

**Faculty Board on Athletics  
Meeting of March 24, 2017  
9:00am – 10:30am, 500 Main Building**

Members present: Patricia Bellia (Chair), Alexa Baltus, James Brockmole, Ann Firth, John Gaski, Erin Hoffmann Harding, Patrick Holmes, Dan Kelly, Sean Kelsey, Mary Ann McDowell, Susan Ohmer, Jaime Pensado, Michael Stanistic, Kevin Vaughan

Members excused: Jack Swarbrick

Athletics Liaisons: Missy Conboy, Michael Harrity, Beth Hunter

Guests: Heidi Uebelhor (Recorder)

**1. Call to Order and Opening Prayer**

Professor Bellia called the meeting to order and offered the opening prayer.

**2. Minutes of Meeting of February 24, 2017**

The Faculty Board on Athletics (Board) unanimously approved the minutes of the February 24, 2017 meeting.

**3. Chair's Announcements**

Professor Bellia announced that she had approved the following schedules on the Board's behalf: the spring volleyball schedule, the spring and fall men's soccer schedules, and the spring and fall women's soccer schedules. She approved revised schedules for softball, baseball, and women's soccer (spring). Baseball experienced weather challenges that required approval for a single student-athlete to miss one class, so as to permit the team to play a double-header ahead of projected storms. Professor Bellia also approved post-season competition for women's basketball, men's basketball, men's and women's fencing, and men's and women's swimming and diving.

Professor Bellia noted that the fall women's soccer schedule involves home games scheduled for orientation weekend, as is typical. Scheduling those games requires consultation with the First Year of Studies (Elly Brenner and Jenny Fox) and Student Affairs (Paul Manrique), to minimize conflicts with the official orientation schedule. The group settled on a 7 pm game on Friday and a 1:30 pm game on Sunday. The Sunday game is earlier than last year, to avoid a conflict with a late afternoon football event designed to test the renovated stadium.

**4. Requests for Waivers of On-Campus Housing Requirement**

Professor Bellia prefaced the discussion of the requests seeking waivers of the Board's on-campus housing requirements by noting that she had spoken to Karen Kennedy, Director of Housing, about the timing of the application process and about the financial penalties for

cancellation. If possible, it would be helpful for the Board to resolve any outstanding waiver requests before on-campus room picks begin on March 27, since cancellation fees attach after room picks occur.

Professor Bellia stated that the Board had three categories of waivers to consider: Category A—Medical Requests, Category B—Early Enrollee Requests, and Category C—Other Issues, such as demonstrated financial hardship.

**a. Category A—Medical Requests.** Professor Bellia revisited the one outstanding medical waiver request introduced during Board’s February 24, 2017, meeting. Professor Bellia notified the Board that she had consulted with Scott Howland, Office of Disability Services, and that Mr. Howland, in turn, had discussed the student-athlete’s request with the student-athlete’s physician. Following that conversation, Mr. Howland stated that the Office of Disability Services would support affording the student-athlete the opportunity to move off-campus rather than initially moving on-campus to an air-conditioned dormitory. Professor Bellia noted Mr. Howland’s observations that it is not clear whether an air-conditioned option would improve the student-athlete’s condition and that the student has a long history of seeking treatment for the condition.

The Student Welfare Subcommittee had voted by e-mail to recommend approval of the student-athlete’s waiver request, but the vote was not unanimous. In response to a question from Professor Brockmole, Ms. Harding commented that she had opposed the request. She preferred that the student-athlete remain on-campus and move into an air-conditioned residence hall.

Members discussed the considerations underlying the Board’s policy: the desire to promote the integration of student-athletes into the campus community, concerns about the impact of off-campus disciplinary issues, concerns about safety, and financial considerations. The Board discussed a 2015 case that ultimately led the Board to create a formal process for seeking medical documentation in connection with waiver requests. The Board in 2015 did not resolve whether a student-athlete must exhaust all on-campus options before being granted a waiver to move off-campus, and the Student Welfare Subcommittee did not favor imposing such a requirement now.

After further discussion and a motion to approve, the Board approved the waiver request with 9 members in favor and 3 members opposed.

**b. Category B—Early Enrollees.** Professor Bellia introduced a set of four waiver requests involving early enrollees. Professor Bellia explained that the requests would allow the student-athletes to reside off-campus following five semesters, rather than the six semesters the Board’s policy requires. An approval would align the student-athletes with teammates classified in their class year. The Board’s policy requires early enrollees seeking to move off-campus to demonstrate that they have made “appropriate progress” toward their degrees. The Board has not imposed a firm credit-hour or GPA requirement.

Professor Bellia reviewed past early enrollee cases. She noted one instance of a waiver denial in 2015 involving a student-athlete with a cumulative GPA of 2.1 and a GPA below 2.0 in courses in the student's major. That student-athlete was later dismissed from the University.

In the course of the discussion about the four cases, Professor Bellia asked whether the Board would prefer to delegate authority to the Chair to approve cases in which the student-athlete's request clearly matches previous case precedent. Professor Ohmer inquired how Professor Bellia would have handled the current cases. Professor Bellia stated that she would have brought one of the four cases, involving a student-athlete with a cumulative GPA only slightly over 2.0, before the full Board because it did not "clearly" fall within prior precedent. She noted that the previous denial involved a student in the Mendoza College of Business, which has a minimum GPA requirement for courses within the major. The current case involves a student in the College of Arts and Letters, which does not have a minimum GPA requirement for courses in the student's major. Despite this policy difference, Professor Bellia felt that the case warranted full Board discussion.

Professor Kelly inquired whether any outcomes were known from previous cases approved and denied. Professor Bellia responded that she did not recall issues that have occurred with waivers already granted. Mr. Holmes agreed that he had no recollection of academic issues. Ms. Conboy expressed concern, in light of the small number of midyear enrollees, about the possibility that one waiver may be denied. The Board briefly discussed the merits and limitations of using data to determine whether students with marginal GPAs were performing as expected or worse than expected. Professor Bellia noted that the unavailability of certain information, such as high school class rank, for all students makes it difficult to use the predicted GPA model for individual students, as opposed to teams.

Professor Gaski recalled a previous policy under which students had to meet a minimum GPA threshold of 2.7 before being permitted to move off-campus. Mr. Holmes explained that the Board had done away with that requirement after a full discussion of its benefits and drawbacks. Ms. Conboy wondered if early enrollee numbers were increasing. Professor Bellia reviewed the Board's previous discussion of whether there ought to be a cap on the number of early enrollees. A group that typically reviews early enrollee admissions had studied this issue and concluded that the level of support the University provides to early enrollees is far more important than the actual number of enrollees. She also observed that the group had anticipated a larger number of early enrollees this year, but that enrollment proved to be consistent with past years.

Professor Kelsey noted that precedent requires an approval of the first three waivers. After a motion and second, the Board unanimously voted to grant the first three waivers.

The Board next discussed the fourth early enrollee waiver request. Professor Ohmer expressed concern for the student-athlete potentially not using on-campus resources while residing off-campus with a marginal GPA. Professor Ohmer wondered if a GPA threshold should be established. Professor Kelsey noted that other students do not have a GPA requirement and that flexibility based on individual circumstances and facts is necessary. Professors McDowell and Bellia requested information from the student's academic counselor, Mr. Sargent, about the student's progress toward his degree. Mr. Holmes was asked to contact Mr. Sargent.

Professor Brockmole revived a discussion regarding the underlying six-semester policy adopted by the Board, wondering if five semesters should be considered. Professor Bellia noted that the six-semester policy aligns the approval cycle with the timing of off-campus lease agreements. The five-semester policy for early enrollees achieves the same result.

While the Board waited for a response from Mr. Sargent, Ms. Firth inquired how disciplinary considerations fit into the Board's approval process. Professor Bellia noted that if a waiver is approved, early enrollees must meet the same standard as student-athletes who have completed six semesters. Ms. Firth suggested that, in the future, the Chair could seek disciplinary history prior to a Board vote on a waiver request. Ms. Firth noted that a holistic approach to the fourth waiver request was sensible. Mr. Holmes returned to the Board and shared Mr. Sargent's comments regarding the academic performance of the student-athlete. Mr. Sargent had noted that the student's performance was consistently at the 2.0 level each term, increasing slightly over time. Mr. Sargent had concerns about the student-athlete failing to use on-campus resources if he were living off-campus. Professor Bellia asked Mr. Holmes to provide information on study hall requirements: would the requirements be the same whether the student lived on- or off-campus? Mr. Holmes clarified study hall requirements for juniors and the ramifications for not completing study hours.

After a motion and a second, the Board voted to approve the request with 7 in favor, 3 opposed, and 1 abstention.

**c. Category C—Other Issues.** Professor Bellia introduced an off-campus waiver request based on financial circumstances. She described a situation in which a student-athlete receiving a textbook-only athletics scholarship valued at \$1,050 secured off-campus housing for the student-athlete's junior year. The student-athlete shared that it was significantly less expensive to move off-campus, and the student-athlete had signed a lease unaware that the Board's policy would apply to the student-athlete's textbook scholarship.

Professor Brockmole stated that the Board policy should not apply to a student-athlete only on a textbook scholarship and noted that it would be more advantageous to decline the scholarship and purchase textbooks. Ms. Harding expressed a concern regarding the student-athlete's team having a history of behavioral issues in off-campus residences. Ms. Conboy stated that the Board should consider academic and disciplinary history of the individual student when reviewing waiver requests. Professor Kelsey commented that the Board's responsibility was not to vet the likelihood of off-campus disciplinary issues. In response to a question, Professor Bellia confirmed the student-athlete's strong academic record in the College of Business.

After a motion and a second, the Board voted to approve the waiver request, with 9 in favor and 2 opposed.

Professor Bellia returned to the issue of whether the Board would prefer to delegate authority to approve waiver requests based on financial considerations in cases falling clearly within existing precedents. Professor Kelsey agreed that such a delegation was appropriate, but stated that he did welcome hearing the different perspectives on the Board's policy. Professor Bellia noted the ongoing University-level discussion about what the on-campus housing

requirements ought to be. Even if the University approves a policy change, such a change will take effect for students entering in 2018, leaving the Board with the task of addressing waivers for the 2015, 2016, and 2017 entering classes.

Hearing no additional comments regarding the delegation of waiver approvals, Professor Bellia addressed the topic of students who are removed from campus for a specific period of time as a disciplinary sanction. The Board's policy would technically apply to such students once the disciplinary sanction expires. Two student-athletes who lost residency privileges in connection with disciplinary issues, however, received a letter from Student Affairs stating that they would have to reapply for housing if they sought to return to campus, and that "housing is not guaranteed." Upon hearing about this situation, Professor Bellia asked the sport administrator to inform the student-athletes that they were subject to the Board's policy and would have to return to campus once the disciplinary sanctions expired. The two student-athletes involved, however, had secured off-campus leases for 2017-2018, and breaking those leases will carry a significant financial penalty. A complicating factor is that Professor Bellia's direction that the students must return to campus was not promptly communicated to the students.

Professor Ohmer stated that students will assume written documentation is correct. Ms. Conboy suggested that the students should return to campus since their athletics scholarships will cover room and board, and there may be a way for Athletics to absorb or mitigate any financial penalty. Professor Bellia observed that the student-athletes claim that the financial consequences extend beyond the lease and the financial penalty, because they have made other investments in off-campus living (such as furniture and incidentals).

Professor Brockmole noted the illogic of requiring students to move off-campus as a disciplinary sanction, when the Board's on-campus housing requirement rests in part on the desire to integrate student-athletes into the community. Professor Bellia confirmed that the Student Welfare Subcommittee had expressed a similar concern, and that she had conveyed that concern to Ms. Harding as well as Brian Coughlin and Ryan Willerton in Student Affairs. Ms. Harding stated that student case deliberation is individual and careful in nature, and the penalty of removing students from the on-campus residential community is sparingly used. Professor Gaski suggested the clause that housing is not guaranteed be removed from the letter. Professor Bellia confirmed that the letter was already under review.

After a motion and second, the Board voted to approve the request, with 7 members in favor, 2 opposed, and 2 abstentions.

Ms. Firth expressed disappointment about the communication breakdowns among University units involved in this situation, and requested further review to address those breakdowns. Professor Bellia confirmed that she would ensure that the communications issues are addressed.

## **5. Adjournment**

Professor Bellia adjourned the meeting, thanking Professor Brockmole and Ms. Baltes for their service, at 10:32 a.m.