mechanical Engineering; Tina Robbins, Management; Narendra Vyawahare, Bioengineering; and Alan Winters, Accountancy and Finance.
teach by example where and when our particular station allows and permits. When we don’t do this, we fail to realize the fullness, complexity, and richness of our teaching mission. That’s something we can’t afford.

**Athletics Update II: Academic Eligibility v. Success**

On the heels of my November President’s Column came a Chronicle article by Arizona State U senior associate athletic director Jean Boyd acknowledging the dangers and costs of replacing a culture of true academic success with a culture of academic eligibility for student-athletes. While Mr. Boyd’s article eventually degenerates into incrementally-oriented handwringing, and his refreshing attitude hasn’t resulted in ASU federal graduation rates or NCAA graduation success rates worth writing home about, it is important to recognize those bold people in the athletics enterprise who understand and are willing to acknowledge that prevalent cultures centered on academic eligibility and Academic Progress Rates have divisive and cheapening influences on the academy, and that cultural change is essential.

The NCAA Rules Working Group chaired by President Barker has made the first of a number of recommendations that will be voted on by the Division I Board of Directors at the 19 January NCAA Convention. You can find a terse summary of these at:

http://chronicle.com/article/Athletes-Need-Education-for/136175/

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Apparently, given the urgency of sensible regulations to govern the provision of cream cheese and the use of Twitter in recruiting, the proposals won’t address the practice of oversigning. This is college athletics’ analog to an airline selling your seat not only to you, but to other people—and then if things don’t all somehow work out, dealing later with the consequences. This is ethical under the letter of NCAA rules, though morally squishy. So much so, that it’s given a sanitized innocuous name—grayshirting. You can read more about the grayshirting at:


**Meritocracy, Critical Thinking, IQ, and SAT scores**

I continue to be impressed by the highly visible leadership of Oklahoma State Provost Robert Sternberg in: (a) warning about the dangers of how detrimental variants of meritocracy are being driven via disproportionate reliance on test scores in the higher education enterprise (thanks, again, to those Georgetown publishing executives trying to sell electronic data and subscriptions); (b) advocating care and caution about critical thinking initiatives due to scores on some recognized critical thinking assessment tools being correlated with SAT scores and, thus, with IQ scores; and (c) urging measurement and consideration of other student skills such as grit, motivation, curiosity, emotional intelligence, etc. You can read a bit more at:


**Governance, SACS, and UVa**

The University of Virginia has been issued a warning—a notch below probation—by SACS due to governance concerns arising from last summer’s fracas about the removal of the institution’s president. This highlights the importance of a culture of transparent dealings and intellectual integrity, and faculty should be pleased that it is something that SACS recognizes.


Most faculty would neither be pleased nor surprised to learn that the American Council of Trustees and Alumni has declared as “ludicrous” the idea that the UVa Faculty Senate should have been aware of the Board’s decision to
terminate the President, and has formally requested U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to investigate SACs actions as an institutional intrusion. I will ask our Senate Executive/Advisory Committee to consider whether it would like to formally urge Secretary Duncan to do otherwise.

Part IX of our Faculty Manual notes that we teach “not only by formal instruction but also by example”. That’s a tremendously powerful admonition that faculty have neither utilized effectively nor demanded of the administration, athletics, the BOT, etc, but should in the future (see the President’s Column). Unfortunately, it’s an idea lost on ACTA, which somehow will seek to fulfill its mission of accountability, free exchange, and philosophical richness in college education without it. I bid them bonne chance.

Faculty and SACS

Initial feedback from SACS has been received by the University in response to the mountain of reaccreditation documentation we’ve submitted, and there are a few things in the purview of faculty to which we need to attend on a short timescale. I appreciate the efforts of faculty curriculum committee representatives and Department chairs in keeping you posted about these, and for rolling up their sleeves to deliberate, discuss, and work with the administration in the common interest of our students and the University over the past month.

Important Faculty Benefits Updates

HR Director of Customer Service John Mueller informs the Senate that planned increases in health insurance will not be deducted from January paychecks due to pending litigation in front of the South Carolina Supreme Court. Faculty and staff should be aware that that does not mean that planned increases in insurance premiums will not occur sometime later or that backdated increases will not be clawed back at a later time, and plan as best they can given this fog of uncertainty.

Faculty should also be aware that the University tentatively plans to make additional improvements and adjustments to the employee payment process in the coming months. The Faculty and Staff Senates have been apprised of these plans. Faculty should stay tuned for important communications from the University at the end of this month regarding payroll updates.

Senate President’s Column

Athletics and the Cultural Future of Higher Ed

Given the human costs of athletics previously noted in this publication, the marginal contributions of athletics to traditional academic metrics, and spending per athlete that is roughly 10 times academic spending per student in major college athletic conferences, faculty are often led to wonder about the value of the athletics enterprise. I suggest five features of athletics whose emulation in and transference to the academic enterprise might be of significant benefit to securing a bright cultural future for higher education and the constituent society we serve.

Given the comments in recent editions of this column and the President’s Report regarding human costs of athletics, and football in particular, it seems worthwhile to explore the other side of the cost-benefit equation. A June 2012 National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper by Michael Anderson examines the extent of some of the benefits. You can access this yourself at [http://www.nber.org/paper/w18196](http://www.nber.org/paper/w18196)

Anderson examines the relationship between college football success and a host of institutional characteristics such as acceptance rates, applications, USNWR academic reputation, SAT scores of incoming students, enrollment, and donations. (Geek-note: in order to establish forward causality rather than mere correlation, the work makes very clever use of sports book spreads that some of you might find fascinating). The empirical evidence revealed by this study should be of interest to many faculty.
The result is that causal relations are seen, but are only statistically meaningful for the FBS (essentially, major conference) institutions. For those, winning football games is seen to increase application numbers and average incoming SAT score and USNWR reputation score, and reduce acceptance rate. Winning football games is also seen to increase alumni athletic donations; there is no statistically significant causal signal associated with academic donations.

While statistically significant, the magnitude of the causal relations is modest at best. An extra win increases alumni athletic donations by $136,000. What is not well-understood, however, is what sort of investment is needed to boost won-loss records by an extra win. A 2009 study by Orszag & Israel suggests that it costs $1-1.5 million in additional investment to produce an extra win. That sounds like a losing business proposition, but such a conclusion is premature without knowledge of how the extra win affects non-alumni donation revenue (e.g., ticket sales, merchandising, media contracts, etc) and how persistent success effects alumni athletic donations over the long-term.

That extra win increases average SAT scores of incoming students by about 1.5 points (!) and annual applications by 108 (a 0.5% effect here at Clemson). Even unusual 5-win swings (which occur with 8% and 13% probability over 1 season and 2 season timescales, respectively) only affect application numbers by 677, in-state enrollments by 76 students, and SAT scores by 9 points.

Given the human costs I’ve discussed elsewhere and the marginal academic returns suggested by Anderson’s working paper, what might justify a faculty member’s interest in a thriving athletics enterprise? This is a timely question inasmuch as the Delta Cost Project has just released a new report indicating that the median annual athletic spending of institutions in the 6 major NCAA conferences (which include the ACC) is now $100,000 per student-athlete. This value is 6-12 times the academic spending per student at those institutions. (In the SEC, median spending per athlete is $164,000 per year).

I know that this dramatic disparity leads many faculty to wonder if Division I higher education institutions have lost their collective minds. I suggest that, perhaps quite by accident, this is not the case; rather, the athletics enterprise harbors features that are now near-vestigial in the University enterprise and society at large, but may be critically important to addressing many socio-economic challenges that also impact the future of higher education. Last year, many in the Senate expressed the view that we should learn from athletics—that we take demonstrable successes from the athletics enterprise and turn them towards achieving success on the academic side of the University. I believe that approach is wise, but may in fact be too narrow; those lessons and key features might be applicable to broader swaths of society.

Here’s my identification and best defense of some of those features that I believe are worth faculty’s consideration:

1. **Athletics can bring and bind together the broad University community**—students, faculty, Board members, alumni, staff, administrators. I know many of you discuss games, team performance, exciting wins, and heartbreaking losses during lunch or in pre- or post-committee meeting chatter. For those interested in athletics in general, the athletic enterprise provides a shared experience. That’s a welcome relief from the divisions surrounding e-portfolio, QEP, parking, Gen Ed, and a host of other issues.

2. **Athletics is a significant component of place-based education.** As such, faculty have a self-interest in its sustainability and health. I know many of you are discussing whether the mantra of a “flat” world made possible by cheap, efficient storage and transmission of data is true, and if this will make most faculty obsolete if the world decides to enroll in MOOCs and recognize each others’ on-line badges or course-completion certifications in lieu of accredited diplomas. Unless one believes that college athletics will and can be transformed
3. If you are worried about the socio-economic health of boys or young men, then athletics offers something positive. It’s sometimes difficult (just ask Larry Summers) to delve into such discussions concerning gender, but one might be justifiably concerned that while young women are achieving considerable academic success (their stunning conquest of pharmacy programs and Ph.D. veterinary programs is something I have yet to see explained, but may be relevant for increased representation in STEM majors), their male counterparts can more frequently be found on the couch playing that Xbox... or in prison... less engaged with society.

If such concerns are not unfounded, then the way forward depends upon the answer to one of those great questions: to what degree is “masculinity” nothing more than a construct of society. An intellectually robust and empirical answer to this question, which is often entangled in identity politics and ideology, is of interest far beyond an academic debate or a feature in the Senate newsletter: will we remain the worlds largest jailer and continue to destroy minority and lower class communities, families, economies, and societies in a continued prosecution of the war on drugs even as a robust drug culture flourishes (in terms of increasingly lower cost and enhanced availability and purity) without for the largely non-minority and upper class cognitive elite (and, it would seem, certain All American wide receivers) users attending universities like Clemson.

How do we reverse the fall in real net incomes and the increasing spread in income distribution? How do we combat moral hazard and reverse the use of the SSI program as a supplemental welfare or unemployment program at the cost of children’s K12 education, and strengthen it for those with disabilities.

Those that believe that such issues can’t be addressed without changing the role and fate of young men and boys in society would be well-served to listen to professionals and academics that are not engaged in reprogramming boys or blaming male culture or placing all of us on a Procrustean bed of ideology, but are instead involved in listening to what boys actually say. Such efforts reveal what boys themselves believe are important. Among them: the presence and influence of guiding men; the importance of traditions and rituals and symbolic trophies; the existence of perceived purpose and the opportunity to compete and be measured. These needs can be met by the athletic enterprise in great abundance for male athletes and spectators alike.

4. Athletics provide a vital counter-culture in academia that pushes back as a healthy check on elitism. Yes, I am saying that academics may be too full of themselves (as my wife sometimes reminds this author... sometimes about this author), and that might have long-term detrimental socio-economic consequences that have not been carefully examined. Nestled almost invisibly within these consequences is also the future of public support for public higher education.

The author Daniel Bell foresaw such consequences some 4 decades ago in The Coming of Post-Industrial Society. As our economy has transitioned from one based on material resources and manufacturing to one centered on information, the “establishment” and robber barons of old have been replaced by a new establishment: IT and social media companies, the news and entertainment media, arms of the federal government, and higher education. These enterprises—sometimes founded and nurtured and occupied by many who, curiously, at one time railed against the old establishment—have thrived even as real net incomes, income inequality, educational disparities, and poverty measures have gone south. This
new “priesthood”, as Bell referred to it, would obtain influence by controlling flows of information and federal funding, exerting regulation (more about that in a minute), and shaping public opinion.

It sounds a bit crazy. But, after my 17 mile drive from Anderson to campus, I can glide my Volvo into an awaiting LEV space. Meanwhile, a colleague, having travelled 4 miles to campus in a SUV after dropping off 4 children at school or daycare, searches for parking. However, my total carbon emissions are larger. My carbon footprint-per passenger is probably an order of magnitude larger. Yet, I receive privilege. Why? Because my vehicle resides on a federally produced and managed list of vehicles blessed by ideology and tokenism into policy that is not thoughtfully concerned with total or per capita carbon footprint, but with blessing vehicles. The most substantive argument I have heard thus far in response to such concerns is that perhaps those harboring them ought to leave the University. The real tragedy of that line of (lack of) thought is not so much its similarity to what one might hear on a 4th grade playground, but that it precisely confirms the anecdotal allegations of elitist disdain and anti-intellectualism that have led some (e.g., uber-geographer Joel Kotkin) to wonder if university faculty are the new Bolsheviks. That portrait, whether ultimately correct or not, may not sit well with the public paying our bills.

Bell’s prognostications are hauntingly mirrored in Charles Murray’s newest work Coming Apart: The State of White America 1960-2010. In focusing on white America, Murray seeks to avoid hackneyed inferences about important trends being driven by race. Murray’s central conclusion is that the rise of a cognitive elite (Bell’s priesthood in essence) has created in America a great and growing divergence, which has flourished in both boom and bust economies alike, that is not related to income equality, ethnicity, or race. This divergence is an issue of class, elitism, social disengagement, isolation, and blindness.

That divergence is manifest in regions like the I-95 corridor. That manifestation, without doubt, is a contributing cause to the state of our K12 outcomes. That state and those outcomes are, as most of you know, the driving force behind the radical reformation being demanded of our School of Education. Perhaps a reformation is needed, but one that only addresses proximate causes and does not get at the deep ultimate wellspring of problems that won’t, at the end of the day, be much of a reformation—it would, alas, be an avoidable misallocation of scarce resources.

A more tangible danger for faculty from the rise of this cognitive elite was foreshadowed a century ago by William Jennings Bryan, who noted that, in his many years of service as an international diplomat, he was only called an idiot once—by a domestic “evolutionist”. I fear that similar attitudes of disdain towards the public on a host of hotbutton issues (evolution, gun ownership, human-caused climate change, political ideology du jour, etc), are much more prevalent in the academy than one might like to acknowledge. Such attitudes, as distinct from substantive intellectual disagreements, have the ability to injure the credibility of the academic enterprise in the eyes of the public that pays the bills, and only exacerbate the class divide that may be gnawing away at us as a country and an institution.

The beauty of college athletics is that it provides a highly visible, positive and welcoming face—free of ideology and the crippling effects of identity politics—to many of those smoking, SUV-driving, gun owning, church going, tea-party-blog-reading members of the public that pay our salaries and whom we are also supposed to serve as the customers of the public goods we produce. Other facets of the higher education enterprise with this ability are in short supply. That’s a risk as we move forward in an era of lingering financial uncertainty.

5. Athletics provides a model culture of risk and exploration even as the vast majority of our institutions whither within a culture of regulation and safety. Of course, the future has always been uncertain. Despite that
circumstance, the explosion in Western per capita GDP over the past 5 centuries provides a phenomenal testament to innovation and risk-taking—not just in the ordinary modern entrepreneurial and technological sense, but in the development of and faith in features (comparative advantage-based trade, social and political institutions, financial instruments, enforcement of contracts, recognition of property rights, etc) that Adam Smith would recognize.

Indeed, uncertainty can be used to great economic advantage; the ability to purchase valuable assets at depressed prices is one example. What seems to be lacking right now is innovation. The Global Innovation 1000 report [http://www.booz.com/global/home/what_we_think/global-innovation-1000] indicates that U.S. firms lag behind foreign firms in R&D spending. While people believe that Apple, Google, Microsoft, and 3M are world-class innovators, the data suggest otherwise. Indeed, the “cash”-rich balance sheets of the first three companies would suggest that these entities exist and function more like hedge funds than like innovative technology companies. If the spirit of innovation were alive and robust, such a company would not have tens of billions of dollars of “cash” on its balance sheet. It would be using these funds for R&D expenses, capital acquisitions, and expanded labor forces to invest hand-over-fist in innovation and resulting production. Instead, we find such funds are used to protect copyrights on curved surfaces of cell phones and to market the release of a 5th generation phone that is only incrementally different than your 4th generation phone. This circumstance reflects one of the most striking, but underreported, features of recent economic history: the huge disparity in corporate and consumer sentiment/confidence.

What passes for innovation today seems not much different than incremental derivatives of design. Peter Thiel recently lamented that we were promised flying cars but got 140 character tweets instead. Indeed, the NSF provides estimates of total national R&D spending (from the public and private sectors) going back 6 decades. Real R&D spending relative to GDP has been flat since the early 1960’s.

It shows. The past few decades have seen major pharmaceutical companies’ “blockbusters” limited to endless incremental variants of proton pump inhibitors, vasodilators, Cox inhibitors, statin blockers, and psychotropic offerings to handle our heartburn, erectile dysfunction, arthritic flareups, high cholesterol, and attention deficits (or as learning enhancers or, perhaps, to transform troubled young men into school/mall/theater shooters). Recessing rapidly in the rearview mirror are the incredible gains in life expectancy and quality of life from immunizations, eradication of polio and smallpox, the taming of tuberculosis (which left my mother without parents in the 1930’s), and improved sanitation. Distant, but all too quickly approaching, in the windshield are antibiotic resistance, the return of the absolute horrors of Dengue fever to the southern U.S., and the crushing societal challenges of Alzheimer’s and “adult” (now often adolescent) -onset diabetes.

The “technology revolution” seems to me to be more about design. We communicate via slick personal radios. We’re all Marconi now. That was a big deal in the Andy Griffith show episode where the big city businessman comes to town with a car having a phone in it. Goober was in awe! But, let’s be honest; that was 50 years ago. We can all now curl up in a house still heated via fossil fuel and watch a video of someone’s funny-looking cat in Bhutan. Now, courtesy of Hulu, every night is British comedy night for me...even if I’m riding on a 60 year old interstate highway. There’s no doubt that features of modern design speak to and captivate us. My 6th grader asked me if she could keep the small cardboard box in which the instructions and warranty to my new iMac came—I gotta admit, it was a box with incredible aesthetics. And aesthetics are important to the human experience.

But it’s also important to see how the smoke (and bells and whistles) of that “technology revolution” has obscured a culture of efficiency and the effects of globalization that
have juiced corporate earnings, but not increased real net income (and thus, perhaps, the creation of real wealth). We exist in a world shaped by true innovation decades ago: the electricity we consume from a nuclear power plant, the economic and informatic reformation made possible by the integrated circuit, etc. Indeed, Ben Jones of Northwestern and Pierre Azoulay of MIT have found that an R&D worker in 1950 created productivity gains seven times as large as an R&D worker in 2000.

As noted in this column before, I believe we often confuse prestige and quality. This has real consequences including a tendency to be risk averse and attack problems only incrementally and peripherally (http://chronicle.com/blogs/next/2012/12/19/the-education-revolution-opens-up-the-path-less-taken/?cid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en). That culture of risk averseness and safety often does not serve us, as a nation or as members of a university community, well. When the Senate receives the student life alcohol survey results each year, the data suggest little progress, a lot of stasis, and some alarming regress (especially concerning binge drinking by females). Yet, we move from one 5-year alcohol plan to the next. The incremental changes to the brochures, workshops, and alcohol-free tailgating events seem to make little difference. Regulate, enforce, continue to expend funds on marketing, but don’t think outside the box like the university presidents who have signed on to the Amethyst Initiative (http://theamethystinitiative.org).

The athletics enterprise, though, is quite different. There’s not much prestige to be had without quality in that business. Innovation and risk abound. As the passing decades slip by, they take with them qualities and features often not recorded in history texts: e.g., the all-hands-on-deck, can-do-even-if-we-don’t-know-how, risk-accepting attitudes that overcame polio, drove the defeat of Nazism, and put many men on the Moon. That attitude is captured in not insignificant measure by “All in” and “Solid Orange” in the athletics enterprise. We could use a slice of that attitude and culture in the academic and administrative arms of the university.

Whether their benefits outweigh the human costs of the athletics enterprise in its current form is not clear, and is a question left to the reader; however, I believe those costs could be mitigated to a level such that the cost-benefit balance makes sense to faculty, who have an important responsibility in creating such an outcome as part of creating the future.

Jeremy King is solely responsible for the views expressed in The Senate President’s Column. They neither reflect the views of nor are endorsed by the Faculty Senate or Clemson University.