

Mini-Wayback: the Last Time the Faculty Senate Discussed Football



By Paul LaFollette, Editor

In keeping with the theme of most of this issue of the *Herald*, I would like to go back 25 years to May 1991. First, a little background. Between 1983 and 1989, Temple's football team had only two winning seasons. In one of those, 1986, Temple's six wins were ultimately forfeited when it was discovered that there was an ineligible player on the roster. In 1991, Temple joined the Big East Conference. Since this was in the midst of a year in which the state had cut 6.4 million dollars from Temple's funding, the Faculty Senate viewed this decision negatively. Most believed, rightly it turned out, that this would be a conference in which we could not compete and that Temple football would become an even bigger money sink than it had been during the 1980's. In addition, the 1990 faculty strike was fresh in everybody's mind.

It was in this atmosphere that on May 17, 1991, the Faculty Senate voted 73-5 to ask the administration to begin the orderly elimination of intercollegiate football unless it could diminish the program's recurring deficits. The major argument in favor of the motion was that academics should take precedence over football.

In 1988, the Board of Trustees created a plan to cut the football deficit over a five year period, a plan which, during the intervening years, had never met its targets. Lynn Miller, chair of the Political Science Department, argued on this basis that "the money that is being lost today is considerably beyond what the trustees said was an appropriate amount to lose," and that subsidizing football was "an extremely serious matter" given the current budgetary problems.

Mark Haller of the History Department said that "We have the most irresponsible football policy in the country. If we are going to have more money for the library, we have got to have substantial cuts in intercollegiate sports."

Following the vote, Jack Freeman, Temple's vice president, argued that football gives Temple name recognition and helps recruitment, saying "The fact is that the sports-minded public often pays more attention to what the football team does than what our academic programs do. That's not something we like very much, but it's a fact of life." ♦