

THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT MONROE
MASCOT COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 4, 2006

The University of Louisiana at Monroe (ULM) Mascot Committee held its initial meeting at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, January 4, 2006 at the Sixth Floor Conference Room of the ULM Library. Members attending were Chairman George Luffey, Keith Brown, Skeet Creekmore, Joe Farr, Kyle Gallman, Richard Hood, Stuart Keyes, John Knesel, Staci Lamb, J. D. Malone, Scott McDonald, Sara Palazzo, Don Skelton, Bobby Staub, Elee Trichel, Amy Weems, and Don Weems. Also attending by invitation were Mazie Williams and Paul Letlow. Committee members not in attendance were John Rettenmayer, Joey Trappey, Amanda Wing and Dorothy Schween.

After calling the meeting to order, Chairman Luffey informed the membership that the mission of the committee is to address the University of Louisiana at Monroe's mascot issue with consideration being focused upon what is in the best long-term and broad-view interest of the University.

President James E. Cofer was recognized to address the committee. He charged the members to ultimately make a recommendation on how the University of Louisiana at Monroe responds to the NCAA's policies dealing with Native American mascots. President Cofer outlined three issues for the committee to consider:

1. Make a recommendation to formally appeal the NCAA's decision.
2. Make a recommendation to keep the "Indians" as the mascot and face all implications of this decision.
3. Make a recommendation to not appeal the NCAA's decision and enter a process to change the University's mascot.

Dr. Cofer emphasized that if a mascot change is recommended, the committee is asked to continue as a group throughout the entire process.

A packet of information was distributed to each committee member that includes:

1. President Cofer's letter to alumni and friends
2. President Cofer's letter to Dr. Bernard W. Franklin, Senior Vice President for Governance and Membership of the National Collegiate Athletic Association
3. Dr. Bernard Franklin's letter of response to President Cofer's letter
4. Mascot Project Notes by Dr. "Skeet" Creekmore

A brief history of how the Indian mascot was originally selected was presented to the committee. A student assembly decided it was time for the University to have a mascot. The student assembly narrowed the choice of the mascot down to two choices: the "Blue Devils" (school colors were blue and white at that time) or the "Indians". By a vote, the "Indians" became the official mascot in 1931.

Since 1931, the use of the Native American Indians as a mascot at this University has always been very generic in its form. In November, 2004, the NCAA asked ULM to submit a self-study explaining why the use of Native American imagery was not considered to be hostile and abusive. At the direction of Dr. Cofer, the University complied with this request. In August, 2005, a new policy was adopted prohibiting NCAA institutions from using hostile or abusive racial/ethnic/national origin mascots, imagery, or nicknames at any of NCAA's national or regional championships. ULM was among the eighteen (18) institutions mentioned in this policy, which meant the NCAA rejected ULM's self-study.

It was noted that the NCAA's policy states that a university may adopt any mascot they wish. However, institutions using hostile or abusive racial/ethnic/national origin mascots, imagery, or nicknames cannot be visible at any of NCAA championships. The NCAA policy, to take effect February 1, 2006, also states that:

1. Institutions with student-athletes wearing uniforms or having paraphernalia with Indian imagery cannot play at NCAA championship competitions.
2. Such institutions will not be permitted to host any NCAA championship tournaments.
3. The NCAA recommends and encourages universities not to schedule athletic competitions with schools that use Native American nicknames, imagery, or mascots. (It is noted that this could ultimately filter down to the conference level.)

The NCAA did state that institutions could appeal this decision if they had a prior endorsement of an Indian tribe to use their tribal name. Even though The University of Louisiana at Monroe did not have a prior association with any Native American tribe, the leadership of three local tribes, the Tunica-Biloxi, the Chitimacha, and the Coushatta, were contacted to solicit an endorsement of support. Two of the tribes did not wish to address the issue, while the Coushatta Tribe responded with an endorsement stating that "they have no problem with the University continuing to use the "Indian" as the school's mascot so long as its usage is not done in a negative manner." In response, the NCAA stated that the support of the Coushatta Tribe would be sufficient to use their tribal name (Coushatta), but it could not endorse the use of the generic term "Indian."

The committee then engaged in discussion of the various options presented. Following this discussion and at President Cofer's request, the members agreed to schedule forums with their respective groups and/or constituents to discuss, educate, inform, involve, and seek input from students, faculty, staff, alumni, friends of the University, and the community in the decision-making process.

Committee members were encouraged to contact Dr. Don Skelton when group meetings are scheduled so that this information can be placed on the ULM website. Dr. Cofer announced that members of the ULM Administration would be available to attend these meetings upon request.

Chairman Luffey announced that the next Mascot Committee meeting will be held on the afternoon of January 25, 26, or 27 and they would be alerted as to the meeting date and time via e-mail. He charged committee members to bring feedback from their constituents to the next meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.