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We undersigned faculty members of the Department of History have been informed that a majority of the Council of Chairs for the College of Arts and Sciences recently voted in favor of a statement that calls on the College to “resist any attempts from outside the relevant Department to influence curricular decisions based solely on the specific content of any courses that have been duly approved by the Department and the relevant College-wide faculty Curriculum Committee.” We strongly support this defense of elementary academic freedom.

More specifically, we protest the College’s successful effort to prevent the teaching of History 333, “Big-Time College Sports and the Rights of Athletes,” as planned by our esteemed colleague Professor Jay Smith for Fall 2011. Professor Smith is a widely recognized authority on this subject, the relevant faculty committees in the Department and the College duly approved the course, and Professor Smith taught it very successfully in both the Summer School and Fall semester of 2011. Contrary to some accounts in the media, it is clear to us that this was not an autonomous “chair’s decision.” Clearly, this course and the professor teaching it were singled out for unprecedented and adverse scrutiny. Under these circumstances, our respected department chair, Professor Fitz Brundage, felt pressured by the administration to cancel any future offerings of the course until Fall 2012, concerned about adverse consequences for the department if he proceeded with the scheduling of the course in the Fall 2011. In the absence of any other credible explanation, we believe that the College took this action to block broader understanding of the recent scandals in UNC’s major intercollegiate athletic programs and

other

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