

**Faculty Board on Athletics  
Meeting of November 22, 2013  
9:00 am-11:00 am, 500 Main Building**

**Members present:** Patricia Bellia (Chair), Ann Firth, Umesh Garg, John Gaski, Erin Hoffmann Harding, Patrick Holmes, Dan Kelly, Thomas Noble, Robin Rhodes, Richard Pierce, Michael Stanasic, Christopher Stewart, Jack Swarbrick, Ann Tenbrunsel

**Athletics Liaisons:** Melissa Conboy, Beth Hunter

**Observers and Guests:** Tracey Thomas (Recorder)

**1. Call to order and opening prayer**

Professor Patricia Bellia called the meeting to order and invited Professor Dan Kelly to give the opening prayer.

**2. Minutes of October 11, 2013**

The minutes of October 11, 2013 were unanimously approved, subject to technical corrections from Jill Bodensteiner.

**3. Chair's Announcements**

Professor Bellia approved spring schedules for baseball, softball, women's lacrosse, and men's and women's fencing. The baseball schedule involves an extra class miss in the Monday/Wednesday/Friday sequence, which has been typical over the last several years in light of the Friday-Saturday-Sunday game structure that is now the norm and the need for the team to be on the road early in the season. The women's lacrosse schedule involves an extra half-day class miss in the Monday/Wednesday/Friday sequence to permit the team to travel to a non-conference game against Ohio State. Professor Bellia approved revised schedules for men's basketball and hockey. The former required an additional Tuesday/Thursday class miss, the team's second in that sequence. The latter involved a reduction by one of Tuesday/Thursday class misses.

Professor Bellia also approved postseason travel for women's soccer and men's soccer. She also approved captaincies for baseball, men's basketball, men's tennis, men's lacrosse, and softball.

Professor Bellia provided members with a copy of the report of the Rawlings Panel on Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Professor Bellia addressed the question of electronic versions of the committee materials. She has received approval for use of Box, a shared file space available at box.nd.edu, for distribution of meeting materials that do not contain highly sensitive

information. Members approved this method of distribution; Professor Bellia will use Box for future materials.

#### **4. Athletics Department Reorganization / Athletics Director's Updates**

Jack Swarbrick gave a report on the Athletics Department reorganization. A memo explaining the reorganization was distributed to all members, and his report today provides context for that memo.

The Department of Athletics "change team" consisted of Athletics staff members, none of whom was in a current senior leadership position. Mr. Swarbrick complimented the team for its excellent work. Four criteria governed the reorganization process: the Athletics Department should become more customer-centric; there should be emphasis on creating a "creative culture" as a foundation for the department; there should be a department-wide focus on "thinking digitally"; and there should be a renewed focus on increasing revenue. Additional goals included increasing efficiency and providing more opportunities for talented staff to advance.

The new structure organizes business around customer groups, in what are now called "Centers of Excellence." The customer groups and corresponding centers are:

1. Student-athletes (Student-Athlete Services)
2. External users of facilities and programs (Sport Operations)
3. Commercial partners (Business Development)
4. General public (Digital Media & Branding)
5. Professional media community and general public (Media Relations)
6. Institutional customers, including University, NCAA, and ACC (Business Operations, Compliance & Policy Management)

Mr. Swarbrick invited questions. Professor Pierce asked about the department's success in changing the culture on diversity in the leadership of the department. Mr. Swarbrick acknowledged that goals have not been satisfactorily met at this time. The context for change includes one unchanging fact: the department has had very low turnover in leadership staff over the past twenty years, and the lowest staff growth of any department in the University in the last twenty years. Mr. Swarbrick reported that he was asked yesterday to appoint a staff member to the President's Oversight Committee on Diversity and Inclusion.

Mr. Swarbrick turned to general updates on the intercollegiate athletics landscape. Professor Gaski asked Mr. Swarbrick to address the issue of the power of the "major football schools" within the Division I to influence policy and regulations. Mr. Swarbrick noted that among the power football schools are some with whom Notre Dame has much in common, such as Duke, Stanford, Northwestern, and Wake Forest. The 65 schools within the five BCS conferences are powerful primarily because the threat of those schools pulling out and forming their own division would be "so negative," an economic disaster to the other schools. Under the current NCAA structure, many schools

with no direct interest in the outcome of particular legislative proposals are able to vote and influence the outcome. For example, Notre Dame is in support of student-athletes participating in a once-every-four-years international trip, as it provides an educational opportunity for student-athletes who may otherwise be unable to travel abroad. A couple of years ago, the NCAA legislative package included a proposal to prohibit such trips. Institutions that do not typically sponsor foreign trips voted to prohibit them. The NCAA must create a balanced power structure so that institutions have control over outcomes that directly affect them, without the power to create outcomes that are harmful to peers. Notre Dame has been active in the discussions on the NCAA governance structure and hopes to make its voice heard, in conjunction with peers schools with a similar perspective.

Professor Noble asked about risks to areas other than economic—for example, academic risks—if there were a split of the 65 BCS schools from Division I. Mr. Swarbrick noted that his perspective, not widely shared, is that the standards for admissions and eligibility should be consistent with the ethos of the institution. Troubles occur when outsiders try to regulate in areas that are not affected by athleticism.

Noting his broad concern about proposed NCAA reform—the desire to reform is preceding the identification of needed reforms—Mr. Swarbrick stated that the fundamental issue is the strain in an association whose members have wildly diverse purposes and business models. There is a need to organize into subgroups with common purposes. Alternatively, the NCAA should only regulate on the common purpose issues and deregulate on all other issues. The latter is favored by Mr. Swarbrick, who also expressed the belief that the NCAA might need to halt its involvement in commercial relationships. Other issues should devolve to the conference and/or the individual institution.

Professor Rhodes raised the problem of serious physical injuries caused by sports; he asked if Notre Dame has made any policy changes in light of the increased awareness of this problem. Mr. Swarbrick agreed with Professor Rhodes on the seriousness of this problem. He noted that Notre Dame is involved several collaborative efforts to study and address the issue. For instance, Notre Dame has partnered with the University of Michigan's concussion project. Notre Dame is also deeply engaged in equipment development. The unintended consequences created by equipment is an important area for analysis. For instance, the use of baseball batting helmets means that athletes stand in closer to the plate, thus encountering more injury situations. Notre Dame coaches are also on the forefront in the careful planning of practices. In football, Notre Dame consistently minimizes the hits taken during practice and keeps practice times at about 90 minutes. This approach is and should be applied across all collegiate sports.

To establish medical standards that are meaningful, the NCAA and institutions need better data collection to enable better data analysis. The baseline test for concussions, for example, is "primitive." Mr. Swarbrick noted that many medical issues for student-athletes begin in youth sports, which in America are year-round and with increasingly intense levels of play. Collegiate athletics departments are significantly

hampered by lack of access to information about the concussion history of prospective high school student-athletes. Attention needs to be paid to youth sports as part of a comprehensive overhaul of medical practices for student-athletes.

In response to a question about injuries incurred by the football team in competitions with the service academies, Mr. Swarbrick noted that there is no data to support the contention that Notre Dame experiences a higher number of injuries in these games. Good rule management is the most effective tool to use to address any perceived problems.

Professor Bellia thanked Mr. Swarbrick for this report.

## **5. Grade and Graduation Rate Reports**

Mr. Holmes gave the annual Grade and Graduation Rate Reports.

### **a. Graduation Rate reports**

There are two metrics used to measure graduation rates, the Graduation Success Rate (GSR) and Federal Rate (Fed Rate). The Fed Rate is a Department of Education metric that has been in use for many years, and it tracks the graduation rates of student-athletes and the general student population, using a cohort that enters the institution in a given year and graduates within six years. For student-athletes, the Fed Rate tracks grant-in-aid students. Transfers into the institution are not added to the cohort, and transfers out of the institution in good academic standing are not removed from it. The Fed Rate report includes both a one-class cohort rate and a rate consisting of four one-class cohorts.

The NCAA instituted the GSR about a decade ago in order to account for the graduation rates of transfers. The GSR works with a 4-year cohort. Students who transfer into the institution are added to the cohort, and students who transfer out in good academic standing are removed from it.

The transfer information can produce a striking difference in the two rates for a given team, especially for teams such as baseball, where some student-athletes leave the university after the junior year in order to pursue professional opportunities. These students almost universally leave in good academic standing. The Fed Rate will be lower, because such students will not be removed from the cohort and will not graduate within six years. It could be argued that the Fed Rate does not effectively gauge the job of the university as it works with student-athletes on campus.

Members discussed specific data from the graduation charts. Notre Dame stands at the top of all institutions nationally in both rates. The GSR is 100% for all sports at Notre Dame with the exception of football and men's lacrosse—94% and 96%. There is no expectation that that standing will change dramatically in the next several years.

Mr. Swarbrick noted that NCAA reform will require the enrolling institution to be responsible for the cost of completing the degree whenever it occurs for the student-athlete; this is a change from the past and will not negatively impact Notre Dame, as it has always covered that cost. In addition, he noted that the NCAA rule requiring student-athletes in some sports to sit out for a period of time when transferring is being watered down. He foresees a loosening (not an abandonment) of this rule. Playing time will then become a more compelling reason for student-athletes to consider transferring.

#### **b. Fifth-Year Student-Athlete Report**

In 2012-2013, there were fourteen student-athletes using their eligibility in a fifth year. Mr. Holmes shared the students' GPA numbers, which he described as "solid." Students generally register as an unclassified, non-degree student and must take at least one course at the 60000 level or above or receive a waiver of this requirement from the Graduate School. In response to a question, Mr. Holmes noted there is some "clustering" in specific courses. There are limits to the opportunities for enrollment for unclassified graduate students. Professor Bellia reported that FBA keeps a close watch on this aspect of the fifth-year students, and it works hard to "close loopholes" as they emerge in the application of the rules. A problem with directed reading courses was addressed; a clustering effect in music classes has been monitored. There is an open discussion path with the deans to discuss problems as they emerge. In response to questions about the limited opportunities for unclassified graduate students, Professor Bellia noted that Notre Dame expends a great deal of effort to ensure that the student-athletes complete a degree in four years. Many other institutions use a tactic of having a student-athlete drop a required undergraduate course. The student-athlete will then complete the final requirement as an undergraduate in the fifth year. That approach leaves student-athletes vulnerable to not completing their degrees. Mr. Holmes added that Notre Dame uses summer school very effectively to move student-athletes toward graduation; some student-athletes have sufficient credits to graduate after three and one half years.

Professor Noble asked whether a coach's decision to preserve eligibility for a student-athlete in the sophomore year effectively "works around" the oversight of FBA. Mr. Holmes noted that a coach can choose not to play a student-athlete in any of the four years; the coach's conversation does not affect the student's application for a fifth year of eligibility. The application for fifth year always comes to FBA, and there is never any guarantee that a student-athlete will be awarded a fifth year.

#### **c. Spring 2013 GPA Report**

Mr. Holmes noted the "great year" had by men's soccer, which registered its highest semester GPA ever as well as its highest cumulative GPA ever, and did this while ranked number one in the country and receiving the top seed in tournament play. The strong team culture was commended. Mr. Holmes shared semester and cumulative GPAs for all teams. Fourteen student-athletes earned a perfect 4.0, 13.4% of student-athletes made Dean's List, and 38.6% earned at or above 3.400. 337 student-athletes were

recognized at Big East Academic All Stars, 68% of Notre Dame student-athletes competing in the Big East conference.

Mr. Holmes noted that several student-athletes received significant academic awards:

- Big East American Eagle Outfitters Scholar-Athlete—Kim Holden and Grant Van De Castele
- Big East Male Scholar-Athlete—Grant Van De Castele
- Big East Sport Excellence Award—Greg Andrews, Alexa Aragon, Kim Holden, Jennifer Kellner, Abby Meyers
- 2012-2013 Academic All-Americans—Greg Andrews, Ashley Armstrong, Mike Golic Jr., Logan Renwick, Manti Te'o, Rebecca Tracy, Elizabeth Tucker, Harrison Shipp
- NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship—Kim Holden
- Truman Scholarship—Alex Coccia
- Michael Traghese Award—Michael Moore

Notre Dame's five Big East Sport Excellence awards is a high and more than any other Big East team. Eight Academic All-American awards is also a current high; Notre Dame is second to Nebraska in total number of Academic All-Americans.

Mr. Holmes discussed several GPA trends. He noted that the student-athlete GPA is trending down slightly in comparison to the general student population. He discussed particular at-risk populations, noting that on a team with a small number of student-athletes, GPAs are more vulnerable to fluctuation when individual students have challenging semesters. Mr. Holmes emphasized the need to continue to carefully calibrate recruitment to "bring in good fits, students who can take advantage of the opportunity."

Mr. Holmes noted that Academic Services continues to make resources available to the student-athletes and to develop strong support and collaboration with coaches. The majority of student-athletes have a good opportunity to get a great education. The outliers are of the most concern. Mr. Swarbrick reported that his department is working to target strategies and personnel on the success of the defined subset of student-athletes who face real challenges at Notre Dame. It is not a question, generally, of team culture but of level of readiness at admittance. The University has an opportunity to make a difference with this population; this subset group also "brings something valuable" to the University.

Professor Rhodes asked about the relationship between sports success and academic performance. For most student-athletes, participation in athletics is an enormous time commitment—it is a twelve-month job for student-athletes. In response to a question, Mr. Holmes agreed that burnout may play a role in lower GPAs. Student-athletes have a significant opportunity to develop skills at balancing commitments and learning to use resources effectively. Professor Gaski concluded the discussion by noting

that given the size of the extracurricular time commitment and the level of achievement in extracurriculars, the difference between the GPAs of student-athletes and non-student-athletes is minor and the achievement tremendous. He noted the credit due to the University and to Mr. Holmes's staff.

Professor Bellia thanked Mr. Holmes for his informative report.

## **5. Class Miss Report**

Professor Bellia gave the annual class miss report, which she distributed to members. The report maps the class miss situations for each sport, to track the times of stress for individual student-athletes. Professor Bellia noted that the 2012-2013 year was uniquely affected by weather, which caused several class misses. The calendar also produced some reductions in class misses during this year; for example, a portion of the NCAA women's basketball tournament occurred over Easter break. Finally, the GPAs are mapped alongside of the class misses. Professor Bellia noted that circumstances make it challenging to correlate GPA with class misses.

Professor Bellia noted that members had previously requested that she conduct a longitudinal analysis. After commencing this analysis, Professor Bellia shared a draft of it with Mr. Holmes. Mapping GPAs over class misses was less informative than anticipated, particularly in the absence of test score data. Professor Bellia requested feedback from members about the kind of information they were seeking when they requested the longitudinal analysis so that she can provide the appropriate analysis.

Professor Tenbrunsel noted that her initial request had to do with the effect of the two additional discretionary class misses that the policy permits the Chair to grant. Professor Bellia discussed the history of this policy: the additional misses were initially added for golf in 2006, and then were extended to other teams in 2008. In 2009, Professor Bellia asked members to confirm that the two additional discretionary misses should continue; members agreed to continue them but requested that Professor Bellia provide an annual class miss report. Professor Bellia stated that there does not appear to be any "excessive use" of the opportunity to request an additional class miss. The teams that tend to request one or two additional class misses do so yearly with no notable impact on GPAs, even where the team may have additional misses for post-season competition (e.g., women's soccer).

Members discussed the use of charter flights to shorten the time missed. Charters are routinely used for football and men's and women's basketball, teams that tend to have more at-risk student-athletes. Charters have occasionally been used for other teams as well. A women's soccer player was mentioned to have reported challenges orienting to campus life in part because of the travel schedule. Mr. Swarbrick remarked that Notre Dame is not happy with the ACC women's soccer schedule; thus far, advocacy on this issue has not been successful. Mr. Swarbrick noted that it is likely that the Olympic sports will move to shorter competitive seasons, which Notre Dame would favor. Mr. Swarbrick and Ms. Conboy both reported that in any discussion of scheduling, there is

zero concern at any other institution about class misses. Ms. Conboy said it is not seen as a question of “student welfare.” Other institutions frame the concern as a need to rest bodies rather than concern for academics. Members urged Mr. Swarbrick, Ms. Conboy, and Professor Bellia to emphasize with their ACC counterparts their concerns about this issue.

Professor Noble asked about the possibility of the football team being scheduled for a Thursday night game on the road, as part of the new ACC relationship. Mr. Swarbrick said that it will only happen once in three years. He also noted that the ACC would like Notre Dame to play a season opener football game on the Monday night of Labor Day; that has not yet been scheduled.

Members thanked Professor Bellia for the report.

#### **6. Subcommittee Report—Academic Integrity—Practice Times and Class Scheduling**

Professor Tenbrunsel noted that the discussion of practice times and class scheduling is an issue remaining from the last academic year’s discussions. Data from the student-athlete survey indicates the student-athletes are not experiencing much tension with faculty about class misses. The pressure point comes in scheduling classes, because of the strong commitment not to miss practice. Practice times appear to be encroaching on class options. The subcommittee recommended that, prior to registration for spring classes, Professor Bellia reissue the letter she had sent in the spring 2013, reminding coaches about the FBA guidelines for scheduling practices. (See Appendix.) The letter notes that the Academic Integrity subcommittee is considering developing a formal policy for scheduling practices and classes, in consultation with the Registrar. An analysis of class scheduling data will be conducted to inform any such policy.

As time had expired, the meeting was adjourned.

## Appendix A

From: Tricia Bellia <pbellia@nd.edu>  
Subject: Spring 2014 Registration  
Date: November 14, 2013 at 3:09:29 PM EST  
To: [Head Coaches]  
Cc: [Sport Administrators]

Dear Head Coaches,

As you may know, registration for Spring 2014 courses begins on November 18. As I did last April, I wanted to call your attention to the guideline, endorsed jointly by the Department of Athletics and the Office of the Provost, that student-athletes should have at least 10 independent class blocks available for class scheduling. You may recall that the Registrar's Office introduced new standard class blocks this past fall. Using those new class blocks, student-athletes should be free to take courses through the blocks ending at 2:50/3:15 for classes in the MWF/MW sequences and at 3:15 for classes in the Tu/Th sequence.

In those situations in which facilities conflicts preclude you from scheduling practice fully outside of these "prime time" class hours, please communicate with your academic counselors about what alternative class slots you plan to make available for your student-athletes. Please plan to share that information with me as well, so that members of the Faculty Board on Athletics can convey it to the Directors of Undergraduate Studies and college academic advisors as needed.

The FBA's Academic Integrity subcommittee continues to study this issue closely, with an eye toward formalizing the guideline described above. On the academic side, we have been working to smooth out some of the issues we have already detected regarding the limited availability of classes within certain departments during the "prime time" class hours. We have asked the Registrar's Office to provide additional data so that we can identify particular stress points and, where necessary, press departments to shift and add classes to ensure that student-athletes have more class offerings available to them. Should you identify specific concerns among your student-athletes about class availability, please let your academic counselor, Pat Holmes, or me know.

Thank you, as always, for everything that you do to support our student-athletes.

Best,  
Tricia

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