

CAA SUPPORTS THE MEMORIAL STADIUM CAMPAIGN

Sept. 17, 2007

A message from CAA President Darek DeFreece:

Today, the Board of Directors of the California Alumni Association unanimously passed a resolution in support of the University regarding the Memorial Stadium Campaign. The campaign is ambitious. It will retrofit and enhance an historic structure, it will build a state-of-the-art training facility for student-athletes from thirteen different disciplines and it will set forth a plan to completely change the face of the southeast quadrant of the University campus.

The timing of the CAA resolution is important. Tomorrow, in an Alameda Superior Court Room, a judge will preside over a hearing pitting the Berkeley City Council against the University and its plans for Memorial Stadium. The Berkeley City Council rebuffed numerous attempts by the University to settle the issue short of this hearing date. Alongside of this hearing occurs another trial of sorts--the continued occupation of a grove of oak trees by Berkeley residents in front of the stadium. While as the occupation of the trees makes for an interesting, and media-friendly, circus in effect it has sidetracked the real issue. Lost in the headlines is the University's consistent proposal to replace trees planted mostly during a 1923 landscaping project on a three-to-one ratio. Arguments for and against the trees have replaced the question of seismic safety for hundreds of student-athletes and conceivably, thousands of spectators.

The larger issue of course is of the future of the stadium. The Memorial Stadium Campaign must continue and must succeed. Our beloved stadium, while majestic and arguably one of the most beautiful contest fields in all of collegiate sports, is aging. Seismically suspect, its facilities are comfortably at the bottom of the Pacific-10 conference. In order for Memorial Stadium to receive its much-needed facelift, student-athletes and staff must safely relocate to another location. The opportunity to build the training center for the first phase of the campaign is therefore present and makes unarguable sense.

Alumni from all over have already spoken on this issue. They believe in the diligent work that the University has done to show that its proposal is sound and principled. It is with the voice of the alumni firmly backing the Board that the Board passes and introduces its resolution in support of the University. The CAA urges the Berkeley City Council to come to the table for meaningful settlement discussions. The CAA urges our 424,000 alumni to raise its collective voice in support of our beloved alma mater.

Fiat Lux,

Darek DeFreece '93
President
California Alumni Association