

Brayton Bleeds Aggie Blue and Gold

UC DAVIS SPORTS MAY GO BIG-TIME

From his office about the length of a football field from the GSM building at UC Davis, Scott Brayton '96 calls the plays in a team effort to put publicity points on the scoreboard for the University's sports programs.

As director of marketing and promotions for intercollegiate athletics at UC Davis, Brayton oversees corporate relations, ticket sales for revenue-producing sports, promotions for all 25 men's and women's athletic teams and the Aggie Auction, the Athletic Department's annual fund-raising event.

In November the whole game changed for Brayton—and the entire campus. Undergraduates voted a fee increase to financially support a move by UC Davis to the Big West Conference and from Division II to Division I—the highest level for intercollegiate sports. Not long after, UC Davis notified the National Collegiate Athletic Association that the campus is considering a shift to Division I status, a decision Chancellor Larry Vanderhoef must make by June 1.

"It's one of the most exciting times we've ever been in during my 12 years on campus," said Brayton, who has worked tirelessly as an undergraduate, MBA student and now staff member to advance UC Davis athletics.

"To be able to move up to the top level of competition is something that most other aspects of the university have already accomplished," Brayton added. "We have some of the best professors. Our graduate schools, undergraduate programs and students are going up against the best in the country. With all the other avenues of the university playing at the Division I level already, why shouldn't athletics? That's the question the students answered in force."

The move up would generate more interest in UC Davis by potential students, corporations and the general public. Brayton knows first hand what it takes to build a base of support. He was recently honored for his efforts to promote the Aggie Pack, the nation's largest student spirit organization, founded 10 years ago, which is credited with infusing new energy into campus sporting events. But without national media exposure and the name recognition that comes with playing in big-time college sports, Brayton said the university, and, as a result the GSM, will continue to face challenges getting attention.

"One of the biggest things is the fact that CEOs across the nation have no idea about UC Davis simply because the football team won't play in the Rose Bowl and our basketball team won't be on TV in the March Madness competition," Brayton observed.



"Having the opportunity to compete in high-profile sporting competitions will only benefit all programs, including the Graduate School of Management."

When Brayton earned his MBA in 1996, *U.S. News & World Report* for the first time ranked the GSM among the top 50 business schools in the nation. "My first look was to see which universities were in the top 25," Brayton recalled. "And I asked Dean Smiley what it would take for the GSM to get there."

The answer became clear after Brayton studied the rankings closer—22 of the top-25 business schools were at universities that had Division I football programs—a trend that continues today. "I'm not a statistical expert, but that's statistically significant to me," he said. "That's all I needed to see."

Brayton believes the equation could change if the move to Division I becomes a reality. "For every GSM graduate along with those in the undergraduate world, the value of their UC Davis degrees would shoot up tremendously," he said. ■

Scott Brayton '96, director of sports marketing and promotions for UC Davis athletics, works courtside at this year's "Break the Record Night" basketball games at Recreation Hall.

