North Carolina Central University boasts a rich tradition in athletic competition, dating back to 1910-11, the same academic year the University opened its doors for the first time.

The first organized sports team at what was then the National Training School and Chautauqua was baseball, fielding a squad in the spring of 1911.

According to a master’s thesis by George L. Samuel, the student-athletes on that first team were Marion Thompson, Clifton Gardner, James R. Paterson, Benny Henderson, Charles Paterson, Louis Hatsfield, Bishop Faison, Samuel Saunders, Moses Williams, and Elmore Brown. The Coach was Louis “Mighty” Bumpus, a local businessman.

Since that time, Eagle student-athletes have competed in sports such as boxing, wrestling and swimming, in addition to the sports currently offered by NCCU: baseball, men’s and women’s basketball, women’s bowling, men’s and women’s cross country, football, men’s golf, softball, men’s and women’s tennis, men’s and women’s indoor and outdoor track & field, and women’s volleyball.

NCCU joined the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (then named the Colored Intercollegiate Athletic Association) in 1928. In 1971, NCCU was one of the founding members of the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference, established as an NCAA Division II conference. In 1980, NCCU returned to the CIAA, an NCAA Division II conference, when the MEAC decided to make the move to the NCAA Division I level of competition.

Teams and individual student-athletes have competed in national tournaments in several sports, including football, men’s and women’s basketball, men’s and women’s indoor and outdoor track & field, women’s cross country, women’s volleyball, softball and men’s tennis, winning national championships in men’s basketball and track and field.

During the university’s membership in the CIAA and MEAC, teams won 41 conference championships, made 21 NCAA regional appearances, won three NCAA regional titles, and earned two team national championships (1989 NCAA Division II Men’s Basketball and 1972 NAIA Men’s Outdoor Track & Field). More than 55 student-athletes have captured individual NCAA and NAIA national championships.

That level of success extended to the international stage. Student-athletes represented NCCU in six consecutive Olympic Games from 1956-76 in the sport of track & field. During that time, individuals captured eight Olympic medals, including five gold medals.

The mission of the NCCU Athletics Department includes providing:

- Quality academic and athletic experiences;
- Affirming academic excellence;
- Developing the physical, mental, and social well-being of our student-athletes;
- Encouraging the attitude of integrity, fairness, and respect; and
- Ensuring strong competitive performance in the classroom and on the athletic field.

Prepared by Mr. Kyle Serba
Sources: Athletic Department Records
August 12, 2008

The Richard L. McDougald and John B. McClendon Gymnasium