

Resolution 2013-8. On Weekday Football Games

The General Faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill resolves:

As a first step towards addressing the proper role of athletics in the university, the chancellor and director of athletics should commit to never scheduling a regular-season football game (home or away) on a day when regular instruction is scheduled.

COMMENT: To date this has not been a major issue at UNC. And indeed, in 1999 the UNC Faculty Council adopted a resolution against scheduling weekday or weeknight home games (Resolution 1999-1 On Football Scheduling on Weekdays). But at other universities aspiring to raise the profile of their football programs and to win television contracts, it has had a profound influence. One major program (soon to join the ACC) during the period between 2002 and 2006 scheduled 9 Thursday night games, 1 Tuesday, 2 Wednesdays, 5 Fridays, and 3 Sundays. We ask that UNC commit NOW, preemptively, to avoid that kind of scheduling.

Although many sports have weeknight games, such scheduling has been traditional to those sports for many years. The tradition in football has been Saturday games—an opportunity for large numbers of the community to come together and enjoy the weekend event. Weeknight (and Sunday night) football games are a recent innovation designed solely for television revenue. As a first step in a quest to balance the athletic/academic relationship, we need to admit that scheduling weeknight football games is done solely for profit and without regard for the academic mission of the university or the education of its athletes, and indeed is actively detrimental to those athletes' academic success.

Although seemingly a small reform, we must begin to acknowledge the warping influence of profit-oriented athletics on the academic mission of the university. While it is true that the complex series of scandals and NCAA violations uncovered in recent years reflects a variety of causes and individual choices, it is also true that the wellspring of those causes and choices was and is the warping effect of the tight relationship between college athletics and the profit-driven entertainment and sports industries. The vast revenue that finds its source in the efforts of students playing for the university, especially the men's football and basketball teams, builds constant pressure to sacrifice education in favor of building profitable sports programs.