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A SUMMIT ON THE COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC EXPERIENCE

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9) Discussion among Knight Commission and panelists about behavioral issues

DR. WHARTON: Thank you very much. We will now have the Commission members. Who would like to kick it off? Chuck Young.

CHARLES YOUNG: Thank you, Clif. I'm commenting on all of the, what all three of those who have spoken have reported. I guess it comes back to the Colorado situation more than any other because that's an example I think of what, the kind of worst of what, or at least maybe close to the worst, of what occurs at other universities from time to time. One of the cornerstones on which this Commission has built its recommendations over the years has been presidential authority and responsibility. And presidents may not be able to produce winning teams, they don't have much control over the win/loss record and so forth, but they've got control over the kind of situation that exists and was reported here and the kind of problems it was reported that has, that Coach Urban Meyer has done so much to change at Florida where I was president when you were first there.

And I think this Commission has a responsibility at this point in time to remind presidents very strongly that these kinds of problems are issues which they have to be concerned about and which they can resolve, and only they can resolve.

This all starts from the top. If the president is willing to take this issue on, head on, it can be resolved.

DR. WHARTON: Bill Asbury and then Anita DeFrantz.

MR. ASBURY: Just an observation and Jemalle really hit on it and it was in part what I was asking Kareem about. And that is this sense of conflict on campus between athletes and non-athletes, whether it be with fraternities or whoever it might be.

This is the kind of things you described happen at all the major college campuses as Don McPherson just talked about. It would be great if you could visit all of those campuses and send the message that you just gave to us. And the two of you could go together and sort of deliver this message because it's a powerful image for the women and non-students, women and men who are on that campus. Athletes are isolated.

In fact I won't take the time to do it now, but if you think about the time that athletes have, if they in fact are going to class and studying and practicing, they've got to squeeze in their social and their sleep and sometimes they have to make a choice between them.

And other students do the same thing. But when they make the kind of choices that get them into situations, whether they start the activity or not, it's the athlete who's going to be on the front page of the student paper. Very often we don't even know who the non-athletes are. But we know if Michael Robinson was in a conflict at

an ice rink at Penn State, we know Michael was there but we don't know about the other seventeen people who were involved.

And this idea of informing the athletes early with examples I think is the best thing that could happen to them. And I don't know about Kareem but, you know, knowing these are situations that you can get yourself into and here's the choices that you have to make and here is a process that you can use to make those choices. You may not always make the best choices but here's a process that you can use. For a seventeen or eighteen year old that would be terrific and I think you're right, this MVP program ought to be something that is more generally available. I'm not sure I know much about it or who offers it but I will just say that your testimony is terrific.

DR. WHARTON: Anita DeFrantz.

MS. DEFRANTZ: Thank you. I think we were talking about, or you were talking about rather as we listened, issues that are rather intuitive. As you said, Mr. Cornelius, you don't want your mother to be beaten up. You know that. But the opportunity to put it in context is what had been missing prior to that.

We're also talking about a sort of code of silence. That's what it's about. The women are not willing often to come forward because they know what will happen. It's like, oh yeah, sure, he raped you, you asked for it. And then all that happens and your case is dismissed, et cetera. The costs and all those things. So there's a code of silence and within the various teams. As the professional players know there is also this code of silence. How do we get at breaking that code? So it's okay at the collegiate program to talk about, having the upper class men talk to you and having the other teams also take part in the MVP program. By the way, was it only for football or did the other teams have access to that?

DR. WHARTON: Jemalle, do you want to answer that last question?

MR. CORNELIUS: The MVP program that we went through was for, strictly for the football team. So, I mean I think it should be available for all the athletic programs. At the University of Florida we have different speakers come in and usually they go through all the sports, every student has to go through it. But I know that specifically the MVP program was for the football team.

DR. WHARTON: On the code of silence question that Anita raised, I wonder if some of you might like to comment? Joanne.

MS. BELKNAP: You know, I do think that code of violence—or code of silence, not code of violence, code of silence, I think that is really important and it kind of reminds back to the other gentleman's point to of, what do presidents do? And I think at CU one of the things that happened was the way that the presidents responded to that enhanced that code of silence because they were definitely speaking out of both sides of their mouth. At the one time they were feeling sorry for themselves and saying, this isn't fair, this happens at universities all over and we're getting picked on. At the same time they're saying, it didn't happen and these women are liars and, I mean there were just terrible things that were being said. And to me I feel like it's almost like this—well, one of the things I feel like is the resiliency of the human spirit, I have to believe in that because I would give up completely.

But I feel so encouraged on things like the MVP program but also just breaking down the walls between people to be able to talk to each other because I think even

with, like I said with these women with the Title IX lawsuit, I think even an apology from the university saying, we're sorry we didn't do, would have made a world of difference and they wouldn't have had a Title IX lawsuit.

What these women wanted was for this not to happen to any more women. So I feel like there were—and I was, I had the privilege to talk with Mr. McPherson last night and I was just saying, I feel like when I've gone and given talks on this on campus sometimes football players will say, well, you don't know what it's like to me and I'm like, you're right, I don't know what it's like, I could never pretend that I know what it's like to be you. But the problem is we don't have those dialogs with, I mean until really recently at CU and it's really, I've learned a lot about the burdens of football players on campus that I was not aware of before. But I think the more that we can have these where it's not the athletes getting this training, even though that is important, but at the same time what are these ways that we do this campus wide, that we say rape and sexual abuse and intimate partner abuse is not just with the athletes, it happens other places too. But certainly condemning women who report these enhances the code of silence when the university does that.

DR. WHARTON: Don.

MR. MCPHERSON: I may just make one point about—actually two points, but one is about the MVP program and I was a director of that program for a number of years at Northeastern University at the Center for the Study of Sport, and Peter Roby is here from the Center and you will hear from him later on.

And it is an outstanding program that has, right now, broad support from at least the Southeastern Conference that the entire conference is doing the program for all the student-athletes. And so just a point about that program, just a further endorsement, I don't think you need more than what you've heard.

But the point about the code of silence is the NCAA was kind of looking out for the graduation rates and the student-athletes being prepared before they came here and so they created the clearing house to kind of look at what people are doing and then whether or not they've qualified and whether or not they've gotten all their ducks in order. If we can reach down into secondary education for those reasons, we can reach down for secondary education on these as well. If we make it a priority in higher education that these are the values that we expect from student-athletes and from students, we can start to say that what we expect about student-athletes is that they come in with this understanding. That will begin to break the silence around some of the issues that we're dealing. And I have to say that the problem of silence is getting worse and with—and I know that there's great debate with abstinence only programming. The word, abstinence, is not the problem. The problem is, only. And when we stop talking to our students with a myriad of messages about how to deal with some of these issues, they become more vulnerable to mass media.

They become more vulnerable to the rumor. They become more vulnerable to the more insidious voices, video games and others, that are telling them how you treat women, music television. If the responsible adults stop talking, which we are, we're less and less open about some of these issues. Programs like MVP put issues on the table. And I asked Jemalle earlier, have you ever had that discussion prior to MVP? No. I asked student-athletes and adults involved, when was the last time a group of men got together and talked about how we treat women, how we look at women? How we talk about women in their absence? And we just don't do that.

And so that silence has to be broken long before student-athletes get to our campuses I believe.

DR. WHARTON: Hodding and then Judy.
Judy?

MS. WOODRUFF: Okay. Yeah, I mean we're here to focus on athletics but it's so clear from what every one of you are saying that this is more than what goes on in the athletic culture. This is a university wide, country wide, culture wide problem.

So my question is, what specific things do you think should be happening on campuses with all students, with all university administrations, presidents, to get at this? I mean this is bigger than the athletic department.

MS. BELKNAP: Well, I think that's a great question and I do think there needs to be this, like I think the MVP program is just phenomenal too but I think in addition to that there just needs to be more where it is bringing all of this together. I mean I do—the issue for athletes I think is somewhat unique and I don't want that to be lost in this, but again it's like it's so unusual to have something where administrators are talking directly with the students, including the athlete students. And so I just think there needs to be a lot more about it.

One of the things that CU has started trying to do was implement this, it was called Campus 101 or College 101, that wasn't just dealing with sexual abuse but it was dealing with, how do we do these kind of life skills courses that some of the athletics programs are doing for all of the student body? And it's not just about violence against women, it's about racism, it's about antisemitism, it's about classism, it's about sort of basic human decency but it's also, what are your responsibilities as somebody that's sharing a planet with all these other people and I just think that has to be part of it because when we compartmentalize it, it makes it easier for every representative at the university from the undergraduate student to the president to compartmentalize it as well.

MS. WOODRUFF: Does anybody else have a follow up?

MR. MCPHERSON: Yeah, I do, I think that's an excellent question and I think one of the biggest problems that we have, especially at the presidential and trustee level is that we don't want to acknowledge that violence against women on our campuses is happening. And if we talk about it every campus will report, check the reports. We've had maybe one, two sexual assaults or rape a year. And there's a reason for that. Campuses more than ever are tuition driven, women are going to college more than men. It's simple economics and we're not going to talk about the reality of the threat to women on college campuses and we're not going to acknowledge that it's happening on our campuses because then I have to compete with the next university.

And so I've been on campuses where I was going to testify on behalf of violence against women on college campuses and I was on a panel with the Cleary family and was called in by my university president and the chief of police who didn't want me to talk about the reality of violence against women on college campuses and how the universities have to be more responsible.

MS. WOODRUFF: So how do we get around that?

MR. MCPHERSON: I think it begins with, as I just said, higher education needs to—you know, the United States military takes a lot of heat for violence in the military and violence against women. I can tell you the United States military has been more forthright, more forthcoming, more aggressive in addressing the issue of violence within the military against women than higher education. I worked with the

Justice Department a couple of years ago, trying to convene a group of college presidents to talk about the issue. We couldn't get them together, it wasn't a priority.

And so higher education needs to acknowledge the fact that it is happening.

MR. WOODRUFF: And alcohol as well.

MR. MCPHERSON: Absolutely.

DR. WHARTON: Hodding Carter.

MR. CARTER: As much as I like listening to myself talk, you've just answered what I wanted, except one question. This really has to be a sustained over time program. I love individual's success stories which are almost the best way to ignore getting down to the reality of life. I mean this has to be a costly, it's not a feel good thing, right?

MR. MCPHERSON: It's not a feel good thing but it's not—let me just give like a brief perspective on what I do, the work that I learned out of working with the MVP. I always talk about the issue of men's violence against women ending when men confront other men, in the absence of women, when we confront the misogynistic and sexist attitudes. I introduce it by saying, what's the worst insult men have ever heard when they were boys, that little boy? You throw like a girl, right? That, the fundamental understanding I think is that's the worst thing you can be called.

It begins with addressing the attitudes that see women as, less than. It begins with addressing the attitudes that goes back to, I'm not sure if it was Kareem or Jemalle who talked about what we expect boys to be, what it means to be a man, this very narrow understanding of masculinity. That's not a difficult discussion, that's an amazing and a fruitful discussion with men about what it means to be a man and how we respect our mothers, our sisters, our daughters.

The sustained part of that discussion that you're talking about is similar to when I ask white people, when black people are not around are you referring to black people as niggers and coons and all those things? No. Then why is it that we as men do that when women aren't around? Why is it that we as men do it in front of women and it's okay? So the part of the sustained discussion that you're talking about is part of a social movement where we are more aware of the problem because we are speaking about it publicly, openly and honestly. We're looking at the attitudes that not just led to the violence, but as so many of you have pointed out, maintains the silence about it because if I stand up and speak out and I say it's wrong, I'm going to be called language, number one, that questions my masculinity and number two, maintains the silence about it.

And so that sustained discussion—and the reason I always bring up racism in that is because it's happened, there is a precedent and the precedent allows the African American people who are in this room to be here. It was the sustained discussion amongst white people that that behavior is inappropriate.

DR. WHARTON: I think, I know I can speak on behalf of the Commission that I would like to thank the panelists today for giving us these marvelous opportunities to learn and to benefit from your presentations and our discussion.

And the work of the Commission, these subjects are very critical. They are also as you have just recently pointed out, reflect what is happening in the wider society and I guess in an optimistic or idealistic vein I would like to look forward to the day when college athletics not only can be successful in dealing with these issues, but in

the process, given the visibility of college athletics, might in fact become an instrument for impacting the wider society with regard to the possible solutions.

So may I ask all of you to join in thanking the panelists? We now have a ten minute break.