## CAMPAIGN FOR ALCOHOL-FREE SPORTS TV

A PROJECT OF THE CENTER FOR SCIENCE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

September 7, 2004

Ronald Stratten
Vice President for Education Services
National Collegiate Athletic Association
700 W. Washington Street
P.O. Box 6222
Indianapolis, IN 46206-6222

Dear Mr. Stratten:

We were surprised and disappointed to see you, as a spokesperson for the NCAA, praise an obviously flawed and biased survey recently conducted on behalf of the beer industry. That public relations gimmick transparently attempts to whitewash the substantial alcohol risks among college students and obscure the true extent of alcohol-related destructive behavior by students at college sporting events.

The "2004 Safe Celebration Study" of fan behavior at college sporting events does not pass the laugh test for at least three reasons:

- 1) By excluding from the sample all students younger than 21 a significant number, if not the majority of students on campuses across America the study inevitably turned a blind eye to a large share of the evident student drinking and drinking problems on campus. The researchers might as well have polled nursing home residents to obtain the sanitized data they sought.
- 2) Funding from Anheuser-Busch casts serious doubt on the objectivity of the study. The "good news" tone of the release and your comments touting the study are in sharp contrast to what most presidents, deans of students, and campus police would describe as a serious and too often dangerous problem on campus and in college communities. Not surprisingly, Anheuser-Busch's study partners the NCAA, NASULGC, and the TEAM Coalition all profit from beer money and have received substantial financial support from the beer industry over the years.
- 3) Even the purported glowing results of the study while grossly unrepresentative and unreliable provide quite disturbing conclusions regarding alcohol-related problems in college sports. We can't imagine that you or college officials on campuses around the country consider a football weekend successful if it involves as many as 8% or more of students **over**21"fight[ing] with other fans", "throw[ing] items on the field", "throw[ing] beverages", "destroy[ing] school or city property", "destroy[ing] others' personal property", and/or "riot[ing]". When you add in the students under 21 who are the heaviest drinkers on campus you can have literally hundreds of students at well-attended college sports events engaging in destructive and harmful behavior.

The results in this survey actually reveal why the NCAA, Ohio State, and other concerned schools called a "summit" on "celebratory riots" in February of 2003 to examine the proliferation of college sports riots. This bogus study and your public comments in support of it, however, raise serious questions about the NCAA's commitment to address seriously the problems related to alcohol-fueled fan misbehavior at college sporting events.

Additionally, the NCAA continues to undermine its credibility in speaking publicly on this issue by accepting significant funds from the beer industry – and by its exclusively exempting beer from alcohol advertising prohibitions on NCAA event broadcasts.

We strongly urge you and the NCAA to disavow the beer-industry study. We also urge the NCAA to support Ohio State, Northwestern, Minnesota, Baylor, and the 215 other member schools that to date have endorsed the College Commitment to break the tie between the beer industry and televised college athletic events. Now's the time to adopt a policy that, in the near future, would eliminate alcohol ads on all NCAA broadcasts. That would represent a real leadership step toward addressing the problems of underage and excessive drinking in college sports.

Sincerely,

Jay Hedlund Manager

Campaign for Alcohol-Free Sports TV

George A. Hacker

Director

**Alcohol Policies Project** 

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cc: President Myles Brand

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Presidents, NCAA Division I-A schools