

**Faculty Board on Athletics
Meeting of May 10, 2014
10:00 am-12:00 pm, 500 Main Building**

Members present: Patricia Bellia (Chair), Michael Desch, Ann Firth, John Gaski, Erin Hoffmann Harding, Patrick Holmes, Umesh Garg, Richard Pierce, Robin Rhodes, Michael Stanistic, Christopher Stewart

Members excused: Dan Kelly, Tom Noble, Jack Swarbrick, Ann Tenbrunsel

Athletics Liaisons present: Missy Conboy, Jill Bodensteiner, Beth Hunter

Observers and Guests: Dan Skendzel, Senior Associate Athletics Director (Digital Media and Branding); Theresa Romagnolo, Head Coach, Women's Soccer; Tracey Thomas (Recorder)

1. Call to order and opening prayer

Professor Patricia Bellia called the meeting to order and invited Professor Michael Desch to give the opening prayer.

2. Minutes of March 21, 2014

The minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Introduction of Theresa Romagnolo, Head Coach, Women's Soccer

Professor Bellia invited Michael Harrity to introduce the new women's soccer coach, Theresa Romagnolo. Mr. Harrity spoke about the resignation of Randy Waldrum, who took a position as coach of a new professional women's soccer team, the Houston Dash. An exhaustive national search was conducted; it attracted the interest of every major program's coach. The search team is "thrilled" about hiring Ms. Romagnolo. She was a student-athlete at the University of Washington. She went on to be an assistant coach at Stanford and San Diego before taking her first head coaching position at Dartmouth. She has been on campus to conduct spring training, which has been successful.

Ms. Romagnolo thanked the board for inviting her to speak. She noted that she has had the opportunity to work at several institutions where the student-athletes are among the elite in the nation; Notre Dame certainly is one such place. She believes strongly in the education she can offer to recruits. Notre Dame can attract national team caliber players as well as provide the opportunity to "meet great people, form great networks, work with great professors." She considers this a "dream job." She noted that Mr. Waldrum has left "a lot of talent and a great tradition of excellence." She expects to make a quick transition into the coaching position. She has already conducted a large number of individual meetings with students, discussing what needs to be done to move forward with the next season. She noted that she is "very excited to be here."

In response to a question, Ms. Romagnolo said the ACC is “the best soccer conference in the country.” There will be some challenges for travel, but the students are already getting used to these issues. For the coach, it means aggressive management of the recovery phase of competition. There will not be as much training time as might be desirable. The ACC, however, has trimmed its conference schedule and changed the timing of the conference tournament; this should mitigate some travel issues. Mr. Harrity noted that the team expects to have three Friday class misses and two Thursday class misses in the fall.

Professor Bellia asked Ms. Romagnolo to speak about the pressure to begin recruiting student-athletes as early as the ninth grade, which seems to be a growing problem in women’s soccer. Ms. Romagnolo agreed that the pressure is strong to engage in this practice, and it is difficult to resist because if one’s peers are doing this kind of recruiting, then the team is disadvantaged if it does not do it also. She advocated not recruiting before the junior year of high school, but noted that some peers are committing to high school sophomores. There has been talk of restricting unofficial school visits. Ms. Romagnolo noted, however, that the rules are easy to bend. At Notre Dame the academics are so important that it is necessary to see a full or nearly full high school transcript before signing a student-athlete. She said it may take some type of NCAA legislation to stop the practice. Key factors to be watching for are speed, and if the student-athlete is in a “challenging environment” that will help her to continue to grow. There is risk that prospective student-athletes who project to be star players will not develop as predicted, but some institutions are willing to take on that risk.

Professor Bellia thanked Ms. Romagnolo for speaking to the board.

4. Women’s Soccer Request for Orientation Weekend Games

Professor Bellia introduced the discussion by reminding members of the board’s policy prohibiting competition on the first-year orientation weekend, and of the fact that the permissible opening date for competition in women’s soccer almost always coincides with orientation weekend. This year there is a request to play an away game on Friday evening followed by a home game on Sunday afternoon.

Mr. Harrity reported that the soccer team is aware of the mandate to avoid a road game on the weekend of orientation. The obligation to play on the road was a surprise to the coaching staff; the scheduling had been handled by the previous coach. Notre Dame owes the University of Illinois a return game, for which Illinois has waited ten years. There is a contract for the game. Illinois is not interested in any other arrangement except a home game on Friday night of orientation weekend.

Notre Dame already plays two fewer games than most opponents. Further, this is the first possible date to schedule the first game of the season; if Notre Dame forfeits the opportunity, then it will be behind all its opponents in terms of training schedules (which are tied to the first game date). In addition, most other teams will already be scheduled for this date, so it will be challenging to find an equivalent quality team to play at home at this time. There are eleven

freshmen on the team. If the game were to be played as currently scheduled, the team would leave campus on Thursday evening and return Friday night, late.

Professor Bellia reviewed prior precedents in this situation, which has arisen repeatedly since an NCAA schedule change in 2009. There has been an effort to schedule home games during this weekend, early on Friday night and then Sunday afternoon at about 2:30 pm. Those time slots emerged from extensive discussions with First Year of Studies and the Office of Student Affairs. In 2012, the team requested and was granted permission to play an away game at Wisconsin, but it played no game on Sunday. The request for this year is for an away Friday game and a home Sunday game.

Members discussed the orientation schedule and the reasons for prioritizing the weekend's events for the students. Ms. Harding noted that the key orientation events for students occur on Friday and Saturday; these include time with hallmates and roommates during which the first bonding experiences happen. While student-athletes and rectors may all be on campus on Wednesday, providing the opportunity for student-athletes to meet with their recotrs, most other students will not be on campus.

Professor Pierce spoke about concerns for "silo-ing" student-athletes; Professor Garg emphasized that the orientation weekend policy was created in order to emphasize how important it is for all students to participate in the key events of orientation.

In response to a question about her ability to travel with a limited number of first-year students, Ms. Romagnolo said the team will also be missing four U-20 student-athletes who will be competing in an event, as well as one student-athlete who received a red card in the last game of the previous season and so must sit out the first game of the new season. For a non-conference travel game, Ms. Romagnolo would usually "bring everyone." It is an important time for building team chemistry.

Members asked questions about alternative Friday game times; it was suggested that a noon game would allow the team to return to Notre Dame before the evening orientation activities have concluded. Ms. Romagnolo reported that the Illinois team intends to advertise heavily for this game, the first of the season and with a marquee school. It is expected that the game will attract a lot of fans as well as provide a significant revenue.

Professor Stanisic suggested that this request be considered separately and then that the Board reconsider policy going forward. Professor Bellia noted that the board had previously settled on permissible windows of competition, but the coaching turnover has caused a disruption. It was noted that this problem is not caused by the new staff. After further discussion, it was proposed that Mr. Harrity and Ms. Romagnolo propose a noon game with Illinois. If the noon game cannot be arranged, then the Board can approve a one-time agreement to play an evening away game during orientation weekend.

The motion was made to propose a noon game and to pre-approve Board acceptance of a 7 pm game if necessary; the motion was seconded. The motion carried with two "no" votes.

Professor Bellia closed discussion by noting that the vote taken should “fully inform” Mr. Harrity of the board’s position. Mr. Harrity stated that he would call the Illinois staff today and report back on the outcome of the conversation. Ms. Harding asked to have the names of the first-year student-athletes so as to communicate with the students’ rectors.

Ms. Romagnolo thanked the board for its attention to this request.

5. Request for Leave of Absence to Participate in Olympic Trials

A student-athlete appeared before the board to make a request to take a leave of absence from the University so that she can pursue an opportunity to participate in Olympic trials. The student-athlete is seeking up to a two-year leave of absence. According to the Academic Code, a leave of absence can be approved only as “an integral part of a plan for the student’s development.” Such a leave is generally granted for up to two semesters. The student-athlete’s request has been granted by the dean of her College; the final decision is up to Associate Provost Hugh Page, who is seeking the advice of the Board.

The student-athlete explained her reasoning for requesting a leave of absence rather than taking a separation from the University with the intention (and expectation) of being readmitted. She emphasized that she and her family want the assurance that she will be able to return to the University at the latest in spring 2016, to complete the final two semesters of her undergraduate degree. She noted that the undertaking of training for and then competing for the Olympics is inherently uncertain. In addition, she has recognized that the long-term plan for her life will not be shaped by her Olympic or athletic ambitions; she called this “a small detour” in her life’s plan. A leave of absence would “ensure the value of the three years” she has already invested in her education.

In response to a question, the student-athlete stated that she might return after one year’s absence, depending on the outcome of several events, including the always present possibility of an injury. She has already arranged for the guarantee of her scholarship, per NCAA’s compliance protocols. While there is no doubt that the student-athlete will have another year of eligibility (she has not used all her eligibility), she stated that she would return to complete her degree even if there were no scholarship money available. Ms. Conboy noted that were the student-athlete to sustain a career ending injury, the scholarship commitment would be honored, as it is with any athlete who has committed to the University but who sustains an injury.

The student-athlete reported that she is aware of several other student-athletes who have competed for the Olympics during their university careers at other institutions. However, she noted that the timing puts her in her junior year, while the examples she is aware of were at a different stage of their education. Ms. Conboy noted, as well, that other institutions may have had sport-appropriate facilities that permitted the athlete to do training at the university. In this case, Notre Dame does not have year-round facilities for the student-athlete to use for training.

Ms. Harding stated that she has a concern for equity for other students who might also have “amazing but quite different experiences” but not be able to seek a leave of absence. She stated that there is very little doubt that the student-athlete would be readmitted to the University

after time away training for and perhaps competing in the Olympics. The student-athlete stressed that she is seeking some concrete security about the future, no matter the outcome of the Olympics-related experiences.

Professor Bellia thanked the student-athlete for appearing and answering questions; she reminded her that the board will share its recommendation with Dr. Page, who will make the final decision.

After the student-athlete's departure, members discussed the request. Professor Bellia noted that she has spoken with the Registrar, Chuck Hurley. Mr. Hurley is concerned about setting a precedent by granting a two-year leave. Students often conjecture that they will return after a two-year leave, and then fail to do so (these students generally have left for health reasons). As Mr. Hurley explained, the limitation on the length of time for a leave is designed to encourage students with longer-term issues "to deal with whatever the problem is" and then "seek to return at that point." Ms. Harding emphasized that health-related issues fall outside of the definition of a leave event. The key to a leave of absence is that it contributes to the student's development. She noted that a withdrawal under other circumstances is not "a bad thing."

Members observed that this student-athlete's request fits the criteria for a leave except for the length of time; it was noted that she does have a strong academic record.

Members affirmed their sense that the student-athlete is seeking psychological security as she steps out of the traditional path to "an unknown world." Ms. Conboy made the case that there is not likely to be a precedent-setting effect from this request. Ms. Harding noted that this experience will be "a great thing" for the student-athlete's development. She registered her concern that other students might seek leaves for longer than two semesters for other types of experiences.

The motion to approve the request by the student-athlete was made and seconded. The vote to approve was unanimous.

6. Requests for Waivers of Off-Campus Housing Policy

Professor Bellia opened the discussion by noting that grant-in-aid student-athletes are required to spend six semesters on campus. At that point, to move off campus, they need a coach's permission. Two student-athletes have asked for waivers of the board's policy, so as to move off campus before spending the required six semesters on campus.

The first request involves a men's lacrosse student-athlete who receives a partial grant-in-aid (GIA). He is requesting permission to move off-campus for summer 2014 in order to save money. The student-athlete would be living with a non-GIA student-athlete whose parents own an off-campus apartment. The student-athlete will be paying rent, an arrangement approved by the Athletics Compliance Office.

Members discussed the financial situation as presented in the student's documentation. There was debate about what defined a financial strain worthy of waiving the board's normal policy.

Mr. Stewart reported that students receiving partial GIAs have been heard to complain that they are forced to subsidize other GIA students by staying in on-campus housing. Professor Bellia noted that there has not been a "flood of requests" to obtain waivers of this policy. At a coaches' meeting a year earlier, some coaches indicated that they do not want a different policy for partial GIA student-athletes that might make a further distinction between them and full GIA student-athletes. However, the summer session might raise different issues. She said that today's vote can only consider the specific request; the board could decide to revisit the policy, however.

A vote was taken; there was one negative vote; the request was approved.

The Board deferred to an e-mail vote a second request involving a student-athlete who is scheduled to graduate in Spring 2015, but who took a one-semester leave from campus.

7. Digital Media Initiatives

Professor Bellia noted that the board has invited the leaders of several "centers of excellence" in the Athletics Department to give a presentation on their work. Dan Skendzel, Senior Associate Athletics Director for Digital Media and Branding, has been invited to discuss Fighting Irish Digital Media (FIDM) and related areas.

Mr. Skendzel began his presentation with a FIDM video featuring swimmer Emma Reaney, who set NCAA and American records in the 200-meter breaststroke several weeks ago. He noted that the video is significant for several reasons. First, it features an absolutely world-class performance by a Notre Dame student-athlete; second, in a very short time, Ms. Reaney conveys a clear sense of "who she is" and speaks volumes about herself and her connection to Notre Dame, which outsiders are sure to find intriguing; third, Notre Dame can create, control, and market this type of material without relying on external media producers for these services.

Mr. Skendzel noted that "telling stories" that are inspiring is at the core of what media services at Notre Dame does. The medium has changed, however. In addition, the consumer now has more options and control over what he or she watches, when, and where. The nature of content has also changed substantially; Mr. Skendzel noted that a video such as "Charlie bit my finger" can today receive 700 million viewers, and Super Bowl commercials can cost several million dollars. Another new element is social media, which has a "huge" reach. Videos such as the one shown today are a powerful way to reach fans and to establish shared values.

Consumers now choose when and how to watch material. There is a strong pattern of time-shift in viewing, and binge viewing as well. Consumers also control how they view content: mobile devices dominate usage. Users want to be able to access content on smartphones and tablets as well as traditional televisions. The TV industry is becoming unbundled—the consumer no longer needs to rely on the container to get the content.

FIDM aims to cover all aspects of the process from production to distribution through to programming, to tell live stories both of news and feature events. Campus personnel are welcome to visit FIDM studio, which is located in the Joyce Center. There are two control rooms, with connectivity to DeBartolo Hall. There is a studio and meeting spaces; the studio can be used by other non-athletic campus units at least 16 hours a week. Professor Elliott Visconsi, Chief Academic Digital Officer, is a partner in the space.

The group is looking to maximize every channel of distribution. WatchND provides content as well as information on what other outlets are showing Notre Dame events at any time. Digital publishing is being launched currently. Last fall, a digital version of the football program was produced; now that option is expanding to other sports. FIDM is developing a commemorative app for women's basketball. This is clearly the future of media guides and magazines.

Social media options are currently reaching over 1.3 million viewers. IrishUNDERground is the blog platform for the Notre Dame Athletics. The contributors here take a less reverent tone, and it is aimed at a younger audience. The primary broadcast partners are ESPN and NBC. FIDM streamed six games on ESPN3 this year. A similar relationship was built with NBC, to which eight hockey games were streamed.

The programming options are also wide open. The center is producing 150 events per year, through news clips, highlights, and feature programming options. Student. Athlete. Irish., Strong of Heart, and ICON (Irish Connection) are some of the programming options that showcase student-athletes in different modes. Mr. Skendzel showed a three minute video featuring clips of the types of programming being produced.

Professor Rhodes asked if any collaborations are being developed with the Motion Graphics side of the Art Department and with the Film, Television, and Theater (FTT) Department. FIDM has a half-time relationship with Professor Ted Mandel, FTT, to build and lead a student program in digital media; there are 60 students involved currently and the intent is to expand student involvement.

Mr. Stewart noted that his experience confirms that these are the kinds of tools used by student-athletes and others in his generation to stay connected. He asked about possibilities for legal questions connected to FIDM's work. Mr. Skendzel noted that there is consistent contact with the General Counsel's office to ensure that all legal aspects of media production are taken care of. The focus of the work is really current student-athletes; the University has obtained rights to feature all current student-athletes. Any conversations with former student-athletes are always preceded by a signed agreement.

Beth Hunter reported that when the men's soccer team travels to Africa this summer, a Digital Media staff person is going to travel with the team. This will ensure that the trip can be widely and appropriately shared. There will be a shared spot on the website to access all the digital communications produced during the trip. This kind of production was not available four years ago when the team went to Sweden.

Professor Bellia asked who is establishing best practices in the use of social media by student-athletes. Mr. Skendzel noted that the center's focus has been on administrative and University productions. It will soon produce a "best practices" document for coaches to use with teams. Jill Bodensteiner reported that Student Welfare and Development does media training with the student-athletes, and Mr. Stewart reported that locker rooms are posted with a clear poster detailing good social media practices.

Professor Bellia thanked Mr. Skendzel for the presentation. He offered to answer any other questions via email or phone.

9. NCAA Governance Redesign

As time had expired, this report was postponed until a future meeting.

10. Departing Members

Professor Bellia noted that Professors Richard Pierce and Umesh Garg are rotating off the Board after years of support to the committee. Professor Pierce has notably been a mentor to many student-athletes; it is hoped that his mentoring will continue past his term on the Board. Professor Garg has been an exemplary team liaison, especially to women's soccer. Members applauded the work of these two outstanding faculty.

Professor Bellia also thanked all members for their hard work in the past academic year.