

“ABOUT OUR MASCOT”

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Who initiated the “Native American” mascot concern?

The NCAA Executive Committee requested that the NCAA staff seek additional information, including the institution’s current position regarding American Indian mascots, nicknames and logos. “It is vitally important that we (NCAA) maintain a balance between the interests of a particular Native American tribe and the NCAA’s responsibility to ensure an atmosphere of respect and sensitivity for all who attend and participate” in athletic events occurring on those campuses. To that end, the NCAA requested that each of the institutions who were using an American Indian mascot, nickname or logo participate in an institutional self study of those uses with description, analysis and justification of those practices.

There were 32 universities who were asked to participate in the survey, as their mascots were Native American.

What was the response of the University of Louisiana at Monroe?

Given the request by the NCAA, President Cofer responded:

“In accordance with the request by the NCAA, I have established a task force of faculty members and institutional constituents who are vitally interested in the well being of the University of Louisiana at Monroe for the purpose of responding to the Institutional Self Study. We welcome the opportunity to address the questions posed in this survey...”.

The president then established the committee consisting of members of the faculty, student body and constituents from the community who were charged with the research, evaluation and generation of the Institutional Self Evaluation document.

What were the results of the Institutional Self Evaluation?

The NCAA Institutional Self Evaluation Examining the Use of American Indian Mascots, Nicknames and Logos, concluded with the following:

The institution’s motivation and intention in the initial selection and continuing use of the American Indian mascot has always been to use these mascots, nickname and logos to serve as a respectful promotion of tradition, school spirit, enthusiasm, community, and pride. Our experience is that it has accomplished those goals. The characteristics of longevity, passion, honor, respect for the earth and others, intellect and wisdom, fortitude and pursuit of those qualities and possessions that make for a better community are most definitely found in the American Indian culture. Those qualities are absolutely sought in all decisions made by our university to enhance the wellbeing of the academy, the community and the competitive venues of fields, diamonds, links and courts of athletics.

In light of these statements, and based on support given by students, student-athletes, academic and athletic support groups and the community for the now 75 years through which the university has embraced the Indian as its mascot, it is the intention to continue use of the mascot, nickname and logos. The Institutional Self Evaluation identified areas, however, that could not be supported for continued use; specifically Chief Brave Spirit, the Indian caricature, and the word Reservation, that is a form of concentration camp in the case of many American Indians. Therefore, the use of these two artifacts of ULM were immediately discontinued (pg. 17 of the Institutional Self Evaluation.)

The Institutional Self Evaluation was submitted to the NCAA on May 2, 2005.

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What was the NCAA’s response to ULM's Institutional Self Evaluation?

The NCAA ruled that, of the initial 32 universities, some of which had previously changed the name of their mascot, 18 were determined to be Hostile and Abusive in the use of the mascot. ULM was one of those 18 universities. A definition of the two descriptors was never provided to any of the universities found guilty of disrespect to the Native American culture.

What does the ruling by the NCAA mean?

The NCAA informed the affected universities of their option to either accept the ruling or to appeal the ruling to the committee. The appeal would include additional or rearticulated information concerning the use of the mascot, justification for its continued use and request that the appeal be approved. The NCAA stated:

It is vitally important that we maintain a balance between the interests of a particular Native American tribe and the NCAA's responsibility to ensure an atmosphere of respect and sensitivity for all who attend and participate... .

We recognize that there are many points of view associated with this issue and we also know that some Native American groups support the use of mascots and imagery and some do not; that is why we will pay particular attention to special circumstances associated with each institution. – Miles Brand, President of the NCAA

The acceptance of the ruling would require the mascot, nickname or logo to be discontinued when the university is involved in post-season play such as tournaments or bowl games. In the event that the university chooses to appeal the ruling, an appeal document would be submitted to the NCAA for further review and evaluation with a ruling forthcoming.

Some universities have been granted approval if they have a pre-existing relationship with the Native American tribe represented by the universities’ mascot and an official endorsement by the tribe.

Other interesting points associated with the ruling by the NCAA concerning the continued use of the university mascot, nickname and logo are as follows:

- The NCAA has said that it does not have the authority to demand that a university change its mascot, nickname or logo and that each school must make its own decision relative to that issue
- The NCAA will not allow the use of the hostile and abusive mascot, nickname or logo to be displayed on any athletic gear or uniforms worn by players, coaches, cheerleaders, bands, etc. who are involved in post season competition. Additionally, all offending material displayed on campus must be covered or concealed during these events.
- The NCAA will discourage universities with membership in the NCAA that are not involved in the mascot issue from playing universities that chose to keep their Native American mascot, nickname or logo.

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What is the process to make the mascot decision?

President Cofer has appointed a Mascot Committee, chaired by Mr. George Luffey that is charged with the responsibility of constructing and presenting to the president, a recommendation relative to the Mascot issue. The committee will:

- Contact its constituency, providing the information about the options that are available.
- Solicit and encourage input from these faculty, student, staff, administrative, booster club, alumni, fan, and community (national, regional, state and community) relative to the initial question of keeping the mascot or selecting a new one.
- After considering all the information, the committee will make a recommendation to the president to either appeal, ignore, or change the mascot, nickname and logo. The committee will consider further action as necessary.

Can the NCAA make ULM do this?

No. As has been stated by the NCAA, they do not have the authority to force a university to modify its mascot, nickname or logo in any manner. However, please understand that the NCAA is a voluntary membership organization and, as such, can enforce the rules, guidelines and regulations of the organization. The NCAA has chosen to disallow the use of American Indian mascots, nicknames or logo's in any post season championship venues. The rules of the NCAA must be adhered to if an individual university chooses to participate in those events.

Why doesn't ULM sue the NCAA?

The NCAA is a voluntary membership organization. The expectation of membership is compliance with the rules, regulations and standards of the organization. Since membership is voluntary and mascot changes are the decision of the individual universities, all decisions made by the individual members are of their own choosing and were not forced.

What are the other 17 universities doing?

Some of the universities who were placed in the non-approval category have changed the name of their mascots; some have appealed and been denied, and some have not yet made a decision. Specific to our situation at ULM none of the universities who have appealed and have generic mascots such as Braves or Indians have been approved. The NCAA has indicated that there will be none approved as the generic nature of the mascot has the potential to offend all Native American tribes and there is no specific tribe that can endorse the use of the mascot, nickname or logo.

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How can individuals share their opinions/recommendations with the Mascot Committee?

An informational website, “About Our Mascot” is located at ulm.edu/mascot. Throughout the Mascot Committee’s process, information will be added to the web site.

The mascot web site can also be accessed by clicking on the "About Our Mascot" picture at the lower left of ULM's home page. You can e-mail any questions or comments to Mr. George Luffey, Chair – Mascot Committee at mascot@ulm.edu or via mail to:

Mr. George Luffey
Mascot Committee Chair
The University of Louisiana at Monroe
700 University Avenue
Monroe, LA 71209-3000

When is the mascot decision expected to be made?

Depending on the upcoming initial decision, the entire process could take as much as six months.

What will happen to the Indian mascot if there is a change?

In the event that a change is made, the mascot, nickname and logo will be retired with respect and honor at an event to be identified to all.