



University of Pittsburgh

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Confidential

May 28, 2010

John Marinatto
Commissioner
Big East Conference
15 Park Row West
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear John,

As you know from a wide range of past dealings, the University of Pittsburgh has been one of the most committed members of the Big East Conference. Speaking more personally, whenever there has been a conference need to be served, I have tried to step up and do my share.

Through that work, you and I have developed what I consider to be a special relationship. I write now, then, out of respect for you and what might be viewed as an abundance of caution. You and I have talked periodically in recent months, and I know that you have talked to others who also have talked to me. It is my sense, then, that you understand my position with respect to our current situation. However, I want to minimize the risk that there ever could be any serious misunderstanding between us and, to that end, will begin with a brief recitation of recent history.

In late December, responding to news that conference expansion could have an impact on the Big East, Steve Pederson and I traveled to Notre Dame for a meeting with John Jenkins and Jack Swarbrick. We believed that our four-way discussion could prove to be important for a combination of reasons – because of Father Jenkins' role as Conference Chair, because he and I enjoy a particularly close and mutually respectful relationship, and because Notre Dame and Pitt had played such key roles in the still-relatively-recent re-configuration of the conference.

The principal purpose of our meeting was to discuss ways in which the Big East might best position itself during a period of unanticipated uncertainty. As one consequence of that session, Father Jenkins reached out to Jack DeGioia, and Steve Pederson and I reached out to some of our "football-playing schools" that had been mentioned as possible "expansion targets." Our mission was straightforward – we wanted to better understand what the leaders of other member universities were thinking about their ongoing relationship with the Big East.

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The general message that Steve and I took from our conversations was that university leaders did not believe that they could commit to the Big East, consistent with their fiduciary responsibilities, without what Jack DeGioia has artfully labeled a "clearer value proposition." In the early weeks of the calendar year, then, Steve and I – in partnership with Jack Swarbrick and John Jenkins and with the support of Tim Perneti and Dick McCormick – began advocating for an assessment of "future worth." That work later was assigned by the Executive Committee to a small group of athletic directors and more recently also has come to involve Paul Tagliabue.

Steve and I continue to believe that such efforts are critical to the Conference, are willing to help push those efforts forward, and do not believe that there are any misunderstandings with respect to our own position. Indeed, when he opened our recent telephone meeting, Jack DeGioia described the context (and I obviously am paraphrasing him now) as an effort to create a situation that might lead a member institution like the University of Pittsburgh to decide to stay in the Big East, even if it had opportunities to move elsewhere.

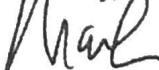
To be absolutely clear, John, I do not know if any such opportunities will come to Pitt. I also do not know what we would do if such an opportunity did come our way. To be equally explicit, though, the fact that Steve and I are participating in these processes should not be viewed as a sign that we would not seriously assess any such opportunities if they did arise. To the contrary, we almost certainly would do so.

Should that position lead you to believe that we should step back from further participation in this work, you should simply let us know, and we will graciously retreat. Because Father Jenkins and President DeGioia not only are actively involved in this work but also are people for whom I have such high regard, I also am copying them on this message.

Again, John, I am not sending this letter to sound any kind of alarm. Instead, I am writing to reinforce what I believe to be existing understandings and because of my strong desire to act honorably toward the Conference and toward you, as its Commissioner and as my friend.

I had intended to craft a letter of this type over the weekend and to send it to you next week. However, when I saw your email message raising the possibility of a conference call meeting before then, I thought that I should act more expeditiously. Hopefully, the content of the letter has not suffered too much from that rush.

Sincerely,



Mark A. Nordenberg

c: President Jack DiGioia
Father John Jenkins