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PIONEERS

DENVER DENSOFTBALL

February 20, 2003

Mr. Michael Burke, President
North Idaho College
1000 W. Garden Avenue
Coeur D'Alene, Idaho 83814

RE: Proposed Athletic Conference Affiliation Change

Dear Mr. Burke:

It was a pleasure meeting you this past weekend and I really enjoyed the spirited play of the North Idaho College teams as they both battled Salt Lake Community College down to the wire. As an alumnus and former athlete of North Idaho College it was equally impressive to see the strong support of the community represented in the game attendance for a Scenic West Athletic Conference (SWAC) contest. For this reason, it was discouraging to hear that the college is considering a change in basketball conference allegiance from the SWAC to the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges (NWAACC). It is my understanding that with this change, the recruiting emphasis and scheduled opponents will consist primarily of northwestern states. From a financial perspective I can understand your reasoning for considering this change, however, as an alum, NCAA Division I basketball coach, and a minority I would like to provide an alternative perspective.

I was recruited to play at North Idaho College from Chicago, Illinois, and not being from this region I was apprehensive about attending a college with minimal diversity as an African-American male. Upon accepting a scholarship to NIC, I was equally surprised that my classmates had similar curiosity about a student from a different region, with cultural and economic background differences. This diverse "educational" process positively enhanced my experience at NIC and influenced my decision to attend the University of Idaho upon graduation. In my college career I was often asked why I decided to attend the University of Idaho, despite having offers from Midwestern schools, and I always reflected upon the positive experience that I had at NIC. Additionally, I was frequently questioned about the culture of Idaho and the safety and comfort of minority students. Again I was able to dispel the rumors of the negative publicity generated by minute racist groups, and their minimal impact on the community.

Second, as a basketball coach at the University of Denver, we consider the Scenic West Athletic Conference to be one of the most competitive community college conferences in the nation, and this opinion is shared by most NCAA Division I basketball programs.

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Accordingly, we recruit and visit all schools in the conference on a frequent basis. With all due respect to the NWAACC, because their athletes are usually not on full scholarship, the level of play is not as high to warrant national attention for recruiting. Therefore, there is less exposure for athletes in the program, and for the respective schools.

Finally, as a member of the University of Idaho's Business Advisory Board, one of the primary goals of the board is increasing diversity at the university. We attempt to attract a diverse population by meeting with alumni groups from different regions and educating out-of-state high school counselors about the benefits of the University of Idaho. As you are aware, your athletic programs attract students from all regions of the country, and occasionally international students. By reducing scholarships and limiting your recruiting area to neighboring states, you may be adversely affecting a primary source of diversity at the college, which would benefit all students and professors. My relationships with professors at the University of Idaho were meaningful and long lasting because we shared experiences from diverse backgrounds. As I attained my Masters of Business Administration I often referred to experiences at NIC and the University of Idaho and commended both for preparing me in corporate world to deal with people with different backgrounds. I sincerely believe that I would not have had the same perspective on life and the nuances of the business world if not for my higher education in the state of Idaho.

In summary, I am sure that you have sound financial reasons for debating a change in conference affiliation. My reason for writing this letter is simply to state that all decisions should not always be purely financial. As a former financial officer in corporate America, I have learned that not all decisions are determined by the bottom line, although I am not downplaying its importance. I do however believe that my positive experience as a college student in Idaho transformed me into a spokesman for the state in my travel nationally. I also believe that without being a childhood product of the region, my perspective was unbiased and carried more credibility. As you make your final recommendations for this important decision please consider the lives and the educational aspect of the college that you will be affecting, which goes much further than wins and losses and dollar signs.

Good luck in your tenure at NIC. If I can ever be of assistance please do not hesitate to give me a call, (303) 871-3293. I would be honored to provide assistance to a school that has given me so much.

Respectfully,



Alvin A. Williams
North Idaho College- Class of 1978

cc: Hugh Watson, Head Men's Basketball Coach
Greg Crump, Head Women's Basketball Coach