

University Makes the Difficult Decision to Change Mascot

After several years of careful consideration and discussion, leaders at PLNU have determined that the university's current mascot, the Crusader, should be retired in favor of an image that more positively represents the university's mission and identity.

A formal rationale adopted by the administrative Cabinet, summarized the concerns around the mascot name. "The Crusader mascot was adopted in a time when the meaning of and reaction to the term was much more clearly identifiable with the honorable aspects of a positive cause, particularly in a Christian institutional sense," the rationale reads. "Additionally, the mascot was developed in an era of men-only intercollegiate athletics, thereby making the male design of the mascot more reflective of the athletic program. However, both of these conditions have been significantly altered in the passing of time, particularly in the last twenty years."

The document continues, "Considerable debate has continued regarding the wisdom of using a mascot that is historically identified with a particularly violent and deadly period of Christian history. Recent global religious fundamentalism has increased the attention and disregard for the Crusader symbol in many aspects of the campus community."

Point Loma is following a number of other Christian

colleges and universities who have also left behind the Crusader image, including Wheaton College. Even the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association has opted to use the descriptor "mission" when referring to what were once Graham's evangelistic "crusades."

Today, at Point Loma, the mascot is used primarily by the university's sports teams, student programs and on logo merchandise.

Across the university community, the announcement of the change has met with both approval and criticism. "We are grateful for those who care about the university and this issue and have been willing to express their opinions and suggestions," said Gordon Golsan, vice president for Student Development, who oversees the athletic program. "We acknowledge that there are deep attachments and long-standing traditions associated with the Crusader and we certainly want to honor our history as we go about this process."

Alumni may remember various iterations of the Crusader mark over the years, including a charging Crusader on a steed, used in Pasadena, and the more cartoonish Charlie Crusader, which appeared in the 1970s. The mark was updated in 1998 when the institution changed to university status.



To facilitate the change, Dr. Brower has appointed a task force, comprised of representatives from faculty, staff, current students, alumni and coaching staff, to choose a new mascot. The task force has established criteria for the new image: it should communicate 1) a sense of place, especially the proximity of the main campus to the ocean; 2) the institution's spiritual identity; 3) dignity and strength and; 4) be appropriate for both men's and women's athletic teams.

Members of the task force have surveyed the groups they represent asking for suggestions for a new mascot. From those surveyed, hundreds of options have been suggested. Once all alternatives have been considered, the task force will make a recommendation to the President and Cabinet who will make the final decision. At that time, work will begin on a new graphic representation.

Viewpoint readers are invited to express their views and make suggestions for the new mascot, keeping in mind the criteria mentioned above. Send comments by email to mascot@ptloma.edu or by mail to Mascot Taskforce, 3900 Lomaland Drive, San Diego, California 92106.

The final decision is due this spring. An announcement will appear in an upcoming issue of the *Viewpoint* or on the university's web site at www.ptloma.edu. ♦