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January 30, 2015

UCLA INTRODUCES SCHOLARSHIP SEATING PROGRAM FOR 2016

Los Angeles – Following more than a year of extensive research and analysis, UCLA's Department of Intercollegiate Athletics announced today that it will introduce a new UCLA Scholarship Seating Program prior to the start of the 2016 football season.

In what is only the second modification to Wooden Athletic Fund (WAF) giving level requirements since football priority seating was instituted in 1989, and the first since 2003, all UCLA football season ticket holders in seat-back locations will be required to meet current minimum per seat donation levels in 2016, of which 80 percent is tax deductible.

With a desire to create a cycle of sustainable excellence through sustainable reinvestment of revenue, UCLA Athletics commissioned a process that included data and survey collection from season seat holders, interviews with each Pac-12 university, a focus group, a national review of Power Five Conference institutions and a comprehensive look at schools recently implementing major football priority seating changes to assess where UCLA Football stood in relation to other nationally prominent programs.

Key among the findings was that in an effort to keep costs for season ticket holders down over the years, UCLA Athletics is one of the only major college athletic programs in the country that does not commensurately align football season ticket locations and donor giving levels due to grandfathering. As a result, UCLA now risks being placed at a significant disadvantage to other nationally prominent football programs should the current system continue.

Notably under the Scholarship Seating Program, UCLA's highest per seat donation requirement will rank seventh in the conference; below USC, Stanford, Arizona State and Washington among others. Of the 86,679 seats in the Rose Bowl, 33,443 seat back locations will fall under this program. Of those locations, more than half will either see a decrease in the donation requirement (44.84 percent) or no change in the donation requirement at all (6.71 percent). There will also be no change to UCLA's student seating location, which reached record attendance levels in 2014.

In order to allow for thorough education about the program and adequate time for review of all options, each current UCLA football season ticket holder may renew their seats for the 2015

season by maintaining their 2014 Wooden Athletic Fund donation level and wait until 2016 to decide whether to retain, transfer, relocate or improve their season seats.

A two-fold measure, the UCLA Scholarship Seating Program aims to create equity amongst donors via the elimination of the current grandfathering system – a system that has created artificial price divisions throughout the stadium – while also generating new, sustainable revenue to help keep pace with the rising costs of collegiate athletics.

“As we approach our centennial anniversary, it is imperative that we maintain our excellence through even greater self-reliance,” said Director of Athletics Dan Guerrero. “In doing so, we help ensure that our future is every bit as spectacular as our past. While change is never easy, without proactively moving forward, we risk falling behind.”

With hard dollar costs rising across the board for student support in scholarships/tuition, travel, facility upgrades, insurance premiums, recently allowed improved support of student-athlete nutritional wellness and a much-welcomed and even more recently allowed full cost of attendance allowance, the need for consistent revenue has never been more vital. UCLA Athletics must work to stabilize its revenue levels for each of the aforementioned categories in order to continue as one of the nation’s elite programs.

Putting changes to the collegiate landscape in perspective, in 1989, the first year UCLA instituted donor-based seating, Athletics’ entire budget was \$19 million. In the 25 years since, UCLA Athletics’ revenue budget has grown to more than \$90 million. While costs continue to rise, funding support from the University (non-state dollars) has remained flat and now only represents 3% of the overall athletic revenue budget.

By comparison, Athletics’ other sources of revenue include the Pac-12 Conference’s national media rights deal (18 percent), corporate sponsorships (12 percent), NCAA distributions (9.5 percent), a Pac-12 Network still in its infancy (1.5 percent) and other miscellaneous revenue sources that comprise approximately nine percent.

Most importantly, through ticket sales and gifts, UCLA’s donors, fans and alumni comprise nearly half of Athletics’ revenue budget (47 percent), helping support 25 elite athletic programs and more than 700 student athletes. Last year, the Wooden Athletic Fund received \$11.7 million in donor support, much of it tied to priority seating for men’s basketball and football. While this amount is significant, it was still approximately \$800,000 shy of the current scholarship costs alone for UCLA student-athletes. As a result, UCLA must invest revenue from other areas to cover this most basic of costs, limiting investment in other areas of the department.

By consistently maintaining a budgetary number near 50 percent in ticket sales and donations, UCLA season ticket holder support not only will have a direct result on the strength and success of the program, it will directly impact the lives of student-athletes.

“We have demonstrated our commitment to competing at an elite level both on the field and in classroom, making significant investments not only in our coaching and academic support staffs, but in our student-athletes as well,” said Guerrero. “With UCLA Football establishing itself as a top-10 program, state-of-the-art football capital projects such as the Wasserman Football Center underway, the City of Pasadena’s Rose Bowl renovations substantially completed and a greater ability than ever before to provide more financial support for our student-athletes due to NCAA deregulation, we have never been better positioned for success. With continued support like last season’s record attendance, the future of the ‘Bruin Revolution’ is very bright.”

For more information on the UCLA Scholarship Seating Program, visit uclascholarshipseating.com.