

# Williams defends his decision banning the Dead

Administrator continues to cite drug use as reason

By Daralyn Trappe  
Emerald Reporter

Dan Williams, University vice president for administration, said Monday he stands by his decision to ban the Grateful Dead from Autzen Stadium, although he acknowledged that certain aspects of the process have been handled badly.

"I knew it would be unpopular," Williams said, speaking to a group of PPPM majors on policy-making. "So the reac-

tion to the decision was not entirely unanticipated, but I would be less than candid if I didn't tell you that the intensity of it has surprised me a little bit.

"I'm not sure that knowing the intensity would have caused me to come to a different conclusion, but I would have worked harder at a couple of pieces of the process."

Williams said he has received about 100 letters and an equal number of telephone

calls with 9 out of 10 opposing his decision.

"It's as if we have sort of offended the value system of a particular generation," he said. "I didn't intend to do that if that's what happened."

Protesters often complain that the University has caved into special interests and that the decision is contrary to free speech rights, Williams said. He added that the comment he hears most is that the decision is hypocritical based on a comparison to the alcohol use and violence that is often associated with University football games.

However, Williams said he believes people are not adequately addressing the issue of illegal drug use at the concerts — the reason he decided not to allow the band to return next summer.

PPPM major Phil Nebergall noted that members of the Eugene police department have said they would rather work at a Dead concert than a football game.

Williams responded that the police's preference was not enough to change his mind.

Based on the feedback he has received, there is now a perception that "somehow by saying 'no' to the Dead we've said that what goes on at those football games is OK — which of course it's not," he said. "(Games) are just a much more difficult and complicated issue to deal with."

Last summer, Williams said, the band's promoters requested permission from the Athletic Department, which benefits from the concerts, to play at Autzen Stadium again next year. The decision was referred to Williams.

He said he asked Jan Oliver, director of multicultural affairs, to ask local business owners for their opinion.

"I'm not suggesting that all of them felt this way, but the general feedback from the University business community

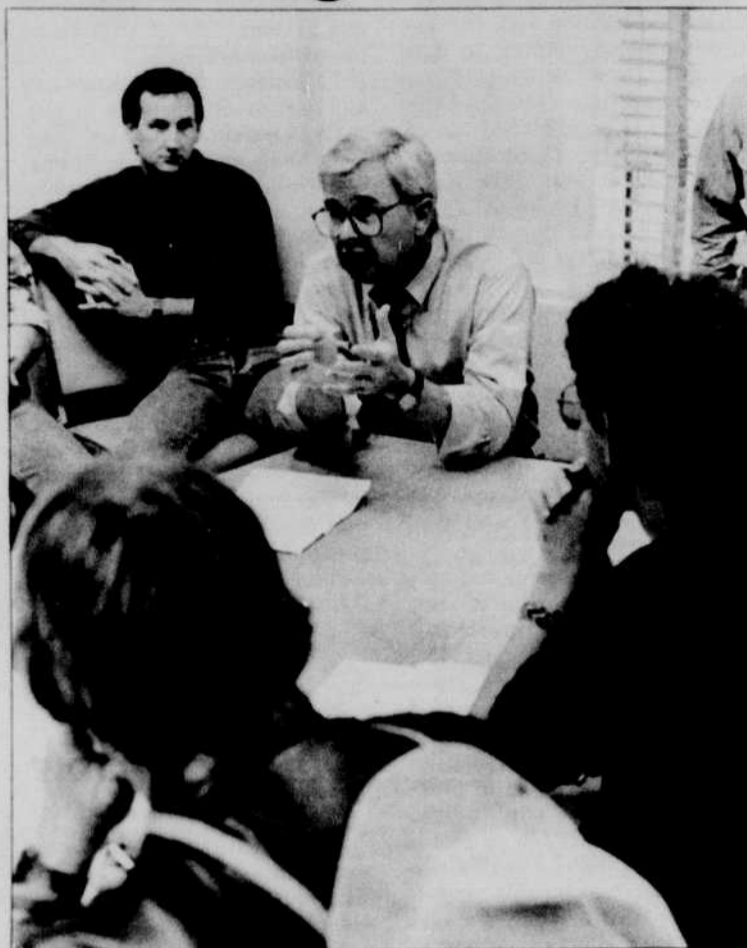


Photo by Andre Ranieri

University Vice President Dan Williams defended his decision to ban the Grateful Dead from Autzen to a group of PPPM students Monday.

was that they wouldn't be disappointed if it didn't happen again," Williams said.

They were not opposed to the event itself, but to the drug activity that is associated with it, he said.

"Given the fact that it's not an activity that's important to the University in terms of its primary responsibility of teaching and instruction, there was no point in exposing ourselves to criticism," he said.

"We probably made a real serious mistake — process wise. It's clear that the nature of the University's enterprise is one of consultation and discussion; decisions are made at the University through the committee process with very wide levels

of participation.

"That's the way we do business and people are used to that," Williams said.

But there are certain decisions where that process is not applicable, he said.

"If I believe that continuing the activity is going to be detrimental to the University's reputation because of the close association with illegal drug activity ... then it doesn't matter to me if the majority of the people want the concert to go on," he said.

"One of the complaints is that we're trampling on the rights of the majority. The University doesn't have a responsibility in these kinds of activities to reflect the will of the people."

The now infamous "12 letters" that he was reported to have received and based his decision on have been misinterpreted by the press, Williams said.

After the announcement was made, he received a phone call from a reporter. Williams said he told that person he had received a certain amount of criticism over the concerts, including several letters. The reporter asked how many and Williams answered by saying 10 or 12.

Responding to a student's question, Williams said he had not received any threats to cut off funds from financial backers or alumni, nor was the decision tied to federal funding.

"It was based on (a) rather non-systematic kind of input," Williams said.

Williams noted that at this time no policy exists defining who may use Autzen Stadium and how.

After Williams left the discussion, students expressed appreciation for the administrator's meeting with them, but said they were still troubled by inconsistencies in his explanation for his decision-making process.

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