

## The Next 5 Years of the UCLA Band

Joshua Cielo



Defense			
Jaguars	Sacks	Points	
1	1	1	
0	PP	2	
0	INT	0	
1	TPL	2	

Q3	10:17
Jaguars	7
UCLA	16



Fig 1. UCLA Athletics social media graphic announcing UCLA's impending move to the BIG 10 Athletic Conference.

### **Introduction**

On June 30, 2022, Athletic Director Martin Jarmond and Chancellor Gene Block formally announced UCLA's (and USC's) intention to leave the PAC-12 and join the BIG 10 starting in the 2024-2025 season (Fig. 1). This announcement resulted in a mixture of support and pushback from fans, students, student-athletes, and the general public. A major concern was the toll on student-athletes and incurred stresses from increased travel in exchange for financial benefits from conference payouts and TV contracts.

Because of its public university status, there was significant pressure on the Regents of the University of California (and, to an extent, Governor Gavin Newsom) to block the move and force UCLA to remain in the PAC-12. However, on December 14, 2022, the UC Regents formally cast their votes and approved the move starting in the 2024-2025 season.

While the public and media both focus on student-athletes, the effects on other groups haven't been looked at in detail, such as the subject of this report: the UCLA Bruin Marching Band. One might ask, why five years and not any other timescale? Other than being a nice, round unit of time, it encompasses the next graduating class and an additional year where a potential new director might make minimal changes. This document explores what defines a BIG 10 band, whether we should emulate it, current "issues" with the UCLA Band, and suggests potential changes for the immediate and near-immediate future. These are not definitive, and I hope that some of these start discussions that lead to the betterment of the band.

For those who don't know me or are reading this after I graduate, my name is Joshua Cielo. I am a physics major from San Diego, California, and a UCLA Bruin Marching Band member. I marched in the Vista High School Regimental Band and Pageantry Corps in high school (for those familiar with the SCSBOA) and in the UCLA Band all four years (2019-2023) of my undergraduate, with 2020-2021 being virtual. I served as the tenor saxophone section leader during 2022-2023. I was also a member of the Psi Chapter of the national honorary band fraternity Kappa Kappa Psi for all four years of my undergraduate. I was initiated in January 2020 and served as Director of Service from May 2021 to May 2022. I also played in the UCLA Symphonic Band, playing bass clarinet. Simply put, I've been around band programs much of my life and have watched them grow and change over the years.

This report is to satisfy the capstone requirement for the [College Scholars](#) program in the UCLA Honors Department, but to me, it is much more. The Scholars program has helped guide my personal development and helped mold me into the person I am today. The classes and experiences I've done through this program will prove invaluable to my future. Being a member of the UCLA Band has defined my college experience, and I deeply care about the ensemble and its members. I want others who come long after me to have experiences similar to my own in this program and have past and present members to be proud of their time in the band, no matter how recently they left. Separately, I think this work has the potential to improve the experience and provide more opportunities for future members of this program.



## **Disclaimer**

Writing this type of document is impossible without making explicit or implicit references to some individuals. Anything written about someone, named or not, is not meant as an attack or a direct criticism of that person, but rather an observation about what we as a collective band do. I do not doubt that anyone mentioned loves this program. Nothing is meant to insult or to positively or negatively judge an individual or their decisions. This is (hopefully) a mostly-objective analysis of how I think this band can improve in the short term. Disagreement and judgment are welcome, and please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or concerns. Thanks and Go Bruins.

Josh

## **What makes a BIG 10 Band?**

We must first define what a BIG 10 band is. Although each school has its history and traditions, there is a consensus that there are common themes and practices present in each program. Despite lacking formal competition, the BIG 10 is probably the most competitive Power 5 athletic conference for the marching arts. Competitions exist for some schools, notably HBCUs and the Honda Battle of the Bands, which isn't even a competition, but those schools currently lack the name recognition of BIG 10 schools. In this case, competition refers to a band's popularity with the crowd in the stadium and the college football fan base.

Although some schools are less well known than others, the program quality is consistent throughout the conference, with similar styles pervading multiple programs. One extensive document explores what exactly makes a BIG 10 band. "A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ELEVEN BIG TEN CONFERENCE MARCHING BAND PROGRAMS," was published in 1995 by John Allen Fuller at The Ohio State University. While this document is over two decades old and does not reflect the current membership of the conference, many conclusions remain true. Replicating the findings of this dissertation for the current BIG 10 is impractical for the timeframe of this project, as it would likely result in a work of similar length (and possibly, a doctorate in music). This document compares different elements of each marching program, finding what makes them unique and if any similarities would support the idea of a defined BIG 10 style.

Much of the defined BIG 10 style already aligns with UCLA's current band model. For example, the concept of entertaining the football audience seems standardized across all Power 5 collegiate marching bands (and many others). Having graduate assistants and defined student staff are also similarities. We also require all incoming members to audition, though we don't require returning students to do the same, as some BIG 10

programs do. We also have preseason rehearsals and perform pregame, halftime, and postgame shows.

However, there are still many differences. Almost all BIG 10 bands have alternates, a practice we've shied away from in recent years for inclusion purposes. Many BIG 10 bands also have pregame show similarities that don't apply to UCLA. Many employ the high-step marching style, some exclusively, for much of their mark time and marching movements. Their drum majors also tend to be baton twirlers and serve as additional performers rather than as a conductor. In this case, the band directors or other staff typically do the conducting. Most BIG 10 bands employ a tunnel entrance, where they either physically enter through a tunnel built in their stadium or come out from an endzone side during a drum cadence. Given the fences and layout of the Rose Bowl tunnel, this is probably not feasible for us. They also march "across the field," meaning they march and play in the direction of the opposite end zone, rather than to the press box side or another long side of the field. Given how empty the Rose Bowl end zones tend to be, this is probably not a good idea for our band. The playing of the alma mater is also a staple of BIG 10 pregame shows. While UCLA did this in the 70s and 80s, it was phased out as the band modernized. This could be reintegrated, and maybe help more casual fans learn the alma mater. But, this would require timing modifications to the pregame show.

One significant difference between UCLA and BIG 10 schools is the rehearsal schedule. UCLA rehearses 6 hours per week, broken up into three two-hour rehearsals on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Every BIG 10 band rehearses 4 or 5 days a week. Similar rehearsal schedules are not necessary, but adding more rehearsal time might lead to a better on-field product. Using rehearsal time effectively is more important than duration, and we've done a better job of more effective rehearsals this past season. However, another day might benefit us. The biggest problem is fitting additional time into existing schedules. UCLA students are among the brightest in the world and have many other extracurricular activities and interests that aren't band or music related. While there are certainly those committed enough to the band to make changes to our rehearsal schedule work, the reality is that adding more rehearsals might damage our current retention rate and possibly our recruitment rate, as new students would be more wary of time commitments.

### **Should we be a BIG 10 Band?**

As UCLA (and USC) moves to the BIG 10 in 2024, we should consider whether or not to adapt to their style. After all, each conference school has a history of style, tradition, and excellence that have led them to the success they see today. A distinct BIG 10 style

exists that each band in the conference generally employs, with slight variations by the school. B1G bands are some of the best in the country, and many bands (hi Cal) try to emulate them in some form.

The answer is no. Being distinctly West Coast and not Midwest makes us unique and is something we should strive for. We are not in the Midwest, so we should not act like it. While some see the BIG 10 style as traditional, others see it as dated. This past year, we've put some effort into embracing individuality in an activity almost defined by conformity. The *Lizzo* show and our new(er) stand tunes allow individual sections to create visuals as they see fit. While, from a distance, we might not look cohesive, each section gets to express its personality. Finding a balance between these two things gives us a unique style and look at rallies, games, and other events.

While we use our color guard in the traditional pageantry sense with identical flags and work, I've noticed that BIG color guards sometimes play a more prominent role, especially in pregame shows. Other programs use at least a subset of their color guard as an "honor guard" that raises flags of every other conference school, marching down the field as a symbol of respect to their conference competition. The honor guard does not necessarily need to be members of the traditional color guard either. Using alternates or non-instrumentalists who want to be part of the band would be a great way to establish a pipeline for auditioners who have potential but fail to meet our requirements or standards during their initial audition.

Integrating some B1G style elements in some form is a very feasible task. For example, playing the opposing team's fight song during pregame would show respect for their school and band, which, in my view, only has positive connotations for sportsmanship. With some additional cuts or added time to our pregame show, we could integrate these traditions into ours.

## **Social Media**

Right now, one of the weakest aspects of our program is our social media accounts and media presence in general. Media draws eyes to ourselves and our performances, sometimes resulting in unexpected collaborations. For example, the alt-rock band Muse saw our 2010 Muse show on YouTube, which was the impetus for inviting us to collaborate with them on their song *Pressure*, with lead man Bellamy [saying](#) "I loved the 2010 UCLA halftime show where they did an entire set of Muse songs, so when we were looking for a band for this version, right away we reached out to Gordon [Henderson] to see if the band was interested."

Our account with the 2nd most followers at 12k, Facebook, is the least updated of our four main accounts. Twitter and Instagram, the most updated, have about 2.5k and 5.5k, respectively. Our current YouTube channel (not the one used by Gordon as an archive) is nearly at 15k. However, the majority of those subscribers come solely from the viral BTS Show, which currently has over 2.8 million views, many of whom aren't inclined to engage in other videos, as evidenced by the R\*ver video that was uploaded two days later with only 3.5k views (Fig. 2). Those subscribers clearly resulted from the BTS show and would generally not watch any other video uploaded. And the band TikTok, stuck at 365 followers, has not been touched since October 2021 (In checking these, I also found that half the social media links at [uclaband.com](http://uclaband.com) go to not current or nonexistent accounts, which should be fixed as recruitment season begins again).

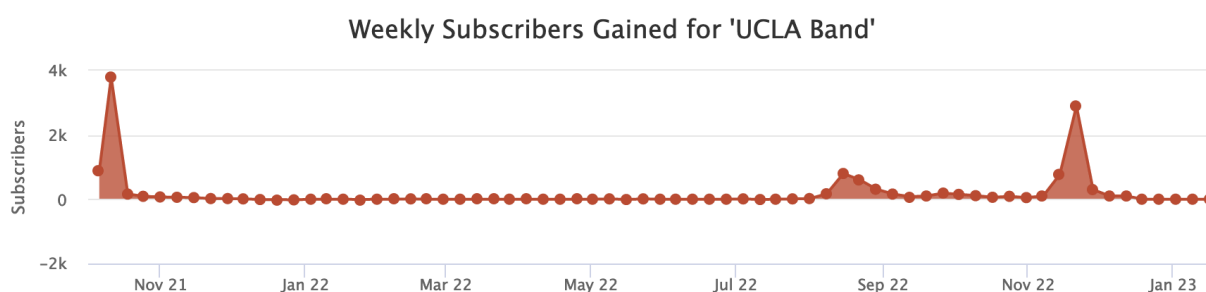


Fig 2: Subscriber gain of the “UCLA Band” YouTube channel over time. The two peaks correspond to the original posting of the BTS Show video and a subsequent rediscovering of that video by the BTS fan community. Data: SocialBlade

None of our accounts are verified, further decreasing their reach. Verified accounts are generally more likely to be recommended in a feed over non-verified accounts, so getting accounts verified without paying (like Twitter Blue) should be a priority. With only a single social media manager, creating content is incredibly difficult. We should not be begging for photos on our internal Facebook page but drawing from a pool taken by designated photographers. In recent years, when we had them, their pictures were easily accessible for band members and were featured extensively on our social media pages.

Compare our follower counts to other B1G schools:

BIG 10 Social Media Following, 1/2023

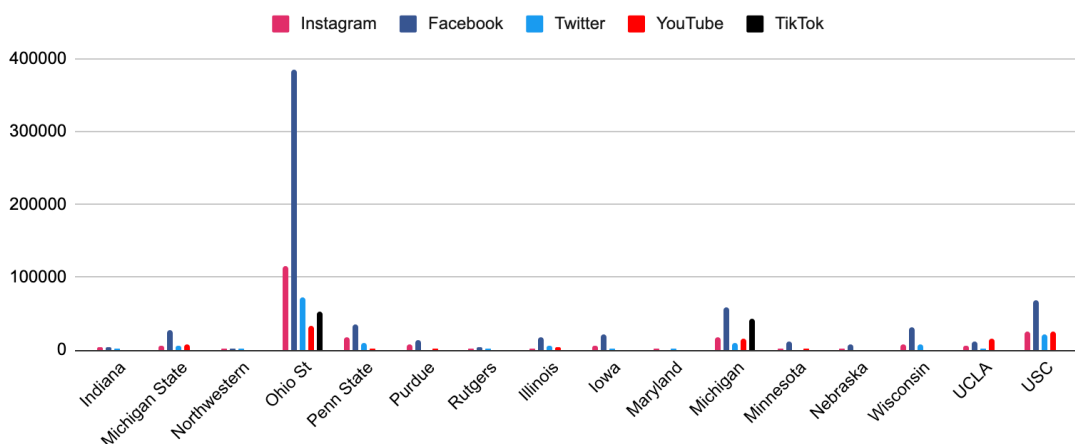


Fig 3. The social media followings of every current BIG 10 band, with UCLA and USC. Ohio State clearly has a much higher following than any other program, especially on Facebook.

Ohio State's Facebook following is a significant outlier, significantly higher than any other social media presence in the conference. Removing that outlier for readability purposes, we get the following:

BIG 10 Social Media Following, 1/2023

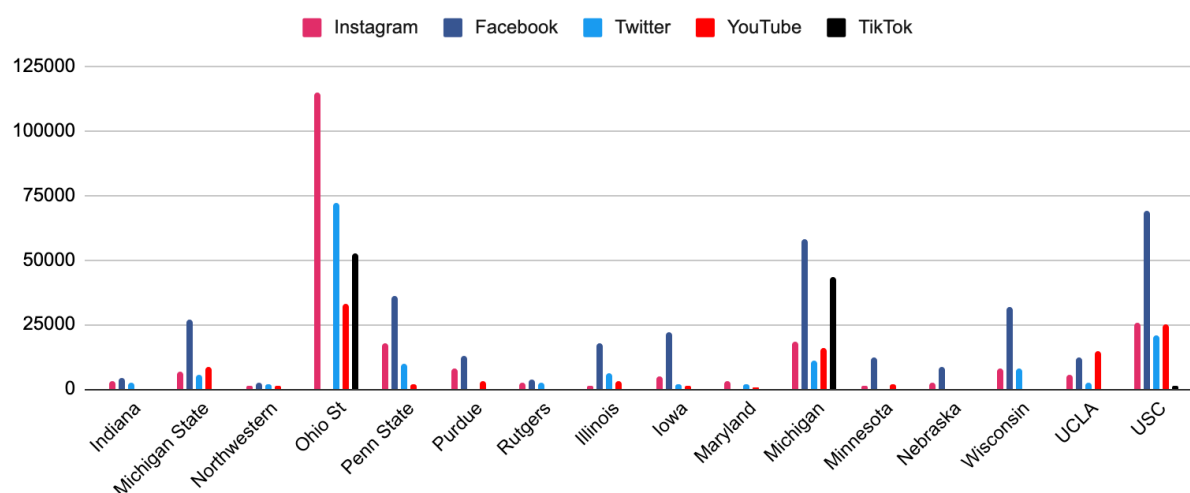


Fig 4. BIG 10 social media followings with UCLA and USC, excluding Ohio St. Facebook for scaling purposes.

Even without OSU's Facebook, they are still clearly the most followed band in the conference. Michigan, USC, and Penn State follow them. These bands are among the



most well-known in the country, being some of the most iconic parts of their athletic programs. For Ohio St, it was a series of viral videos in the 2010s that solidified their reputation as one of the most visually impressive bands in the country. For Michigan, it's the M fanfare and their fight song *The Victors*. For USC, it is their iconic field stab to begin their pregame show.

While UCLA certainly doesn't have the lowest following, we are much lower than where we could be. We are severely lacking in this department for several reasons. Most significantly, the lack of investment of both effort and funds. A significant social media presence could provide many benefits, namely in non-UCLA gigs and recruitment. For example, "The Best Damn Band In The Land" at the Ohio State University is by far the most recognized band in the country.

In recent years, many bands have engaged in "trend-chasing" to stay relevant and engage with their audience. UCLA is no different. The BTS and Lizzo shows were prime examples of playing the music of whatever artist was most culturally relevant at the time, which is not inherently bad. Viral videos driven by fans of those artists get more eyes on our band, may increase our relevance on the national marching band landscape, and are sometimes subconsciously remembered.

Staying engaged with current trends may also boost recruitment, reported by an article from [Halftime Magazine](#). A published journal [article from 2020](#) suggests that social media engagement could effectively recruit high school students, though personal communication from friends and family and direct contact with band directors most influenced their decision. Because the former is not something we can control outside of California, and the fact directors are usually quite busy, social media is one of the most effective ways to reach many people quickly. In the same study, YouTube videos received the second-highest mean score for perceived influence to join a collegiate marching band. Respondents from that journal article also stated that they would enjoy current (N=86) or more frequent posts from college bands (N=66), with very few desiring less frequency (N=6). One respondent who wrote a free response stated they would enjoy more behind-the-scenes content. The majority of respondents want consistent or more consistent posts from bands, something we have not been able to do recently. This should be changed as the recruitment of new band members begins again.

While we would not be the weakest in the conference, we should spend time, funds, and other resources to improve our social media presence. It would almost certainly support recruiting high school or transfer students for the band and potentially provide many more higher-profile gigs.

The fact that we have no recent official and public recordings of any pregame or halftime show (except the BTS show, which was very intentional), an intro video made of clips from 2 years to around a decade old, and social media manager who sometimes struggles getting pictures for posts is disappointing, especially considering that many marching bands in the country, including high school bands, have put in more effort into their media presence. Having only one social media manager limits our ability to create content if they are not at games or on trips (see Pac-12 WBB and MBB Tournaments 2023, where our social media mostly sat dormant, aside from story posts). A small social media team with a unified strategy would allow us to produce more content and engage with the UCLA community.

As someone who relished watching runs of their high school field shows, I am disappointed that I do not have any definitive recordings of many of the shows I have performed over the past four years. Relying on band parents and other fans is inconsistent at best. Most of the time, they focus on their child, have bad seats for viewing purposes, have shaky camera work, and/or have to deal with loud fans nearby, among other things. While bits and pieces exist publicly, these factors distort the viewing experience and can make them somewhat annoying to watch. Over the Fall of 2020, videos of the previous year's halftime shows were released during home games, only to be deleted shortly after. Recording and releasing our shows would allow others to see them and see what we do.

I understand that copyright law plays a significant role in whether or not we can perform certain music as well as post it. The company Tresona is a barrier to what we can and cannot play, post, and perform, at least in terms of music. With finances as tight as ours, performing modern and popular music consistently can get expensive quickly. Tresona limits what we are to do, so finding ways to get around them is essential.

Several attainable goals would greatly benefit our social media presence. First, having more than one person running our social media, rather than a single person, would be beneficial. In theory, the entirety of the recruitment crew should be responsible for this, but in practice, it falls onto the shoulders of an individual. These individuals should also understand how to effectively market and promote their b(r)and. A quick Google search yields some free [classes](#) that could serve as the starting point for social media managers to learn the basics of these and other skills like Photoshop while being paid.

Having dedicated photographers/ videographers and additional social media managers that produce and publish content would help on the social media side. Historically, we have had individuals do this temporarily, with some paid and some voluntary. We could

follow the model some bands, such as Cal, uses. They use uniformed student band members who do not march (or maybe do not play in the stands) to photograph various parts of rehearsals, gamedays, or other gigs.

I frankly have no idea what the monetary needs of the band are, but I know that transportation plays a much costlier role than in most other bands. Along with the rising costs of music licensing, more funds may be necessary to keep this band at its current high standard, or at least give us financial wiggle room. The [SPARK campaign](#) of 2019 aimed to raise \$100,000 and ultimately exceeded that goal, raising \$105,100. While that campaign was ambitious and successful, it is unlikely that we could replicate it consistently. However, we could consider pursuing smaller, yearly, or bi-yearly, fundraising campaigns to surplus our budget. A likely much more contentious, but possible, way to support the budget is to institute a small fee for band members to cover personal things like uniform cleaning fees. This is unlikely to be popular with band members, but if the budget dictates cuts, then this might be the most reasonable route to make up any necessary funds.

One thing that I truly believe should be explored and pursued is the establishment of a Band Boosters program. Traditionally, band boosters are responsible for raising funds for the band. At the high school level, these are typically parents and some alumni. At the collegiate level, it is almost entirely composed of alumni. The UCLA Band already has “The Solid Gold Sound Club” listed at [uclaband.com](http://uclaband.com). However, that page has not been updated since 2016 or 2017. Clicking the donation leads to several funds that people could donate to, but there are no descriptions of each fund or its use. Adding additional descriptors for each fund may help potential donors know exactly where their money is going. Alumni donations could help us make up any financial shortfall or potentially fund new projects or music we would otherwise not be able to secure the rights. We could pursue this project with the leadership team of the UCLA Alumni Band, a group that already boasts a considerable number of UCLA Band Alumni.

In encouraging alumni and other groups to donate, we could use the perk model we used for the 2019 SPARK Campaign or build off the models of other bands. Michigan State’s band:

<b>GIVING LEVELS:</b> Your donation to the SMB qualifies you for the following benefits. Higher donor levels include the benefits of the preceding lower levels.		
<b>SPAT (\$50–\$99)</b> Subscription to the <i>Spartan Fanfare</i> e-newsletter for the season, and a special early bird discount code for tickets to Spartan Spectacular.*	<b>SERIES (\$500–\$999)</b> Band Fan lapel pin	<b>SECTION SPONSOR (\$2,500–\$9,999)</b> On-campus meet and greet with your section during pre-game on Adams Field and photo of your section.
<b>PLUME (\$100–\$249)</b> Band Fan decal	<b>INNER CIRCLE (\$1,000–\$2,499)</b> SMB photo plus SMB Band-O-Gram. <i>One free SMB Band-O-Gram during the football season. A small group of SMB students will perform for your tailgate near Spartan Stadium. Information will be included with qualifying members' perks.</i>	<b>SMB GAME DAY SPONSOR (\$10,000+)</b> Conduct the SMB during pre-game at Adams Field, lead the <i>March to the Stadium</i> , and recognition in the football program as the SMB Game Day Sponsor.
<b>DIRECTOR (\$250–\$499)</b> Band Fan schedule magnet		
<i>All in-person perks are subject to change and must be in accordance with MSU's Covid-19 Safety protocols.  *All gifts made to SMB allocation AE0607 during fiscal year count cumulatively toward Band Fan membership perk levels.</i>		

Fig 5. The donation levels and perks for being a donor to the Michigan State University Spartan Marching Band

They have perks for different donation levels. Having this as a permanent part of our band's donation strategy rather than as a one-off for a particular fundraiser could help us attract donors who look for donation perks. For a tailgate or anything that would occur at a football or basketball game, we could work with athletics to help advertise these. We could develop UCLA-specific perks and design experiences that focus on the UCLA community.

## Travel

Travel has been a point of contention for opponents of the BIG 10 move, resulting in concern for student-athletes. However, if we wish to continue our tradition of traveling to a rivalry game that is not USC, we must discuss the implications of location. There do exist comparisons to our current non-USC rivals; Northwestern for Stanford (top academic-focused university) and Michigan for Cal (top public university). However, traveling annually to one of these schools is much more logistically challenging and dependent on how the conference will schedule games.

Travel is easy for current B1G schools because of geographic proximity. Bands can bus across the Midwest or East Coast instead of paying for expensive charter flights. We have no such luxury. If we were to travel to big games like those at Michigan or Ohio State, we would likely need a separate charter flight to get band members there, especially if we intend to perform pregame and halftime shows. If these games occur in late November or December, we would likely need some winter clothing to deal with possible rainy or snowy weather. Some bands use an overcoat of some kind to protect

against the elements. This is dependent on weather conditions and BIG 10 scheduling, but one should consider that most Southern Californians (myself included) consider 60 degrees to be sweater weather.

Typically, we travel by bus to the Bay for either the Stanford or Cal game, which we have done since the existence of the Pacific Coast Conference (except for the early years when we traveled by boat). As we no longer will play them yearly, we do not make that trip. Every BIG 10 school is in the American Midwest or East Coast, and taking a bus is not reasonable or feasible. We also do not know who we will be playing every year yet, something we won't likely know for a year or so.

As B1G schools are geographically much more distant from California, it begs the question of whether we can and should travel to games on the other side of the country. From a student's perspective, travel is one of the most fun and rewarding experiences that the band can provide. Doing so with your section and your friends makes it more fun. Traveling opportunities, especially with the full band, should be supported by the School of Music and Athletics. Representing the university across the country and providing music to fans increases our presence in the eyes, ears, and minds of the Bruin faithful. Big football games at the likes of Ohio State and Michigan with a full marching band would bolster any Bruin support present in those stadiums. The cost of flying our 250-piece band to the Midwest or East Coast is much different than bussing most but not all of the band to the Bay Area and would be prohibitive to the band's finances. However, I believe that Athletics should provide some of the resources.

For basketball tournaments, we would not bus to Las Vegas, but would instead fly to the Midwest, likely Chicago and/ Minneapolis. This trip would end up being run by Athletics, as they would likely charter a plane that could fit our pep band, spirit squad, and team.

## **Audience Relations**

There are three primary groups that we perform for: the student-athletes, the Den, and general fans with emphasis on the Wooden Athletic Fund members (because they could give us money). Consequently, our music in the stands and on the field should reflect their interests. These interests typically differ, so balancing what each group wants to hear can be challenging.

Because of our affiliation with athletics, having healthy relationships with the administration and student-athletes is important for our success. They are the only people at every game and event. Some teams love us, such as Women's Basketball, Women's Soccer, and Gymnastics. Generally, non-revenue sports seem to enjoy the



band's presence. Some schools have dedicated bands for specific non-revenue sports. For some, it's ice hockey, others women's volleyball, but many schools have dedicated bands for other sports. Although it might be a logistical challenge, it might be interesting to gauge interest from current band members in permanent non-basketball varsity band gigs.

Rarely do coaches of revenue sports (football and men's basketball) acknowledge the band's contributions to the sporting environment. Usually, it's individual student-athletes who sometimes make passing remarks (shoutout [to Adem Bona](#) and Chase Griffin). While the reality is that most student-athletes are only here to play their sport, we can still improve their time at UCLA, namely by asking what they want to hear from us. Sending open calls for music suggestions to all student-athletes is something that is very doable and is something that we should do. While we can't guarantee every request will be good, reasonably priced, or feasible for a marching band, we may end up with music that reflects our student-athletes. Exceptions to this exist, especially former UCLA Football Coach Jim Mora. Some coaches love their band, others less so. However, it depends on the coach. Coach Kelly seems to be ambivalent about us, and I don't know how much we can do from our side.

It may be possible for athletics funds to help us secure arranging rights for some music. Athletics is the group that benefits the most from our presence, as our shows and stand tunes contribute to creating a Bruin environment. This may require some compromise and negotiation, but if it means being able to play music that's more interesting to the fans, the band, and the athletic administration, it might be worth it.

This past year, Interim Director Ken Fisher has fostered a stronger relationship with athletic administrators, evidenced by our visit to the Wasserman Football Center and the football team's appearance at one of our rehearsals. Along with our normal relations with Women's Basketball Head Coach Cori Close, there is evidence that we are moving in the right direction in our relationships with all of Athletics.

As much as we love our Women's Basketball Team, having a solid relationship with the football team might prove the most beneficial. There are countless examples of football players leading a fight song or alma mater after a big win (see USC QB Caleb Williams after this year's rivalry game). Usually, this translates to pictures and videos that resonate with football fans in a way that the band alone might not.

One odd detail I noticed was there always seemed to be a ladder or podium ready for the player and conductor. In our current setup, this would prove difficult as it takes some time to convert the podium from the stands to the field. I don't know if a football player

would ever take the time to go to the band after a big win, but since we're now located in the middle of the student section, we should consider it a possibility.

The Den is probably the most inconsistent group we play for. The only consistency is the presence of Den Ops, the students who run The Den. They are often the most passionate and dedicated fans, serving as the face of an otherwise sometimes apathetic group. The problem with The Den, and to an extent all UCLA sports fans, is that they are fairweather, meaning that they show up to games when the team is performing well, and disappear when the team is performing poorly. Over my four years, both the football and men's basketball teams have steadily improved performance-wise, leading to attendance increases in the Den (even if the football average attendance is near record lows), selling out only when there are big games. Unfortunately, a lot of our music doesn't resonate with the Den. There are exceptions (especially one person at the 2023 PAC-12 MBB Tournament who asked for *Industry Baby* every game), usually stand tunes you might hear at a frat party or dance, which are sometimes the tunes that band members feel are weaker parts of our flap. Similar to athletes, we could send out a simple Qualtrics or Google Form asking Den Pass holders what kind of music they want to hear from the UCLA Band. This would allow us to choose music and types of music that excite The Den and keep them engaged with the game. For the Den especially, finding songs that encourage audience participation, whether it's motion, singing, or something else, could help create a more fun (and potentially intimidating) environment in the Rose Bowl and Pauley Pavilion. Finding songs that already play to an audience, such as NHL goal songs, would provide a good starting point.

The Wooden Athletic Fund makes up the majority of donors to the UCLA Athletic Department, enabling it to better serve student-athletes and improve finances. In short, these donors have money, and making ourselves more present in their minds might encourage them to financially support the band. Similar to the other groups, finding what kind of music they like and maybe performing at WAF-exclusive events could further kindle the Bruin spirit and potentially lead to donations.

### **Student Led Band**

When the UCLA Band visited Cal for their football matchup in November 2022, members of the tenor saxophone section (including myself) got to spend time with members of the Cal Band tenors to tour their campus and learn about their band. They use a "student-led" model, meaning that, even though they have a director, much of their activity comes from the minds of elected student leadership. This allows them to perform at more events and build community relationships. They do things like perform at local bars before and after games and at community events. They also get discounts

at particular restaurants solely for being a band member. These are all student-initiated activities, with limited involvement by their band administration. There's some oversight, but students are generally entrusted to perform and represent the band on their own.

Since the Rose Bowl is in Pasadena and not Westwood, we cannot make a 1-to-1 copy of the Cal model. However, giving students more agency in where and when they want to perform, with director approval, could help us integrate more into the UCLA and Westwood community.

### **The Next Director**

The School of Music originally intended to hire a permanent director following the departure of former director Kevin McKeown, who they hired on an interim basis to replace longtime director Gordon Henderson. In Winter 2021, finalists were invited to audition with members of the UCLA Band, teaching one of our stand tunes, one of their stand tunes, and receiving questions from band members. Following all of the auditions, two of the four candidates were vastly more popular with the student body than the others and were offered the job. The first candidate declined after securing a promotion at her current program and the second candidate declined because his current program was in the midst of their camp. Ultimately, no one was permanently hired, and assistant director Ken Fisher assumed the interim director position for the 2022-2023 academic year.

As of writing, the School of Music has resumed its search for a permanent director. In conversations with current members, there is a clear preference from the current band members for the current interim director to assume the full-time position. The next director will herald the band into the BIG 10 era, and the hiring board should consider who is best equipped to do so. The opinions of this document obviously should not serve as the only criteria on who to hire a director. However, my view is that the best director candidate is the one who can handle the rapid change in the collegiate band landscape.

Edit 5/24: As of May 16, 2023, Ken Fisher has been hired as the Acting Director of Athletic Bands and as an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Music for a two year period.

### **Random Opinions**

While not necessarily fundamental to the core functions of our band, some things that we do have bothered me more than they probably should. Taking action on none of these would probably have no adverse effect on anything, but I think they are worth discussing. Obligatorily, these are all my opinions and should be taken as such.

A lot of these things are tiny, inconsequential disagreements. For example, I think “Script UCLA” in our pregame show should look like our official logo. Most, if not all, collegiate marching bands form their logo in marching drill, and reworking “Script UCLA” to reflect the logo would have a much stronger amplification effect from the central logo at the Rose Bowl.



Fig 6. Script UCLA at The Rose Bowl

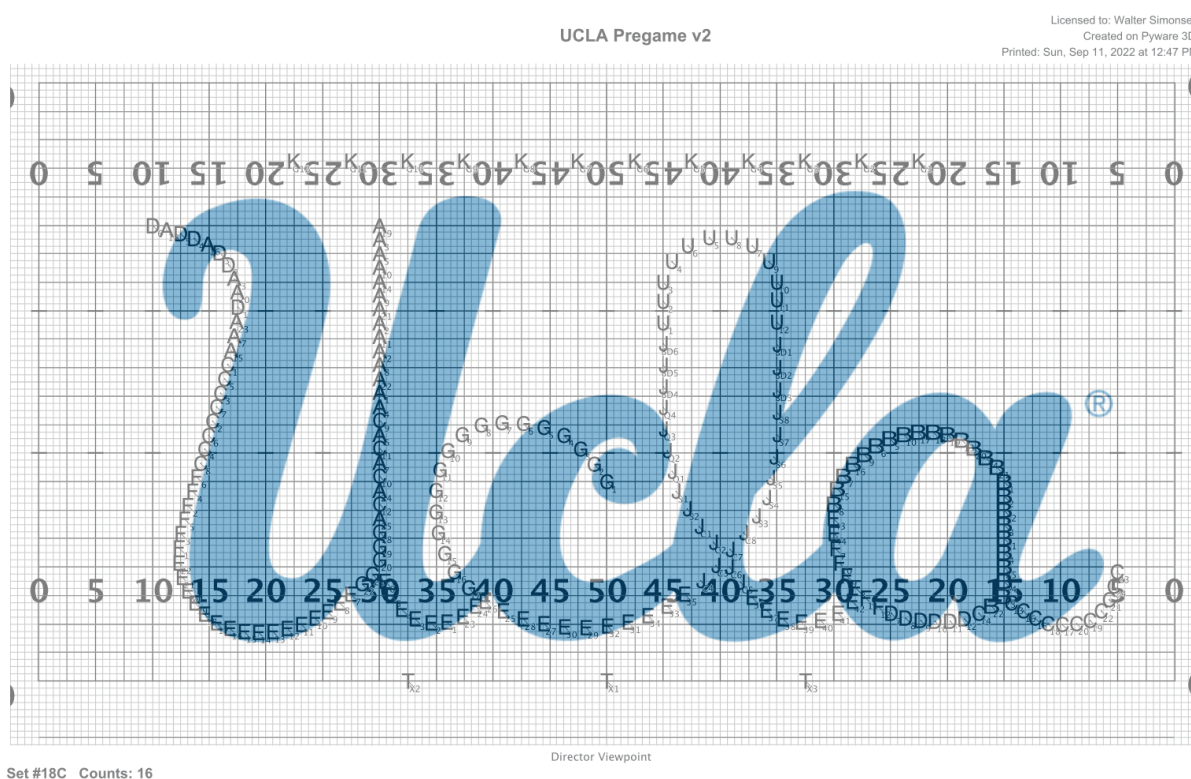


Fig 7. The current UCLA athletic logo superimposed on the UCLA Band “Script UCLA” drill from the 2022 football season

Changes to the drill are inconsequential, but I think it would be cool to amplify the logo at the center of the Rose Bowl field, even if it is a bit busy. While we do not have a symmetrical single-letter logo like many schools, rewriting the drill to resemble the current athletic logo would make our pregame a little prettier. I also think *some* parts of our pregame show are a little clunky, and modifying them would create a better flow. We do not have much control over some things, but they are still worth considering if the Rose Bowl accommodates us. For pregame, walking onto the sidelines and waiting for a timer to count down is awkward. Our appearance is not surprising, but standing there and using an introduction video ruins any sense of anticipation. Logistically, I do not know if there is much we can do, as I do not think the Rose Bowl would remove a portion of the fence from the tunnel so that we could do a tunnel entrance. Cutting the introduction video and going straight to the run-on may create more of an auditory surprise.

The pregame announcement right now is too short. The U-C-L-A chant during the run-on is quiet from the stands and very few people in the crowds know/do the chant. We should extend the pregame announcement such that when “Bruin fanfare!” is said, the audience hears the opening notes of the fanfare. After the fanfare, there is a very quiet “Go Bruins!” from band members on the field. Cutting this, along with some drum roll-offs, would make the transition between the fanfare and “Strike Up The Band” much more effective from a musical point of view.

Band staff is essential for the continued operation of this program. Section leaders, rank leaders, and crews are responsible for tasks delegated to them by the director. For section and rank leaders specifically, those who don’t have prior experience can struggle. I know this from my own experience. Many UCLA band members have band leadership experience in high school, but I did not and was making things up as the season progressed, emulating others. That didn’t always work, to my section’s detriment. There are two things that I feel would have, at least, helped me. First, having detailed job descriptions, a list of exact responsibilities of crew positions, and useful skills for applicants would help during the application process. This would be a quick fix to ensure that band members who apply know what skills and traits would serve them well in these positions.

Second, any type of teaching or leadership pedagogy would have helped me be a better section leader. Balancing obligations between being a leader who has to lead sectionals, make decisions, and be friends with the people in my section can be challenging at times. Knowing how to give useful feedback, resolve disputes, and know



what the director wants to be emphasized in a particular piece before bringing the whole band together during rehearsals would be very useful.

Modernization of our video assets is also a large non-issue. What we have now is fine, but does not necessarily reflect who we are now. Currently, our intro video is composed of clips from many years ago. Our website [uclaband.com](http://uclaband.com)'s design is clunky and feels dated, with photos and videos from many years ago. These things seem to be relatively easy fixes. Editing a new intro with people who currently make up the band would better represent who we are now, rather than who we were. Alternatively, we could have no intro video and allow the “run-on” to serve as our introduction. Creating a modern website and updating links and photos also seems like an easy fix. If we received a large enough budget, I think it would be entertaining to have an overly styled and “hype” intro video, similar to team intro videos.

One of my more controversial opinions is that our current fight songs, *Bruin Warriors* and *Mighty Bruins*, are, at their best, derivative and uninspiring. I’ve played these songs a lot in my four years, and, while fun to play at times, don’t necessarily always meet their goals. I believe a fight song’s goals are to be synonymous with the university and “to inspire student-athletes, fans, and other spirit groups.” I’m not sure that these songs accomplish these goals. As many casual UCLA fans know, *Warriors* is derived from Cal’s *Big C* with its UCLA-specific modifications thanks to Cal’s poor understanding of copyright law (at the time).

I would argue that *Mighty* is somewhat derivative of *Warriors*. Even with a different melody, ending, lyrics, and composer, it has the same structure, repetition, and 8-clap as *Warriors*. The form is A-8-A-E, with A being the melody, 8 being the 8-clap, and E being the ending. In both songs, the official melodic lyrics are the same both times, except when we switch to  $\frac{3}{4}$  the second time during *Warriors* during a postgame show. This repetition leads to boredom from the audience. If you have ever watched members of the Den or anyone who is in their seats early as either basketball team runs onto the court for warmups, you have probably noticed that after the 8-clap, the only people who continue to engage with the song at all are those in Den Ops. These are almost always the most consistently passionate and loud people in the stands, with energy that does not carry over to other fans other than in big moments in the game.

Perhaps I am asking too much for a casual or bandwagon fan. In Los Angeles especially, it can be difficult to be passionate about sports, as there are many teams to choose from and many other things to do in the city. I’m not sure that the band's performance can do much to change that, but we can certainly improve the atmosphere

for those who make the trip to Pasadena. Playing music that engages fans, whether that's stand tunes or fight songs, should be a priority.

Many of the most well-known fight songs from the biggest schools have some kind of audience participation component. Even doing a simple hand motion that is not basic like clapping and is relevant to the school connects the audience with the music. The 8-clap is specific to our school but is isolated from the music (except drums) and only relates to UCLA vocally.

Most audience members do not know their school's fight song lyrics. There are some exceptions, for example, *The Eyes of Texas* at UT Austin (Texas) is a song known by players and fans alike, sung proudly by the entire stadium during pregame and [after a win](#).

There are two options to "fix" this. One, we can begin to integrate older fight songs that we've stopped using. *By The Old Pacific* is one option, but there seem to be ones even less known. [Fight On](#), [Men of Westwood](#), [Team Hear Out Song](#) (1:30) and [Sing UCLA](#) are all fight songs associated with UCLA's past, mainly in the 70s and 80s, and were replaced by *Mighty*. I think that bringing some of them back in some capacity, perhaps as motifs during pregame, might be interesting. If anything, they are an interesting look at how our fight songs have changed over the years, and are an overall representation of what fight songs sounded like in decades past.

Potentially, we could combine *Warriors* and *Mighty*, as UT Austin does with *Texas Fight* and *The Eyes of Texas* (racial controversies notwithstanding). They play the melody of *Texas Fight* in the first half, and following the bridge, they play *The Eyes of Texas*. We could do something similar, maybe playing *Mighty* for the first half and *Warriors* for the second half, ordered so because *Warriors* has a musical ending rather than a drum ending.

One extreme idea is writing a completely new fight song. This goes against tradition, but I would argue that a song that is one hundred percent unique to our school could further distinguish our sound. This would be controversial with fans and potentially band members, but it would give us two songs that are uniquely UCLA.

### **Does any of this matter?**

Not really. Marching band, at least on paper, is an inherently nonconsequential activity. A football team and a university can function without one. However, marching band is something unique to American college sports and can play a huge role in the culture of

a school. The average fan might not care, but we are a personification of the school that represents it musically at all athletic competitions.

The UCLA Band has been the defining activity of my college career. Without it, I would not have the friends or be a part of the organizations I am today. I love this band and the fact that I have the opportunity to do something I love with people who I deeply care about. Those people and some of the gigs that I have been a part of have been the best part of my undergraduate college experience. I am graduating, so I won't be a part of this band's future. As the school and band move to a different conference (and hopefully receive much more funding), I believe future band members can have experiences that exceed my own. We should be taking complete advantage of any good opportunities that come our way. In my admittedly biased opinion, I believe that the ideas presented in this report would help modernize this band and prepare it for the immediate future.

A lot can change very quickly. After five years, I have no idea what this athletic or band landscape will look like. I can't make meaningful predictions or contribute potentially useful ideas past that point because the landscape will be very different.

## **Summary**

The traditions, culture, and style of marching bands in the BIG 10 are very much unlike the PAC 12. As conference realignment takes place, the primary focus is on the effects on the student-athletes and fanbases, and less so on large student groups like the band. The central question is whether the UCLA Band should adapt to the traditions and styles of the BIG 10, and what they should do as the collegiate landscape changes in the face of conference realignment. Also, what changes could/ should be made so that the UCLA Band is well-positioned to embrace inevitable changes?

The UCLA band is at a critical point in its history. A new permanent director starting in Fall 2023 will guide the band through a tumultuous time in college athletics and our impending move to the BIG 10. Our last permanent director guided this band into the 21st century. The next will have the task of ensuring that we are well-positioned to take advantage of the unique opportunities presented to us in this century.

The next director will be able to decide how our band develops and improves our relationships with campus groups. Our relationships with the Athletic Department, The Den, and members of the Wooden Athletic fund have significant room for improvement. Finding how they are willing to contribute to us and what kind of music we could play for them could be the starting point for a positive relationship change.

We can make many changes in the immediate future. Many could start today. But a lot of these changes cannot happen without institutional support. Leaving both the directorship and administrative duties to a single person is unfair to them and an unsustainable practice. The UCLA Band cannot survive long-term with a single director. Committing to providing administrative support from outside groups to whoever the next director will be is essential for making any significant change in this program, listed in this document or not. I would hope that the School of Music and/or the Athletic Department find a way to make this possible, or else the next five years could look very different for the UCLA Band. Both groups and individuals will shape the future of this program. Everyone reading this document will likely play some role, whether as a student, director, administrator, or something else. It's up to us to decide what the future holds for the Solid Gold Sound.