




MEMORANDUM

To: USC Academic Deans, Faculty, and Staff

From: C. L. Max Nikias 

Date: April 21, 2017

Subject: Athletic Compliance and our Shared Responsibility

USC's unsurpassed athletic tradition is the glue that binds our Trojan Family, and this year our student-athletes have made us particularly proud. As a community, we celebrated our first Rose Bowl victory in eight years, while our men's basketball team made its second straight appearance in the NCAA tournament, energizing large crowds at the Galen Center. USC also earned the Women's Capital One Cup, which recognizes the finest women's athletics program in the country. This honor was backed up by a string of national titles among our women's teams in beach volleyball, water polo, and soccer. Indeed, *all* USC's Division I programs are championship caliber, and compete at the very highest level, with a range of titles and accolades coming their way.

We've achieved these successes while also building the finest athletic compliance program in the United States. I am proud that in the past seven years, we have not experienced a single major violation; however, our success will only increase scrutiny on our athletic programs. As the current academic year draws to a close, and as we mark seven years since the NCAA's disciplinary actions, I would like to remind each of you of our shared responsibility to a culture of compliance.

It is imperative that we remain vigilant, and I wish to emphasize the following points regarding NCAA, Pac-12, and university rules and regulations:

- **Rules Education** — Each office, department, or program at USC that interacts with student-athletes, including but not limited to admissions, the registrar, financial aid, student affairs, the Department of Public Safety, housing, and transportation, must be educated about the rules and limitations pertaining to our student-athletes through the Office of Athletic Compliance (OAC).

- **Athletic Compliance Outreach** — Our OAC strives to ensure all constituents at the university are educated on issues such as impermissible extra benefits, recruiting limitations, and academic integrity. However, each unit that has any interaction with our student-athletes must take reasonable steps to ensure that it is educated. The OAC will be contacting offices, departments, and programs that regularly engage with our student-athletes to review their educational needs. In addition, new hires, employee transfers, and other operational issues require that each office, department, or program reach out to the OAC to ensure that appropriate personnel are educated.
- **Shared Responsibility** — It is extremely difficult for the OAC to reach and educate every USC employee. As such, we all have a shared responsibility to make sure USC is compliant with NCAA, Pac-12, and university rules pertaining to our student-athletes. All faculty and staff—including new employees—must visit the [USC Athletic Compliance Website](#) for basic rules education. If you are the head of a department or office that interacts directly with student-athletes, the OAC will work with you to reinforce these efforts. Along with this responsibility comes the absolute duty to report any potential or actual violation of those rules to the OAC. Therefore, if you see or hear something amiss, even if you are unsure, you must report it, or ask the OAC for guidance.
- **Office, Department, and Program Policies** — Each office, department, or program engages our student-athletes in different ways. The OAC will work with you to develop, where necessary, policies, procedures, and protocols to ensure we are compliant with, and able to monitor compliance with, NCAA, Pac-12, and university rules.
- **Zero Tolerance Policy** — There is, and will continue to be, a strict policy regarding any willful or knowing failure to follow and adhere to NCAA, Pac-12, or university rules regarding our student-athletes. Any such failure may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

In closing, I want to express my appreciation for your continued commitment to our shared responsibility, and your efforts to become informed on NCAA, Pac-12, and university rules pertaining to our athletic programs. We all look forward to the continued success of our student-athletes in the classroom and on the playing field.

Thank you, and Fight On!

cc: Michael Quick
Carol Mauch Amir
Al Checcio
Todd R. Dickey
Thomas E. Jackiewicz
Thomas S. Sayles
James M. Staten
Lynn Swann