

# SPORTS

## Ready or Not?

*Opinion: Some students are happy about the move to MEAC; others long for the good old days of CIAA*

**Grant Fulton**  
PHOTO EDITOR

Do you ever get the feeling that instead of moving up to Division I in the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference [MEAC], that Winston-Salem State University should have remained in the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association [CIAA]? The CIAA is a Division II Historically Black College and University conference composed of 10 schools in the south. The states include Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina.

The North Carolina A&T cheerleaders said in a battle against WSSU that, "We don't care what you did in the CIAA." However, we cannot forget what we did while we were in Division II. We were the first HBCU to win a national basketball championship. No matter what division we are in we cannot forget all that we have accomplished while being in the CIAA.

This season, the Rams have not had big crowds at any of their basketball games. There has been an average attendance of 980 people at the 10 mens and women's double-header games. In football, the attendance was much better, especially when they faced rivals such as North Carolina A&T and North Carolina Central in Bowman Gray Stadium.

"I prefer the CIAA because the environment and atmosphere of a CIAA game or event is undoubtedly more intense than that of the MEAC," said junior Alonzo Turner.

In the MEAC it seems like many fans do not follow their team on the road to other universities, or they just do not want to come see their team play against WSSU. Some schools may even feel that WSSU should not even be in the MEAC.

"Although the MEAC is Division I, it does not receive as much support from the black community as the CIAA (i.e. the CIAA and MEAC tournaments)," Turner said.

The CIAA tournament is the third largest college basketball tournament held and it still draws faithful crowds from teams such as Norfolk State University, which was previously in the CIAA before joining the MEAC.

The MEAC now holds its annual basketball tournament in Raleigh, which used to be the home of the CIAA tournament that could not draw a big crowd. "I will not be attending the MEAC tournament even though it will be held in Raleigh, and that is where I am from...instead, I'm going to the CIAA tournament," said Turner.

"It doesn't really matter. It's not the conference that makes the event. It is the teams and the people that show up in support of their favorite team. With many CIAA teams moving to the MEAC, all that is needed is for the fans to bring their enthusiasm to this tournament and the MEAC will be just as big," said senior Joshua Blackwell.

"CIAA... COMPLETELY!! WE HAD MORE FUN IN THE CIAA!!," said sophomore James Locks, a fan of the CIAA.

"Before I was a student I went to the CIAA. It focuses more on HBCU and them sticking together! They had functions to further people's education about HBCUs and with that said; they have a day dedicated to fun/laughter, and a day for encouraging students to attend HBCU's during the basketball tournament!"

"What more can you ask for?" Locks continued to say.

"Moreover, when your school played against another school... the opposing school would come with their band, cheerleaders, and fans. Which increased the anticipation of going and supporting your school at each game. But a guess it's about the money, and not about memories and fun! I guess that's what happened to the SCHOOL SPIRIT!"

**Steven J. Gaither**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

For more than 60 years, Winston-Salem State was one of the best and most consistent athletic programs in the CIAA. WSSU produced top-flight athletes like Earl Monroe, Cleo Hill, Tim Newsome, Richard Huntley and the winningest HBCU basketball coach Clarence "Big House" Gaines. Monroe and Gaines helped the Rams win their first and only NCAA College Division National title in 1967.

What the Rams did during their more than 60 years in the CIAA cannot be diminished, but WSSU can't afford to live

in the past. The CIAA is not the powerhouse conference it was in Monroe's day.

Integration has led the best college athletes to bigger, Division I schools. Over the years, the talent level of the teams the Rams put on the court began to diminish. The Rams went as far as they could in the CIAA, but that era is over.

Granted, the CIAA is probably the best Division II conference, it's still Division II. It's like being the smartest in the Jackson family;

not too many people care. Going Division I and joining the MEAC was a great move for the Rams for several reasons. Many people who long for the CIAA days only do so for sentimental value. They always want to bring up the tournament, which is one of the most successful in all of college sports, regardless of division. Look at it this way, the CIAA tournament only lasts four to five days. What about the other 51 weeks of the year?

Also the move to the MEAC has given

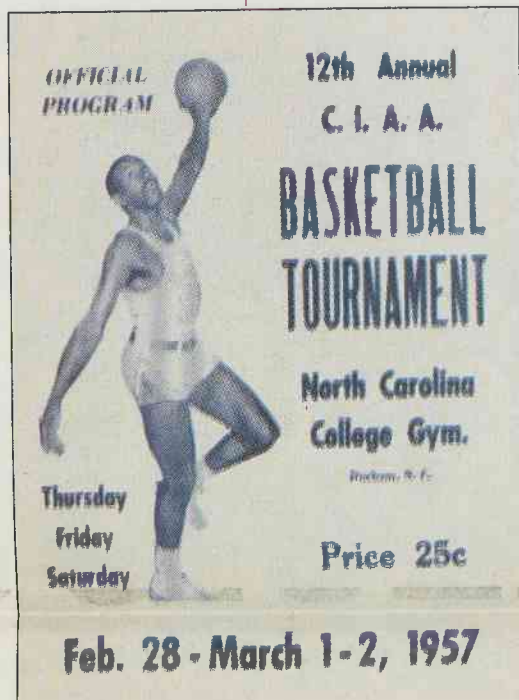
us a chance to compete against our most natural rival, North Carolina A&T.

A&T was one of the teams that left the CIAA in 1971 for the MEAC. For years the two teams continued to play each other as non-conference foes but recent restrictions on playing Division II schools hurt the rivalry. The Rams and Aggies didn't meet on the basketball court for ten years. And in football, the Aggies and Rams didn't play for seven years. WSSU's first Division I football win came over A&T in 2006 and the Rams defeated the Aggies again last season in front of an announced crowd of more than 22,000. And the first meeting between the two teams on the court in nearly a decade resulted in a sold out crowd at Corbett Center, although the Rams lost. Things will get even better, should North Carolina Central be placed back in the MEAC. The new conference will also give us a chance to renew rivalries with old CIAA teams such as Hampton, Norfolk State, and Morgan State.

Playing in the MEAC also means a chance to play in the NCAA Tournament, better known as "March Madness." The winner of the MEAC tournament gets an automatic bid to play in the tournament, which gives every school that participates tremendous free exposure. Once they are eligible to play in the MEAC Tournament in 2009-10, the Rams will have a shot at making it to the NCAA tournament, where anything could happen. Just think of this dream scenario: the Rams win 20 games, win the MEAC tournament, and upset say, Duke. Every casual college basketball fan in the world will know about Winston-Salem State.

Finally, playing in the MEAC will give WSSU a higher profile among HBCUs. Many of the most prestigious HBCUs in the country, including Howard and Hampton, play in the MEAC. Becoming a winner in the MEAC could lead to students who want to go to a top-flight HBCU to look closer to the CIAA.

Bottom line, we can't forget what WSSU did in the CIAA, but we also have to look to the future. The move to Division I and the MEAC has already been made, so let's look at the positives and support our teams.



## SGA opposes increase of athletic fees

**Steven J. Gaither**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

At the Student Body Forum Meeting on Wed, Feb. 20, Winston-Salem State's Student Government Association distributed copies of a letter that Student Body President Robert Terrell Stephens sent on Feb. 11 to WSSU Chancellor Donald L. Reaves.

The letter contains seven request of the student body to the chancellor, the last of which addresses an increase in students' athletic fees. The increase, which will be enacted prior to the 2008-09 school year, calls for students to pay \$579.80 total in athletic fees, an increase of \$18 (per semester) more than the current school year's fee.

"There's few of us who play, and a lot of us who pay," Stephens said.

In the letter, Stephens recommends that at most, the fees increase by \$10. Since WSSU announced it would leave the NCAA's Division-II in the fall of 2004, students have seen a continuing increase of athletic fees. In 2005-06, the school's last year in Division-II, full-time students were charged an athletic fee of \$416. In 2006-07, the school's first year of Division I, athletic fees increased to \$444. For the current 2007-08 school year, students are being charged \$544 total.

According to the letter, the SGA is displeased with the chancellor for what they feel is a disregard of their opinion. The letter claims that Reaves disregarded the students opinions expressed last fall regarding the increases.

The letter states, in part: "You had at your disposal minutes from a Tuition and Fees Student Town Hall Forum which took place Nov. 26, 2007, audio recording the student feedback, in which students were vehemently opposed to an increase, as well as minutes from the Tuition and Fee Committee, which recommended at most a \$10 increase, with specific fundraising suggestions for the department of athletics. Not only did you disregard the student body, you facilitated the eradication of student body morale,"

WSSU Director of Athletics Dr. Percy "Chico" Caldwell said that the athletic fee is just one of several fees that will increase next school year and that the chancellor has the final say with regard to tuition.

"The Chancellor has the option to decide how to disperse the funds," he said. Caldwell said that prices for auxiliary funds are rising across the university and the UNC System.

He also said that the athletic department originally asked for a \$100 increase per student for the next school year, Caldwell said that the increase would go toward salaries and to accommodate rising fuel prices for the buses that transport student-athletes and students enroute to athletic events.

"It won't matter if athletics get \$36 or nothing, all auxiliary services have to increase to keep up with the costs," he said. "If students want a quality athletic program, our costs have to come from somewhere. There is no state support for athletics."

Caldwell says that there are only three avenues of revenue for athletics.

Student fees, which account for \$ 3.1 million of the department's \$4.3 million estimated budget, make up the bulk of the financial support. Gate receipts from athletic events are another source of revenue; however, the only programs that generate revenue in the athletic department are football and basketball games, which so far this year have brought in around \$265,000.



CHANCELLOR REEVES

According to Caldwell football and basketball are the only sports that produce revenue. The other 12 programs do not.

A third source of revenue is fundraising activities. So far this season, fundraising activities have accounted for nearly \$480,000. Caldwell said that he agrees with Stephens that alumni need to support the program. Currently, only 70 to 75 out of 14,000 alumni are currently giving to the athletic department. Caldwell said that he recently held a meeting with alumni in Atlanta to address the need for giving.

"We're trying to use students concern to go after the alumni," he said. "We figured if the students could pay \$579 every year, then every alum should be able to pay \$250 annually."

## Happy Spring Break

from *The News Argus*

Due to Spring break, *The News Argus* will not publish March 10 or 17.

Watch for our online-only edition March 24<sup>th</sup> at [www.thenewsargus.com](http://www.thenewsargus.com).

We'll be back on your favorite newsstand March 31.

