



Last year a number of students and alumni began to advocate for bringing back Boone as the University's mascot. The Boone image was created for DU in 1968 in response to a perceived need to update the closely related Pioneer Pete figure used in the preceding decades. For similar reasons, Boone was replaced in 1998 by our current mascot Ruckus, the red-tailed hawk figure we adopted when we built the Ritchie Center and moved back to Division I athletics. The response to Ruckus among the University Community has been generally ambivalent, and in recent years there has been considerable underground activity in Boone images and memorabilia. This ultimately led to the students' efforts last year to resurrect Boone as our official mascot. I subsequently asked Vice Chancellor Peg Bradley Doppes to chair a committee that would consider this matter in a more direct manner and move it toward a resolution based on broad discussion. As the committee was formed, its charge was expanded to cover more generally the history and traditions of the University with the objective of developing greater awareness and pride among the University community.

The committee's initial efforts indicated a groundswell of support for Boone. Over time, though, the responses became more polarized, a growing number suggesting that the Boone image of the 1970s was simply not reflective of either the DU or America of today, still less of the future. From this perspective, the old Boone figure is one that does not reflect the broad diversity of the DU community and is not an image that many of today's women, persons of color, international students and faculty, and others can easily relate to as defining the pioneering spirit. Certainly, this runs counter to our commitment to build a diverse and inclusive campus community as a fundamental element of excellence. While there was some discussion among the committee members of the possibility of modernizing the Boone image, this generated little enthusiasm.

Opinion on campus concerning this matter is now quite polarized, and a resolution is needed. We need to move on. Consequently, I have decided that Boone will not become the official mascot of the University. While I certainly appreciate the genuine enthusiasm behind the "bring back Boone" movement, the University simply cannot adopt an official mascot that has a divisive rather than unifying influence on our community. The image will not be used in any official manner by the University, nor will we provide financial support for its use by others. That being said, Boone is a part of our history, one that is treasured by many alumni and friends as a symbol of the University they knew three and four decades ago, and we are certainly an institution that honors its past. Hence it seems reasonable that students and alumni be allowed to use the image as a celebration of that past, to the extent that they may choose.

This entire matter begs the question of what sort of image or figure should be the official "mascot" of the University, or indeed whether we need one at all. Our major symbol is the "arched Denver" logo that is now ubiquitous across the campus and in the media. One thing is certain—we will always be the Pioneers. I'd suggest that what we do need is a community-wide discussion of what it means to be a Pioneer, for today and the future, and I ask that the history and traditions committee and our student and alumni organizations take up this question with a view to building community and clarifying our identity.

Robert Coombe, Chancellor