

**Testimony of**

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**Before the**

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Education and the Workforce Committee**

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Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Miller, and Members of the Committee, I am pleased to be here today to provide some comments about the experiences of our student-athletes at Stanford University.

While I am confident there are other institutions around the country that share many of the values we promote at Stanford, my comments are specific to Stanford. The case involving scholarship football players and collective bargaining rights at Northwestern University raises broad implications for student athletics and the college experience. That case is currently before the National Labor Relations Board, and I will refrain from addressing the intricacies of that case. In my testimony, I hope to illuminate some of the larger issues by discussing how we approach student athletics and academics at Stanford.

Many of you are familiar with Stanford, but by way of brief overview, the University has 7,000 undergraduate students and nearly 9,000 graduate students. Our faculty are internationally recognized as leaders in their fields and include 22 Nobel Laureates. Those faculty members pursue an extraordinarily ambitious research portfolio, with more than 5,000 sponsored research projects underway, and they work to link that research with the undergraduate teaching they perform. Stanford offers a 5-to-1 student-faculty ratio for undergraduates, with rich opportunities for students to both engage in the creation of knowledge and put it to use in the world, particularly through the interdisciplinary approach to problem solving for which Stanford is widely recognized.

I serve as the Director of Athletics and have served in that capacity since 2012. Before coming to Stanford, I served as athletic director at the University of Delaware and at Georgetown University, and as deputy director of athletics at the University of Notre Dame. I was a student-athlete myself, playing on the basketball team as an undergraduate at Brown University. I am blessed to have the opportunity to serve the student-athletes at Stanford, where we offer 36 varsity sports – 20 for women and 16 for men. About 900 students participate in intercollegiate sports at Stanford – 53 percent of them men, 47 percent of them women – numbers that are consistent with the demographics of our overall undergraduate population. We offer about 300 athletic scholarships annually.

Stanford has won the Directors' Cup, which honors the most successful program in NCAA Division I sports, for the last 19 years. Our student-athletes have won a total of 104 team NCAA championships and 448 individual NCAA titles.

We are very proud of those results. But what I want to emphasize in my testimony today is that notwithstanding the tremendous athletic success of our student-athletes, we never lose sight of the university's larger mission. *Stanford is a university first and foremost, and its academic mission comes first.* We firmly believe that the most important thing our student-athletes walk out the door with when they leave Stanford is not a varsity letter or a national championship ring – it is a Stanford degree. Fully 97 percent of our student-athletes achieve this goal. Over many years, with the leadership of many dedicated people, we have built a successful athletic program at Stanford, with a relentless focus on the fact that our primary responsibility is to provide the best possible educational experience for all of our students. The athletic experience is NOT something pursued at the expense of the academic experience, or separate and apart from it. Each enhances the other.

Many of our student-athletes talk about this themselves. Chase Beeler, a football student-athlete who graduated from Stanford in 2011, has written in a blog post about his concerns early in college about having to choose between being a great athlete and a great student. Through his Stanford experience, he writes,

"I have not only reconciled the athletic and intellectual components of my identity, but I have also learned that, far from being incompatible, the two are actually different sides of the same coin. In spite of popular cultural stereotypes that tell us scholarship and athletics are not intended to mix, as if there is some sort of Manichean divide separating the two worlds and that never the twain shall meet, my experiences at Stanford have prompted me to realize that there are in fact far more similarities between the two than differences, and that if properly managed, the relationship between the two is actually mutually beneficial and reinforcing. The same values and mindset that foster success in the classroom can be applied on the field of competition as well (or in any phase of life for that matter)."

Allow me to describe the academic experience of student-athletes at Stanford just a bit further. As I mentioned, we have about 900 student-athletes, in an undergraduate student body of about 7,000. That means that one out of every eight members of the undergraduate student body is a student-athlete. This is not a separate group of people off on its own, having a separate experience from the rest of the student body. They are in the very same classes, they are in the very same laboratories, they are in the very same libraries, they are in the very same undergraduate housing with other students from every conceivable background and walk of life. They have the same exam schedules – even if it means taking a proctored examination on the road at the site of a competition – and the same degree-completion requirements as other students. They also select challenging majors in subjects including human biology; science, technology and society; engineering; management science and engineering; and political science. They have access to a range of academic support services as other students do, including an academic adviser, a major adviser, and skill-building programs in various areas of interest to them. This is a robust educational experience, in close touch with world-class faculty and elbow-to-elbow with other immensely talented students from across the nation and around the world.

Kelsey Gerhart, a Stanford student-athlete who played softball and graduated last year, once discussed what it was like to be part of such a community. "This is a community," she said, "where ties and connections made with students, faculty, and alumni last a lifetime; where we enter college as a teen, and leave as well-educated young adults prepared to maintain a stable life and make a difference in the world; where we are molded through successes and failures in the classroom, through the social aspects of college, and through interacting with the diverse population that makes up Stanford's campus." That is the kind of rich, integrated student-athlete experience we seek to provide.

The rigor of the academic enterprise at Stanford begins with the admission process itself. Simply put, Stanford does not admit anyone it is not confident can succeed academically at the University. Stanford reviews each applicant for undergraduate admission holistically, looking at the academic excellence, intellectual vitality and personal context each brings to

the table. But at the end of the day, the admissions office is charged with upholding the academic integrity of Stanford by ensuring that every admitted student has the ability to succeed academically there. This is a process that occurs independently of the Athletic Department, and the admissions office does not make exceptions to its standards.

Our student-athletes demonstrate how importantly they view a Stanford education by taking all the steps they need to complete it. As referenced earlier, 97 percent of our student-athletes earn degrees. For the football team, the rate is 93 percent. One need look only as far as quarterback Andrew Luck of the Indianapolis Colts and pitcher Mark Appel of the Houston Astros organization – both recent Stanford graduates – to recognize that even those who *do* go on to professional sports careers see the value of completing their Stanford degree. Both Andrew and Mark bypassed the opportunity to leave Stanford with a year of eligibility left to enter professional sports, remaining instead at Stanford to complete their degrees.

We also have a number of student-athletes each year – there will be 30 this year – who complete a master's degree at Stanford at the same time as their bachelor's degree. Coby Fleener, a Stanford football student-athlete also currently with the Indianapolis Colts, is one of these who graduated from Stanford with two degrees. He has written about his original decision to attend Stanford, emphasizing the importance to him of a strong academic grounding given the uncertainties and injury possibilities in the NFL. "A diploma from Stanford speaks for itself in any job interview, anywhere," he wrote.

Even among the few Stanford student-athletes who do not complete a degree before becoming professional athletes, many come back to finish their degrees when they are able. For example, basketball student-athletes Jarron Collins, Josh Childress and Curtis Borchardt returned to complete their degrees after careers in the NBA and in Europe; football student-athletes Bob Whitfield, Amon Gordon, and T.J. Rushing, meanwhile, returned to earn their degrees after NFL careers of fifteen, nine, and four years, respectively. In other cases, former student-athletes return to the academic environment to pursue advanced degrees: Another Stanford football student-athlete, Owen Marecic,

decided to forego an NFL career to attend medical school and is currently back working in a Stanford lab in preparation.

We have woven this emphasis on academic priorities into the University's expectations of those who coach our student-athletes. We have made clear to our coaches that academic achievement is a primary goal for their performance as leaders of Stanford athletic teams. To that end, the achievement of certain academic benchmarks is an important part of how we evaluate the performance of our coaches.

As noted earlier, at Stanford we believe that athletics and academics enhance each other. Athletics offer a meaningful additional component to an individual's university education – teaching leadership, strategy, team dynamics, problem solving, time management, health and fitness maintenance, and persistence, among many other things. I can point to many examples of student-athletes who have come out of Stanford and applied their skills to make tremendous achievements in their professional lives. Dr. Milt McColl, a Stanford football student-athlete, now CEO of Gauss Surgical, Inc.; Lisa Falzone, CEO and co-founder of Revel Systems, recently named to Forbes' "30 Under 30" list, a Stanford women's swimming student-athlete; Cory Booker, a Stanford football student-athlete, a member of the United States Senate; John Elway, a Stanford football student-athlete, general manager of the Denver Broncos; Sally Ride, a tennis student-athlete who became the first American woman in space; Charles Schwab, who was a Stanford golf student-athlete before heading the company that bears his name; Dr. Geoff Abrams, Stanford team physician and orthopedic surgeon, an All-American tennis student-athlete; Josh Nesbit, co-founder of Medic Mobile and named as one of Forbes' "Impact 30," a Stanford men's soccer student-athlete – the list goes on.

In summary, our student-athletes at Stanford do not receive salaries, but they receive something far more valuable – and that is an academic experience of the very highest quality, funded in many cases by scholarship support, that rigorously prepares them for leadership and success in the world. The vast majority of our student-athletes will not go on to earn a living in professional sports careers. But whatever path they take, their

Stanford experience, including their athletic experience, will provide them with outstanding preparation for success in the world.

I hope I have conveyed the centrality of the academic experience to the overall student-athlete experience at Stanford. We seek to make it an integrated experience that fulfills each student's educational aspirations. But I also want to address a related question that often enters conversations on this subject, and that is the question of revenue from intercollegiate athletics and how that revenue is used.

As mentioned earlier, at Stanford we offer 36 varsity sports for men and women. That is one of the largest offerings of intercollegiate sports in the country. While football and basketball generate net revenue through ticket sales and TV contracts, the vast majority of sports that provide athletic opportunities to our students do not. *All of the revenue the University receives from these two sports is used to support the athletic program, including the 87 percent of student-athletes who participate in the other 34 sports that do not generate net revenue.* These funds received by the University enable the Athletic Department to support scholarships, travel, medical staff, training staff, equipment, facilities, maintenance, and all the other costs that come with offering a broad sports program that appeals to the interests and talents of a breadth of students. Investing in that breadth of activities, to support athletic opportunities for a cross-section of students, both men and women, is very important to us.

Let me close by discussing briefly one of the other key issues, and that is how we address the needs and concerns of student-athletes themselves. At Stanford, we work very hard to ensure that the academic and athletic experiences of our student-athletes are excellent and properly supported. There are two things that are important to understand about that commitment.

First is what we already do. I have looked through the list of issues that have been identified by the union seeking to represent Northwestern student-athletes. The majority of them are issues we are already addressing at Stanford. Whether it is covering the

medical costs of injuries, protecting scholarship support for students who are medically disqualified from playing, promoting player safety, researching the prevention and effects of concussions, or a range of other issues, we are present and active.

Second, as proud as we are of our record on these issues, we are never satisfied, and we seek to exceed the expectations of all of our student-athletes. We take proactive measures to understand their needs by extending the offer for student-athletes to tell us when and where we can be doing better. We have formal bodies at Stanford for doing so, such as our Student-Athlete Advisory Committee. But our student-athletes can also communicate their views to coaches, sport administrators, the Faculty Athletic Representative, or me as Athletic Director. All athletics programs need to ensure that they are making every effort to provide a high-quality experience that empowers their students with tools to achieve success in their post-college lives, and soliciting honest feedback from the students themselves is critical to that objective. Although there are areas where our actions are governed by NCAA regulations, we are always open to making improvements that are within our purview – and to working with the NCAA to improve its rules and enforcement on issues such as minimum academic progress for student-athletes and scholarships that include fair stipends for student-athletes' expenses.

We have worked very hard at Stanford to create an environment where we offer outstanding opportunities for the academic and athletic development of incredibly talented young people. We believe the educational opportunity provided to our student-athletes is incredibly rich and beneficial, and we know from countless conversations with student-athletes who have benefitted from the Stanford experience over the years that the students who choose to come to Stanford understand and appreciate that. We are immensely proud of our student-athletes, and it is the constant mission of those of us in leadership positions to seek to do everything we can, every day, to support them and make their experience at Stanford a rewarding one. I hope that the strengths and benefits of systems such as ours will be considered as the national discussion of these issues continues. I also recognize that there is variation on these issues from school to school, and that while I have been speaking today about the Stanford experience, there may well be differences at other institutions.



Stanford stands ready to talk with, and work with, others who are likewise interested in continually improving the experience of student-athletes across the country.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my perspective. I will do my best to respond to any questions you may have.