

The Graham Plan: A Missed Opportunity for Reform in Collegiate Athletics

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The University of North Carolina (UNC) has a rich history of attempting to regulate or contract collegiate athletics that dates back to Frank Porter Graham's presidency of the UNC system in the mid-twentieth century. In 1935, Graham proposed a plan to reign in the influence and corruption of athletics in the UNC system that, while unsuccessful, would define his legacy and set a remarkable tone for his successors. This thesis tells the story of the Graham Plan: why it was necessary, how it was a part of a progressive mission to reform higher education, how it developed, and why it failed. If it had somehow succeeded, the Graham Plan may have been able to prevent the large subsidization of athletics we see today and the practice of propagating institutions of higher education as brands or commodities. Regretfully, the plan only survived for eleven months, and was eventually defeated by the opposition it faced from alumni.

Frank Porter Graham was born in 1886, was the sixth of nine children. His father, Alexander Graham was a confederate veteran, and a passionate public school superintendent. The concept of public schools was still new to many in the South in the late nineteenth century, and Alexander Graham was an early advocate of the cause in the political sphere. When someone questioned Alexander Graham, “do you honestly believe in taxing the rich man to educate the poor man’s children? Do you mean to tell us that the white man should pay for the colored children?” He would reply, “I believe in education of all the children.”¹ This sentiment had a significant influence on his son and his commitment to public education.

Graham holds a special place in the history of the UNC system, and the two mutually shaped each other’s future. Graham first came to UNC at Chapel Hill as a student in 1905. He

¹*Dr. Frank: The Life and Times of Frank Porter Graham*, written by John Wilson and produced by Martin Clark (Research Triangle Park: North Carolina Public Television, 1994), VHS.

later came back as a professor, dean of students and eventually became the president, and earning a reputation as a champion of progressive causes through his policy and advocacy.

During his time as a student at UNC, Frank quickly became a popular figure on campus. He was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, an honors society for liberal arts and sciences, and senior class president. He was also an active student as the editor of the school newspaper and yearbook, the president of the YMCA, president of the debate society, and head cheerleader. Through his time at UNC he built up his reputation as an idealist. There was a common anecdote around campus that no new student movements could be successful without Graham's support. Graham's senior yearbook noted that he was known for his, "idealism, fair play, integrity, and his belief that others were trustworthy."² In 1907, Graham's cousin, Edward Kidder Graham, joined the university as an English professor and became the university president in 1917.

After Graham's time as an undergraduate student, he went on to earn a law degree from UNC, taught as a high school history teacher in Raleigh, obtained a Master of Arts degree from the Columbia University, and also enlisted in the Marines during the First World War. Graham returned to UNC in 1919 as a history professor and became its first dean of students in 1925.

Graham was already involved with many progressive movements within the university. He joined President Harry W. Chase for statewide campaigns to appropriate two million dollars for the university from the state budget.³ Through President Chase's faculty hires, he manufactured controversy and progress. As one historian has explained, the faculty's research on "tenant farming, mill villages, the chain gang, rural illegitimacy, sharecropping and convict

²John Wilson, *Dr. Frank: The Life and Times of Frank Porter Graham*.

³The Carolina Story, "Graham as Dean of Students," A Virtual Museum of University History, accessed June 07, 2016, <https://museum.unc.edu/exhibits/show/graham/harry-woodburn-chase--1883-195>.

leasing – all social systems that had long held back poor and nonwhite North Carolinians.”⁴ The university faced bitter attacks against these studies, yet President Chase continuously shared the findings of his professors and their students to “fulfill the university’s core mission to be a catalyst for change.”⁵ Later, throughout the 1920s, Chase had to also fight the General Assembly’s attempts to curb the teaching of evolution at UNC Chapel Hill. Chase framed the problem with evolution as a matter of academic freedom but was not seen favorably by all of the press in North Carolina.⁶

As a history professor, Graham was an active member of the community beyond the university. In 1929, the Loray Mills workers in Gastonia went on a strike, instigated and organized by the labor-involved communist group, the National Textiles Workers Union (NTWU). In the midst of the violent strike, a sheriff and striker, Ella May Wiggins were killed.⁷ During this strike, Graham worked to help the workers find legal help, however, fifteen strikers were convicted for the death of the sheriff without a fair trial, compared with the five charged with the murder of Wiggins who was a seamstress, single mother of nine children, and activist were all acquitted after a thirty minute deliberation.⁸

Upon Ella May Wiggins’ death, Graham wrote, “her death was in a sense upon the heads of us all,” and “to think that those who killed her rejoiced in their Americanism!” For Graham, “Americanism . . . was not riding in cars carrying men and guns that day, barring the common

⁴John Charles, "UNC Poverty Center Maneuver a Betrayal of University's past and Its Promise," *News and Observer*, February 19, 2015, <http://www.newsobserver.com/opinion/op-ed/article10880426.html>.

⁵Charles.

⁶The Evolution Controversy in North Carolina in the 1920s, "Harry Woodburn Chase," University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, accessed September 07, 2016, <https://exhibits.lib.unc.edu/exhibits/show/evolution/biographies/chase>.

⁷John Wilson, *Dr. Frank: The Life and Times of Frank Porter Graham*.

⁸John Wilson, *Dr. Frank: The Life and Times of Frank Porter Graham*.

highway to the citizens of the State.” Rather, “Americanism was somewhere deep in the heart of this mother who went riding in a truck toward what to her was the promise of a better day for her children.”⁹

In response to the labor unrest, Graham drafted an “Industrial Bill of Rights,” which endorsed workers' rights to join unions and advocated for stronger protection for women and children in factories.¹⁰ Unfortunately his association with the NTWU-- which was affiliated with the Communist Party-- through the Loray Mill Strike, as well as the other progressive organizations had consequences that would constantly plague his political career in the future.

Given the political climate, Graham never identified as a communist, and there is little, if any, evidence to show that he accepted their beliefs. Graham and the other progressive Democrats of his time could be classified as a “modernizer” in North Carolina’s political tradition. This classification was created by Paul Luebke who characterizes the political players of North Carolina, as either “modernizers” or “traditionalists.” Modernizers are characterized by those who do “progressive” things, intending them to trickle down to help the poor, but are still reluctant to directly empower the poor. Modernizers favor moderate reform of the state’s social and economic relations in order to advance the growth of new business opportunities in technology, finance, and manufacturing. They most often come from the urban areas of the state, especially the industrial piedmont. According to Luebke, traditionalists resist any alteration in southern racial, economic, or social relations. They often live in rural and agrarian sections of the state. Traditionalists enjoyed the support of the established industries such as textiles, furniture,

⁹ John A. Salmond, *Gastonia 1929: The Story of the Loray Mill Strike* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 129.

¹⁰ John Wilson, *Dr. Frank: The Life and Times of Frank Porter Graham*.

and agriculture, and they advocate for things like limited government and lower marginal tax rates.¹¹

In keeping with his prototypical philosophy as a “modernizer,” Graham did not support racial integration of schools but did fight for more equitable treatment for black Americans. He also upheld liberal and progressive academic values. Chapel Hill, as described by historian William Snider, was an institution that served as a kind of window into a work in which, “academic freedom meant freedom to differ, to wrestle with the complexities of searching for the truth, to tolerate error where truth was left free to combat it, all in the best Jeffersonian tradition.”¹² There is no doubt that this great institution would not have earned this reputation without Graham, the “champion of the underdog.”¹³

After having organized successful campaigns pursuing the allocation of more benefits to public libraries and public schools and helping to protect the teaching of evolution at the university, the enthusiastic Graham was appointed by the Board of Trustees as the new president of the university in 1930. Six months into Graham’s presidency of UNC, a study from the Brookings Institute requested by Governor Oliver Max Gardner recommend major reorganization of local structures to deal with the Great Depression. January 9, 1931, Governor Gardner introduced the possibility of consolidating the universities in North Carolina to implement cost saving measures.¹⁴ His plan included the merging of the UNC at Chapel Hill, the North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering at Raleigh (today North Carolina

¹¹Paul Luebke, *Tar Heel Politics 2000* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 20.

¹²William D. Snider, *Light on the Hill: A History of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), xii.

¹³Snider, 202.

¹⁴David A. Lockmiller, *the Consolidation of the University of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 23.

State University), and the North Carolina College for Women at Greensboro (today UNC at Greensboro) into the Consolidated University of North Carolina.¹⁵ Although Graham originally opposed the plan, he agreed to cooperate if there would be an amendment which would make it mandatory to have a commission of twelve experts in higher education to make recommendations to the Board of Trustees during the process of the consolidation. Once the legislation was passed with the amendment, the General Assembly chose Graham to oversee the process of merging the three public universities.¹⁶

Prior to the consolidation, each university had its own independent president, administration, and Board of Trustees, but the merger subsumed their power under the new Consolidated University. This consolidation caused a great deal of resentment from the university presidents. Political opposition from President Julius I. Foust of the North Carolina College for Women, and President Eugene C. Brooks from the North Carolina State College was intense. The two vigorously resisted having one president preside over them and the whole Consolidated University. Although initially Graham supported Foust for the president of the Consolidated University, the General Assembly had already made up its mind about having Graham govern it. Graham was appointed the president of the Consolidated University in 1931. President Graham made a commitment to visit all campuses at least once a week and was well received by the students and faculty.¹⁷ The consolidation the three universities eventually became the bedrock for the UNC system as it exists today.

¹⁵John Ehle, *Dr. Frank: Life with Frank Porter Graham* (Chapel Hill: Franklin Street Books, 1993), 56.

¹⁶Lockmiller, 54.

¹⁷Warren Ashby, *Frank Porter Graham, A Southern Liberal* (North Carolina: J.F. Blair, 1980), 114.

One of Graham's first actions as president was to push for reforms at the former Women's College. In 1933, Graham made the decision that men should no longer be admitted into the Women's College. He wanted to provide women with a space to excel without feeling socially inferior to men.¹⁸ Graham dreamed that the Women's College would transform itself into a great liberal arts institution, which was not necessarily in line with the institution's previous tradition. In 1935, he instituted a new departments of arts, classical civilization, and philosophy. The decrease in funding for public universities during Great Depression generally had a negative impact on the accessibility of liberal arts, but the retention and expansion of these programs under Graham was exceptional.

Graham's legacy in the UNC system cannot be explained without understanding Graham's personal history of advocating for historically marginalized communities. During his time as a president, a few of his decisions demonstrated his genuine passion for civil rights. When Graham moved into the presidential house as a bachelor, it was far too big for him to live in alone, and he opted to allow impoverished students to stay in the unused rooms. Likewise, throughout his tenure as the president of Consolidated University, Graham continued his activism and engagement with causes related to social and economic justice. Issues he dealt with ranged from advocating for the economically disadvantaged, admitting of Jewish students to the university, to protecting communist students and faculty.

In September of 1933, Graham received a complaint from a prospective student who was refused admission into the medical school due to his Jewish background. The Dean of the medical school for the last twenty-eight years had a quota on the number of Jewish students-- no more than ten percent. Graham offered the Dean an ultimatum: either change the admission

¹⁸Ashby, 119.

policy or submit his resignation. Ultimately the Dean resigned, which simultaneously caused an outrage from alumni and strong support from the faculty for Graham. Reaction from the national press was very positive on this matter as well.¹⁹

Also during Graham's presidency, there was an incident in which a university administrator sought to remove a communist professor from the English Department. This was during a time when the political consequences of the Red Scare persisted. Graham dismissed that particular administrator, and while he did have to publicly condemn having communist professors at his university, he still supported the right of communist students to attend the university. Graham insisted that UNC was an institution that should allow for all sorts of ideologies to be explored and developed.

Graham also maintained a strong relationship with the faculty and encouraged the expansion of their voices in university governance. Graham often defended the faculty from the harsh policies that were enforced by Governor Gardner during the difficult years of the Great Depression. On occasion Graham did have to explain the need for a salary cut, but he continued to stand in solidarity with those who were willing to turn down job offers elsewhere to remain a faculty at UNC. Graham himself turned down numerous pay raises and job offers outside of the state of North Carolina. As the *Newbern Tribune* wrote in 1936, "On several occasions during the past few years it has been recorded he received offers from other schools urging him to take over their presidential duties. Some of the schools might have been larger than North Carolina's University and always the salary offered has been an increase over the one now received by President Graham. Always, like some of the persons under him, he has promptly refused. He has

¹⁹Ashby, 128.

felt too much loyalty for the university.”²⁰ According to Professor Louis Kastoff, “He is one of the only university president I know, who can announce a cut in salaries and receive a standing ovation from his faculty.”²¹

Many years later, Bill Friday discussed the progressive ideologies of Graham in his book, *Frank Porter Graham and Human Rights*. Friday was the UNC system president from 1956 to 1986 and is regarded as another one of the great presidents of the UNC system. He wrote about Graham, “In that year, [1931] fear was the frequent response of those who could not fathom the future or break loose from the past. To many, the University was the agent of progress and hope, and in this role it would suffer harsh attacks and bitter condemnations. But the new president made clear what his response would be to these attacks. ‘Without freedom,’ he said, ‘there can be no university.’”²² According to Friday, Graham showed a commitment for students to have their freedom to govern their affairs, and protected any students’ right to freely assemble and discuss any issues and perspectives.²³

Along with his other crusades for progressive causes, Graham was committed to resolving the issue of commercialization in athletics. Resolving this issue was vital to preserve the university as an equitable and accessible institution, and most importantly, an institution which sought to benefit students above all. Fighting the commercialization in athletics had everything to do with upholding Graham’s values for a public university. This issue would

²⁰“Where is the Replacement?” *New Bern Tribune*, March 11, 1936, in Office of President of the University of North Carolina (System): Frank Porter Graham Records, #40007. University Archives, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (Hereafter cited as “Frank Porter Graham Records.)

²¹Snider, 209.

²²William Clyde Friday, *Frank Porter Graham and Human Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1983), 5.

²³Friday, 5.

become one of the biggest challenges he pursued in office, and one of the most persistent issues of higher education.

Graham, as a former student-athlete himself, was regarded as being enthusiastic about sports but he did not hesitate to pursue the problems asserted with collegiate athletics.²⁴ In 1929, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, published a three year study of 112 universities titled, “American College Athletics.” This report had a profound impact on Graham, his tenure as UNC president, and the future of collegiate sports in North Carolina.

According to the Carnegie report, in 1884 the Harvard faculty pioneered a movement to reform collegiate athletics and voted to abolish football. Its prohibition only lasted for two years. Since this occurrence, between 1907 and 1928, there persisted a scattered but constant mobilization of faculty to gain control over athletics. The study explained, “The attitude of most faculties toward [varsity] athletics appears to have been not opposition but tolerance or *laissez-faire*,” however, there was a growing conflict between collegiate athletics and the academic mission of the university. While the origin of the practice of charging an admission fee for athletic events is unclear, the practice of soliciting financial support from alumni in exchange of greater control over the athletics program was found early in the introduction of competitive collegiate football. The study described commercialized athletics as a practice which allows an individual to be exploited and utilized for “the reputation which they confer upon the institution” and the amusement for “joint cooperative enterprises involving presidents, trustees, faculties, alumni, and townsmen, and the vast publics of the radio and the press.” This contradicted the fundamental mission of public universities to provide a service for the public, rather than its

²⁴Ashby, 131.

students to provide a service for the university's reputation. For Graham, ideologically, higher education was intended to serve a community through the promotion of new visions.²⁵

The study fit well into Graham's efforts to improve higher education. It affirmed his intuition that financial interests were poised to invade, shape, and ultimately dictate intercollegiate athletics and that universities were increasingly becoming commodified. Thus, it became evident for Graham that universities had to eliminate any preferential treatment in financial aid for student athletes, and to allow greater control for the faculty to guide the future of collegiate athletics in order to preserve and advance universities as educational centers for students.

By mid-November of 1935, UNC's football team had overwhelmed opponents in the Southern Conference. Only victories over Duke and Virginia stood between UNC earning an invitation to the 1936 Tournament of Roses in Pasadena, California.²⁶ UNC ended up losing the Duke game and thus its opportunity to attend the Rose bowl, but, Graham's disappointment with the loss must have been mixed with a sense of relief. He had already made his decision to decline the invitation to Pasadena and launch a campaign for what he called "a plan to try to save football from self-destruction."²⁷

On November 21, 1935, Graham unveiled the Graham Plan by introducing it to, and receiving the endorsement from, the National Association of State Universities (NASU). The

²⁵Howard Savage, Harold Bentley, John McGovern, and Dean Smiley, "American College Athletics," accessed March 5, 2016, <http://sites.comm.psu.edu/theoia/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2014/09/Carnegie-Commission-1929-excerpts.pdf>.

²⁶Richard Stone, "The Graham Plan of 1935: An Aborted Crusade to De-emphasize College Athletics," *The North Carolina Historical Review* Vol. 64, Issue 3 (1987): 274, *JSTOR Journals*, EBSCOhost.

²⁷Andy Thomason, "One Man Had a Plan to Keep Money Out of College Sports. Here's What Happened," *The Chronicle Of Higher Education* no. 44 (2014), *Biography in Context*, EBSCOhost.

NASU which had no enforcement power, enthusiastically adopted the Graham Plan. The association asked institutions and conferences to consider the Graham Plan's eleven proposals. The first sentence read, "these regulations are not submitted as a code, and not to be replace any existing code, but simply as suggested supplements to existing codes." To summarize the eleven points in the document:

1. A student should be ineligible for athletic competition if he received preferential consideration "in the matter of tuition, fees, room, board, clothes, books, scholarship, loans, job, or any other financial aid material consideration," from any supporter of that institution such as alumni, students, agencies, as a reward for athletics competence.
2. In like manner, no athlete should receive a scholarship, loan, job, or other financial aid from any source other than those awarded by responsible faculty committees, who will treat all student applications equally.
3. Each scholarship applicant should be required to state in writing his financial earnings for the preceding year.
4. Athletic staff should not take any part in "initiation of correspondence, by the distribution of literature, or by personal interviews" for the purpose of recruitment. They also should insist that alumni and students abide by these same guidelines.
5. Alumni and students through their meetings and publications show their institutional and personal obligations of loyalty and honor by helping to prevent others from violating these proposed athletic eligibility guidelines.
6. There should be a one-year rule for eligibility or, in other words, all athletes

should complete one full year's work with progressive advancement and be in good academic standing before being eligible for varsity competition.

7. "No student who is on conduct or scholastic probation shall take part in an intercollegiate athletic contest"
8. Athletic staff members should be restricted to receiving monies from their respective institutions for coaching and other services rendered to athletics. This essentially suggested putting a halt to sponsorships.
9. Each athlete should be required to affirm in writing his compliance with the eligibility regulations.
10. "All athletics accounts shall be audited regularly by a certified public accountant and shall and shall be published as a matter of public record."
11. "No postseason intercollegiate athletic contest shall be permitted. No request for any exception to this regulation shall in any case be allowed"

The document concluded that, "the Association urges all members to attempt in their respective athletic conference to arrange for meetings of all college and university presidents in each conference, at which meeting these standards will be taken up for discussion and approval."²⁸

Upon the plan's publication, L.C. Glenn, Chairman of the Committee on Athletics from Vanderbilt, wrote to Graham expressing a desire to implement such standards at his university. But his letter included a perceptive warning as well, "Our greatest difficulty, however, lies in the impossibility of controlling the actions of alumni scattered all over our country and our alumni and local friends in Nashville. Business concerns and individuals do, to a considerable extent, pay athletes for services that are more or less fictitious and these really subsidize them. If you

²⁸National Association of State Universities, *Standards of Athletic Eligibility* (November 21, 1935), in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

can find a remedy for it, please let us share in your information.”²⁹ In Chapel Hill, however, by December of 1935, the faculty at the UNC came out in strong support of the Graham Plan, and adopted a version of the Graham Plan in a resolution through the Faculty Senate.³⁰

Regretfully, Graham’s involvement in another political crusade outside of the university jaded the public’s perception of the Graham Plan from early on in its operation. While launching the Graham Plan, he was simultaneously outspoken about his opposition to the US participation in the Olympics in Germany under Nazi rule. Encouraged by the Committee on Fair Play in Sports, which led on the national effort to curb US participation in this particular Olympics, Graham and other university presidents released a statement addressing the American Olympic Committee on November 15, 1935.³¹ This exacerbated the perception of Graham over-politicizing athletics in the public’s eyes. The UNC Board of Trustees and alumni were unhappy with this sort of negative publicity for the university.³²

Foy Roberson, an alumnus of UNC and the captain of the football team in the 1904 season was one of the earliest and most outspoken opponents of the Graham Plan. At the time, Roberson was a practicing general surgeon in Durham and was a member of UNC’s Athletics Council. Roberson’s first letter on the topic of the Graham Plan read, “I was amazed and shocked when I read the recommendations you made to the American Association of Universities and Colleges in regard to athletics. The whole thing is ridiculous and absurd and it is hard for me to conceive of a fair-minded person like yourself having anything to do with anything so unfair and

²⁹L.C. Glenn to Frank Porter Graham, November 1935, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

³⁰Ashby, 133.

³¹George Gordon Battle and Henry Smith Leiper to Frank Porter Graham, 3 October 1936 in the Frank Porter Graham Papers #1819, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, http://finding-aids.lib.unc.edu/01819/#folder_376#1.

³²Ashby, 135.

so unsportsmanlike as this set of recommendations.”³³ Throughout the next few months, Roberson frequently wrote to Graham to inform him of additional political entities that expressed skepticism about the Graham Plan. By January, the Athletics Council, under Roberson’s leadership had also passed a resolution to demonstrate their disapproval of the NASU recommendations.³⁴

Other source of opposition to the Graham Plan became more apparent as sports writers came out in opposition to the plan and began to shape the public’s opinion. As few letters of concern came in, Graham also had friends who wrote to him to warn him his plan is likely to not pass the Southern Conference. Bill Cox wrote to him that his “information is the Southern Conference will refuse your platform. One of the hardest fights you have ever experienced is before you to swing this better.”³⁵

In order to create allies for his cause, Graham reached out to President William P. Few of Duke University. Graham wrote to President Few, “I am writing to ask you to join with the presidents of the colleges and universities in the Southern Conference in a plan to try to save football from self-destruction . . . I have talked with the faculty chairman of our athletic committee here, and he is highly favorable to this meeting of the college presidents.”³⁶ On November 28, President Few wrote back to Graham, that if possible, he would be present at the Southern Conference, or at least send a representative. He added: “We here are still as anxious as ever to do what we can in behalf of this cause and can be counted on to engage in any

³³Foy Roberson to Frank Porter Graham, 27 November 1935, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

³⁴*Copy of Resolution Adopted Unanimously by the Athletics Council of the University of North Carolina at the December Meeting* (January 1936), in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

³⁵Bill Cox to Frank Porter Graham, 20 December 1935, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

³⁶Frank Porter Graham to William Few, November 1935, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

undertaking that gives promise of helping to make and keep college athletics contributory to the best interests of education and of the students themselves.”³⁷ But in fact, President Few never distinguished himself as a strong supporter of the Graham Plan, and perpetually postponed giving Graham an endorsement of the plan.

Duke’s reluctance to adopt the plan gave the perception to UNC alumni that Graham is punishing his own university, while allowing the athletic programs of neighboring universities to be superior to the one at UNC and agitated alumni. One alumnus wrote, “your past policy of discouraging athletic scholarships and jobs for athletes has severely handicapped coach in meeting leading teams in competition. He cannot now have sufficient material to evenly compete with Duke, Tennessee, and many other institutions . . . University of North Carolina would certainly suffer if these new rules are rigidly observed at Chapel Hill playing New York University, Tulane, Tennessee, Georgia Tech will be a joke and the fine advertising good teams give the university will be gone. Virginia institutions are naturally desirous of pulling our football down to their level.”³⁸

One by one, based on accusations spread by sports writers, various county chapters of the alumni association passed resolutions to condemn the Graham Plan over the course of two months. Many also sent a copy to Graham’s office to express their dissatisfaction. Alumni from New Hanover County wrote:

Whereas, we have made a thorough study of the Graham Plan of athletic control and found same to be of such nature that is discriminates against any boy with athletic ability-- namely; by an unfamiliar revelation of his personal affairs, by placing him under undue

³⁷William Few to Frank Porter Graham, 28 November 1935, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

³⁸KP Lewis to Frank Porter Graham, 13 December 1915, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

suspicion, and by definitely eliminating any boy who happens the combination of athletic ability and financial help from athletics.

Whereas, athletics are of prime importance in developing the school spirit of any university and whereas the Graham Plan will definitely undermine the quality of the university athletic teams by encouraging athletes to go elsewhere, we feel that this plan will be extremely detrimental to the University.³⁹

The New Hanover County alumni chapter described the plan as: “idealistic and extremely impractical and unfair to the students of the University of North Carolina.”⁴⁰ Pitt, Buncombe, Davidson, Durham, Forsyth, Sampson, Cumberland, and Guilford County were among some of the alumni association chapters that sent a similar resolution to Graham over the course of the two months. Some affirmed their support for the decision made by Foy Roberson and the Athletics Council at UNC. Some urged Graham to withdraw the plan. Some called for his resignation. Some addressed the Southern Conference, urging them to deny Graham’s plan. Some called for a combination of all these actions.

One of the most popular strategies adopted by the alumni groups was to attack Graham personally. In particular they accused him of being an autocrat. The first of the documented accusations about Graham being autocratic came from the alumni association of Buncombe

³⁹*Copy of Resolution Adopted by the University of North Carolina Alumni of New Hanover County, Wilmington, North Carolina, (January 1936), in "Frank Porter Graham Records."*

⁴⁰*Copy of Resolution Adopted by the University of North Carolina Alumni of New Hanover County, Wilmington, North Carolina, (January 1936), in "Frank Porter Graham Records."*

County. The letter read:

The alumni in this part of the State are particularly concerned over your proposal to abolish the Athletics council and you assume sole power to employ and discharge coaches and fix their compensation. In a democratic State with a democratic university, do you think this move is toward democracy or autocracy? I sincerely hope that this proposed change of athletic control and policy will die a natural and painless death and that we may go forward with our attention directed toward larger and greater things.⁴¹

These accusations were simply untrue. Not one of the eleven points in the Graham Plan suggested the abolishment of the Athletics Council for the president to assume all control. The political rhetoric launched against him intended to elucidate communist affiliations by labeling him an autocrat.

While earlier efforts to gain the support of Duke University's administration were largely unsuccessful in January and February of 1936, Graham turned his attention to the persuasion of other Southern Conference supportive executive members. Graham, with the other executive members of the Southern Conference, drafted a new plan to be introduced and adopted by the conference. Graham wrote many letters to various presidents of universities in order to win their support. President Few of Duke University wrote back only to notify Graham that they were still deliberating on the issue, but the five executive members of the Southern Conference from the North Carolina State College, the University of Maryland, the University of Virginia, the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and Washington and Lee University were different. They irrevocably supported Graham's intentions and actions. During this struggle, which Graham called "the hardest and hottest fight that I have ever been in my life" they were only presidents

⁴¹Nellie Sue Tillet to Frank Porter Graham, 26 January 1936, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

that Graham was able to count upon.⁴² The five often wrote in support of Graham, and of their admiration for him as the leader of this great cause.

For example, upon Graham's request, the five took turns calling the president of Clemson. Clemson's president originally supported the plan but later withdrew his support. Graham wrote to his allies explaining that the Clemson had a lot of pressure on them from other universities in South Carolina to not vote for the Graham Plan. "I feel sure that he wants to stand with us," Graham wrote to his supporters, "He has indicated to me how the South Carolina situation has complicated his own situation... Perhaps you can suggest to him the long look to the future."⁴³

While Graham was rallying the Southern Conference behind the Graham Plan, on January 9, 1936, he also received a letter of support from the Student Government of the North Carolina State College. The student council unanimously voted in favor of a resolution supporting Graham's reforms. The letter from the student body president, Bill Aycock, informed Graham that he intended to meet with the Board of Trustees, stating, "I hope our support will be of some value at this meeting, and we will stick by the stand which we have taken last, regardless of the strength of the opposition."⁴⁴

Ultimately, in the 1936 meeting, the Graham Plan was successfully passed through the Southern Conference. Only Clemson, Duke, South Carolina, and the Virginia Military Institute opposed the plan.⁴⁵ However, because meeting took place in January, the Plan would not be

⁴²Stone, 281.

⁴³Frank Porter Graham to Julian Burruss, 16 January 1936, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

⁴⁴Bill Aycock to Frank Porter Graham, 9 January 1936, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

⁴⁵Ronald A Smith, *Pay for Play: A History of Big-Time College Athletic Reform*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 87, *eBook Collection*, EBSCOhost.

implemented until the beginning of the next academic year.

Foy Roberson sent a letter to Graham, "I suppose congratulations are in order. You gave us a good licking. I was opposed to your plan and fought it with all the power I had, which wasn't much. However, since it was adopted by the Southern Conference and since we are member of the conference, I intend to make it my business to see that the new regulations are rigidly enforced, not only by ourselves but by every other member."⁴⁶

This was an enormous success for the Graham Plan and it marked the largest movement to combat the commercialization of athletics on a national scale. Through the adoption of the plan with the NASU and the Southern Conference, true reform for collegiate athletics may have been possible. However, the Graham Plan, which depended on the altruism of the governing bodies of the universities, was perhaps bound to fail sooner or later.

While previous alumni movements were organized by local chapters, in February of 1936, the General Alumni Association reached out to all UNC alumni. It distributed the following questionnaires to former students as a new strategy of their organized opposition.

1. Do you favor the removal of the Engineering School from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill?
2. Should a student of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, who has resided there one year and has satisfactorily performed to the faculty his scholastic work, be disbarred from participation in athletic activities because he has received, and openly disclosed to the Athletic Council, reasonable financial assistance from alumni or friends of the University?

⁴⁶Foy Roberson to Frank Porter Graham, 9 February 1936, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

3. The present Athletic Council at Chapel Hill is composed of three representatives of the faculty, three representatives of the student body, and three representatives of the alumni, with its acts subject to veto by the President. Do you favor abolishing the present Athletic Council and Transferring sole authority over athletics at the University of North Carolina to the President of the consolidated University?
4. Do you favor aggressive action by the officers and directors of the Alumni Association on the behalf of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill?⁴⁷

This survey contained questions that were clearly intended to cast a negative opinion of Graham and his plan. These questions were meant to be answered by choosing “yes” or “no,” however the information in the survey was misleading for the public. In question one, the alumni were not sufficiently informed on the fact that multiple majors that were offered at more than one institution in the Consolidated University were only forced to be removed to avoid duplication. “The removal of the engineering school,” as stated in the survey paints a rather different image in reader's mind about the actions taken by Graham. The second question essentially is a non sequitur to any concerns regarding the Graham Plan. Its intention was to limit the influence of preferential treatment of students for financial aid due to their athletics skills, not to punish excelling students from participating in athletics. The third question contains an utter lie, considering the eleven point Graham Plan introduced and approved by the NASU had encouraged greater control of athletics by the faculty, and also had no mention of abolishing the Athletics Council from each university for it to be under the control to Graham himself. And lastly, after defaming Graham with deceptive questions, the survey asks people whether they would approve of the intervention of the Alumni Association, insinuating that the actions of

⁴⁷General Alumni Association of the University of North Carolina, *Ballot* (February 1936), in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

Graham requires an intervention from the association.

The next political opposition Graham faced was a false public rumor about the consideration by the university Board of Trustees to remove Graham from his duties. The first of these rumors in Graham's records came from Jonathan Daniels, editor of the *News and Observer*. On March 6, 1936, Daniels wrote to Graham, "The suggestion has come to me from two or three sources that there is a danger that you might offer, in connection with the recent crap, to resign as president of the University of North Carolina." Daniels continued that he assumed these were false rumors, but wanted to reinforce that his supporters would be deeply disappointed in the case Graham intended to, or actually did submit his resignation. Daniels suggested the "fight is not on you, but on liberalism."⁴⁸ To many people, Graham was the leader who represented these political values, or at least the agent which allowed for students to explore these political values.

The *New Bern Tribune* article on March 8, reported, "From all parts of the state especially around Charlotte, come the reports that the alumni of UNC are planning to oust the president of the Consolidated University, Dr. Frank P. Graham." The paper described the opposition groups as consisting of (1) big manufacturers who oppose Graham's interest in organized labor and "an equal chance for every man," (2) those who are the athletic minded, (3) those against the removal of the engineering school, (4) those opposed to his liberal ideas. The paper added that these men were in no way in touch with the contributions that Graham had made to the university. The article read, "He is the man who stood by and kept the high standard of the university through the worst days of the depression. Should he be forced out by a few selfish persons who may be able to fool the masses-- not close enough to the man or the university to really understand what is happening-- the University will sell for one of the greatest

⁴⁸Foy Roberson to Frank Porter Graham, 27 November 1935, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

losses and its history.”⁴⁹ Another article in the *New Bern Tribune* published just a few days later reported that Graham had turned down numerous job offers at other universities and the federal government, and that if “foolishly ousted” Graham would always remain an influential public figure. “Where will [the opposing alumni] find a man who will work so brilliantly, faithfully and hard for the cause of education North Carolina?” the paper concluded.⁵⁰

The rumor regarding Graham’s forced resignation was confirmed through an article in the *Evening Sun*, titled “Uproar in Tarheelia” published on March 12, 1936. The author, Gerald W. Johnson, reported, “Only a short time ago, the *Charlotte Observer* announced that an organized movement is afoot to kick out President Graham-- the second of his name-- at the trustees meeting next June.” Johnson supported Graham by claiming, “as a matter fact, he is not a Bolshevik, is not a radical, he's not even a liberal.” After twenty years of his close observation of American colleges and universities, “Pliant gentleman supple and slick gentlemen who know how to lick the boots of rich alumni in an artistic manner seem to prosper in that office more than the immovably honest.” According to Johnson, under this criteria, Graham made an extremely bad university president. Inserted, Johnson praised the Freedom of Expression established at UNC:

Already in fact, the impressions spreads abroad that the University of North Carolina is a state university in a commonwealth dominated by two industries that is not itself dominated; and this is enough to attract attention. The impression spread abroad that it is an institution in which a man can say what he believes to be true without fear of being

⁴⁹Jonathan Daniels to Frank Porter Graham, 6 March 1936, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

⁵⁰“Where is the Replacement?” *New Bern Tribune*, March 11, 1936, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

deserted by the president, if what he says draw a criticism; and this is extremely attractive to professors. The impressions spreads abroad that it is an institution in which the president and faculty are more interested and education then in football; and this is downright sensational.⁵¹

Furthermore, even in a state of budget cuts to the economic depression, the university, "has yet sufficient vitality to arouse the wrath of the self-seeking and the stupid" and exists as a model of optimism, that exemplify that money is not the only requisite for creating a wonderful institution of higher education to serve the community.

On March 29, 1936, the American Civil Liberties Union's (ACLU) committee on academic freedom wrote to Graham to see if the liberal faculty at UNC were under attack. They were particularly worried after receiving reports that certain groups were trying to force Graham's resignation.⁵² By April 13, the ACLU wrote back to Graham, "Thank you for your confidential reply to our letter. We are pleased to learn that the University of North Carolina does not seem to be in any immediate danger, in spite of threats and rumors. And we are delighted that the strength of your own position persists. If we can be of any assistance to you at any time, please do not hesitate to call upon us."⁵³ It is important to note that the ACLU was under investigation at the time by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). This demonstrates the severity of the threat launched against Graham by his political opponents when they accused him of being a left-leaning autocrat, which was even utilized to discuss Graham's

⁵¹Gerald W. Johnson, "Uproar in Tarheelia," *Evening Sun*, March 12, 1936, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

⁵²Committee on Academic Freedom of the American Civil Liberties Union to Frank Porter Graham, 28 March, 1936, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

⁵³Committee on Academic Freedom of the American Civil Liberties Union to Frank Porter Graham, 13 April, 1936, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

intentions with the future of collegiate athletics.

Just as opposing alumni feared, the Consolidated University's athletic program seemed to be on the decline under the Graham Plan. Newspapers speculated about the resignation of Coach Carl Snavely in April 1936 and blamed Graham. Coach Snavely had transferred to work for Cornell University, where he also received a \$2,000 pay increase.⁵⁴ This resignation further fueled the alumni's arguments for how vital athletics was in maintaining a reputation for the university.

However, some sports writers regretted what they had previously published on this matter. Wade L. Cavin, wrote on April 9, 1936, "I take this opportunity to write to you in connection with my editorial which appeared in the *Greensboro Daily News* on April 5 concerning the recent resignation of Coach Carl G. Snavely... At the time the article was written, circumstances cause the author to believe that the Graham Plan was the cause for the resignation of Coach Snavely, but he has since become more enlightened on the subject... I am of the opinion that your plan is the greatest proposal in recent years to rid athletics in our southern universities and colleges of corruption and ruination."⁵⁵

On September 19, 1936, the Southern Conference officially sent out their pamphlets in regards to the new changes that were made to the conference's bylaws.⁵⁶ The pamphlet laid out rules derived from the Graham Plan which was adopted at its meeting earlier that year in the conference. But this effort also failed, as few colleges in the Southern Conference strictly followed the rules.⁵⁷ Many executive members were also replaced in the Southern Conference

⁵⁴ Stone, 287.

⁵⁵ Wade Cavin to Frank Porter Graham, 9 April 1936, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

⁵⁶ Southern Conference, *Extract from By-laws* (September 1936), in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

⁵⁷ Smith, 87.

with the new term, and not all were supportive of the Graham Plan.

Proponents of the plan continued to solicit feedback from other university presidents and urged the Southern Conference president to call for a special meeting to discuss this matter. Forest Fletcher, president of the conference, wrote back to Graham indicating that only a few presidents were in favor of having the special session, and therefore, the conference would not be meeting that November.⁵⁸ Graham desperately continued his work, and prepared amendments to be introduced at the next Southern Conference despite the lack of enthusiasm from others. Meanwhile, the nearby Southeastern Conference implemented measures for their athletic conference that directly contradicted the Graham Plan and put the athletic teams in the Southern Conference at a competitive disadvantage. The thirteen institutions that were members of the neighboring Southeastern Conference, actually began deregulating the awarding of athletic scholarships.⁵⁹ This move by the Southeastern Conference would increase scholarships, helped them attract better student-athletes.

By the annual meeting of the Southern Conference, which took place on December 3, 1936, the Graham Plan had few defenders left. The President of the Southern Conference had retracted his initial support for the plan, and the six presidents who helped Graham slowly retracted their help. Despite the University of Virginia being an original supporter of the Graham Plan in the conference, soon after this meeting it entirely withdrew from the Southern Conference to escape the regulations.⁶⁰ Although Graham himself came prepared with his amendments to strengthen the plan, the modifications proposed by others undermined the

⁵⁸Forest Fletcher to Frank Porter Graham, 12 October 1936, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

⁵⁹Frank P. Graham to J. T. Dowd, 31 January 1936, in "Frank Porter Graham Records."

⁶⁰John Sayle Watterson, *College Football: History, Spectacle, Controversy*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 185.

purpose of the Graham Plan by permitting financial aid to be given to students if it were not “primarily” for athletic ability. UNC’s faculty opted to adopt the deregulated version of the plan modified by the Southern Conference.⁶¹ Graham had lost his attempt to keep athletic money from the academic priority of American Universities. In 1938, alumni successfully created a tax-exempt foundation independent of the university, the Educational Foundation, to raise money for funding student-athletes, forcing this fight to come to an end.⁶²

This crusade to reform College Athletics, which Graham called the toughest fight he had ever faced, had come to a very unfortunate loss for him. To Graham, the issue of athletics was one facet of what he saw as a larger issue—the intrusion of commercial and political influences and principles into the sphere of university education. He saw these, and nearly all other, outside influences which sought to dictate the operations of universities as inherently corrupting and debasing, intentionally or otherwise, the broader philosophical purpose of education. Reinstating the amateur status of student-athletes was, to him, an absolutely critical component to preserving their role as being students and members of the university community first and foremost. Graham believed, and warned that, ticket sales would become paramount “under the triple pressure to carry all the football load, most of the other major and minor sports, and the athletic subsidies” which rings clearly true today in a way that was not so obvious to his colleagues at the time.⁶³ The faculty ignored his pleas, instead adopted a resolution that merely encouraged alumni to submit “any assistance” to “responsible faculty committees.”⁶⁴

Graham’s perspective on this matter was shaped by his fear of a future in which the student athlete’s experience was that of, “the auction block, upon which boys in high school sell

⁶¹Snider, 222.

⁶²Smith, 87.

⁶³Thomason, "One Man Had a Plan to Keep Money Out of College Sports."

⁶⁴Thomason, "One Man Had a Plan to Keep Money Out of College Sports."

themselves to the highest bidder.”⁶⁵ Graham foresaw a large shift in the philosophy of higher education by treating students as an asset to provide benefits to the university, rather than the university serving student needs and serving as a public good and the facilitator and moderator of free thinking and student development. The defeat of the Graham Plan did not mark the end of his liberal crusades. Frank Porter Graham continued to fight for the causes he believed in for the rest of his life, on the national and international stage.

While the Graham Plan had to be discarded, in 1946, President Harry S. Truman appointed Graham to the President's committee on Civil Rights. The committee combatted police brutality, discrimination, and voting restrictions. Graham's fight for civil rights aggravated many conservatives. In a report of the HUAC in 1947, it attacked Graham as “one of those liberals who saw a predilection for affiliation with various Communist-inspired front organizations.”⁶⁶

Graham left the university in 1949, when Governor W. Kerr Scott appointed him to replace Senator Joseph Melville Broughton, who had recently passed away. Just one year later, Graham had to face re-election. After just missing the majority of the votes needed in the first primary, Graham and his opponent Willis Smith competed in the second primary. Frank Porter Graham ultimately lost because of the unpopularity of his views on civil rights, his supposed affiliations with communist front groups, and accusations that he supported desegregation.⁶⁷

After this campaign, historians often refer to the latter years of Graham's life as a period of “exile.” Being appointed on the United Nation's Security Council Graham worked as a

⁶⁵Thomason, "One Man Had a Plan to Keep Money Out of College Sports."

⁶⁶ The Carolina Story, "Criticism of Graham in the McCarthy Era," A Virtual Museum of University History, accessed October 08, 2016, <https://museum.unc.edu/exhibits/show/graham/photo-of-graham-taken-by-allar>.

⁶⁷Jonathan Gentry, "All that's Not Fit to Print: Anticommunist and White Supremacist Campaign Literature in the 1950 North Carolina Democratic Senate Primary," *North Carolina Historical Review* 82, no. 1 (January 2005): 40, accessed November 8, 2016, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost.

mediator in the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan. The initial three month commitment, turned into a nineteen year career in foreign relations. In spite of Graham's work overseas, his passion seemed to have always stayed with university affairs. He spent his last days in Chapel Hill, participating as a volunteer on campus and meeting students in his home. He passed away in 1972.

In historian William Link's analysis, the failure of the Graham Plan was the reason why reformation in collegiate athletics could not be brought up for two more decades in the political discourse.⁶⁸ But the persistent nature of this issue, throughout the last century, demonstrated that Graham was a pioneer in this very important cause. Even in the 1960s, athletics were bringing about scandals.

In May of 1961, UNC President Bill Friday received a phone call notifying him of a gambling scheme. Gamblers had paid off N.C. State University's basketball players to shave points off the game with Georgia Tech at the Dixie Classic. When N.C. State actually won the game by a small margin, the gamblers met the players outside the stadium and demanded to have the money returned at gunpoint. This was not the only game tampered with bribery. Historians who write about Bill Friday's cancellation of the Dixie Classic in the 1960s, almost always include a discussion about how Graham tried to prevent such scandals through reform in the 1930s. Friday even considered restoring the Graham Plan, although such drastic change to college athletics was impossible to hold accountable by the 1960s, but shared similar concerns to Graham.⁶⁹

⁶⁸William A. Link, *William Friday: Power, Purpose, and American Higher Education*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 98.

⁶⁹Rob Christensen, "Bill Friday Brought Reforms after College Gambling Scandal," News and Observer, October 28, 2014, <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/rob-christensen/article10110344.html>.

Unfortunately, collegiate athletics has evolved into a much larger industry over the last century. In 2015, the median expenditure on athletics for National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) registered universities totaled to \$25,123,468. Increasingly, sports were being subsidized by student tuition and fees. Of that, the median of the institutional subsidies provided for athletics at those colleges was 66.38 percent, which means the funds in which students pay to receive an education is the primary source of revenue for collegiate athletics.⁷⁰

Graham's concerns regarding the commercialization of collegiate athletics have only become worse since universities realized their potential to exploit the "amateur" status of student-athletes. The recruitment of student-athletes differs from scholarly recruitment because the practice often fails to provide mutually beneficial opportunities for the participating student. While varsity athletics can provide marginal benefits to student-athletes, its business model extracts profit from student-athletes by under compensating them for their labor.⁷¹

The consequences of this industry extends to all aspects of the university. It affects both students, student-athletes, and faculty through the skewed priorities of university administrations. Perhaps if the Graham Plan had succeeded and the Southern Conference could have been more principled in its fight to mitigate athletic subsidies, our universities today could be much more accessible, affordable, and equitable institutions.

⁷⁰"NCAA Finance," USA Today, accessed March 16, 2016.
<http://sports.usatoday.com/ncaa/finances/>.

⁷¹Dave Zirin, *Game Over: How Politics Has Turned the Sports World Upside down*, (New York: New Press, 2013), 107-134.

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