

**Faculty Board on Athletics  
Meeting of December 7, 2012  
500 Main Building**

**Members present:** Patricia Bellia (Chair), Eileen Botting, Stephen Fallon, Ann Firth, Maudess Fulton (student representative), Umesh Garg, John Gaski, Erin Hoffmann Harding, Patrick Holmes, William Kelley, James McKenna, Richard Pierce, Michael Stanistic, Ann Tenbrunsel

**Member excused:** Jack Swarbrick

**Liaisons present:** Melissa Conboy

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

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

Prof. Patricia Bellia called the meeting to order and invited Professor John Gaski to give the opening prayer.

**2. Minutes of November 16, 2012**

The minutes were unanimously approved.

**3. Chair's Announcements**

Prof. Bellia approved schedule changes for the following sports: men and women's fencing (spring) and women's swimming and diving (fall). She approved individual absences for football players who traveled to awards ceremonies. She also approved post-season travel for volleyball.

**4. Class Miss Report**

Prof. Bellia gave the 2011-2012 class miss report, using the same format of the report from the past few years. Each sport's class misses have been charted, and each miss is located at its chronological moment in the semester, including whether the miss was in the M/W/F or Tu/Th sequence. Also included is the reason for the class miss. The three miss limit per class sequence does not apply to postseason competition misses; those misses were included in the chart in green to distinguish them from misses for regular season competition.

Prof. Bellia noted that it is difficult to generalize about different sports. Individual class misses, incurred for a variety of reasons, were included in the relevant sport in orange to distinguish them from team misses. For instance, in spring 2012, a baseball player missed class to attend a national awards ceremony. There is a separate approval process for individual class misses, and generally they have not been included in the totals charged to the team. She also briefly noted the complexity of capturing the misses for sports that have a mix of team and individual competition, such as fencing or tennis. In such cases, she has counted the individual absences

incurred by most team members toward the team totals, but has excluded from the team totals situations in which a single student-athlete's participation continues beyond the rest of the team.

Also included in this year's report is a column comparing this year's GPA data with GPA data from 2010-2011. Overall, the data is comparable across the two years. There has been an increase in the number of postseason class misses, as Notre Dame teams have appeared in more postseason competitions in the recent past.

Mr. Holmes noted that the increased misses in the postseason indicate the strength of a team; deep advancement in postseason competitions does affect the ability to perform in the classroom.

Prof. Pierce asked about the misses incurred by football, which were all on Fridays in the M/W/F rotation—a slot in which many classes have small group sections. Two were half-day misses. Prof. Bellia reported that, in consultation with Academic Services staff, she gives careful attention to these requests by football, weighing the team's need to arrive at its destination in time for a walk-through against the loss of class time. In situations where the team was traveling in the early afternoon, there were certain position groups (e.g., quarterbacks) that needed to be released one class slot earlier than others. On the other hand, no one attending mandatory study hall could be excused early. In the past, the Board has supported the coaching staff's preference to get to venues early enough for a walk-through; the coaching staff has been persuasive about the value of this activity. Overall, the football team requested 5 class misses; after consulting with Academic Services, Prof. Bellia approved only 3 full and 2 half-day misses. It was agreed that it is unfortunate that football misses all fall on Fridays. No misses are given for home games or neutral site games at which Notre Dame can control the timing of the walk-through.

Mr. Holmes noted that his office is aware of and works toward getting Friday discussion sections scheduled in earlier time slots to avoid the misses. There is a dialogue ongoing with a number of professors.

Prof. Tenbrunsel asked if the increase of 20 more misses in 2011-2012 affected GPAs. Mr. Holmes said that while a number of factors impact GPA, multiple class misses do have an impact. Prof. Bellia observed that some GPA moves have as much to do with an increase in the number of freshmen on a team as with class misses. Ms. Conboy noted that some student-athletes take only 12 hours of coursework in the semester of heavy competition, which can affect GPAs. Prof. Tenbrunsel suggested that a longitudinal study might be useful. This is only the third class miss report and the second in which GPA was included.

Prof. Fallon noted that there appears to be no pattern among the teams with consistently higher GPAs. He expressed some concern about the men's basketball team, which missed 3 classes during the last two weeks of the fall semester in the Tu/Th sequence, which is equivalent to 1 ½ weeks of missed class time. While the games must be fit into the semester, it is a troubling situation to miss the equivalent of 1 ½ weeks of class time at the very end of the semester. Mr. Holmes reported that that was a specific and unusual situation involving the team's travel to Spokane for a game against Gonzaga. The game was originally scheduled for a weekend, but a TV scheduling conflict necessitated moving the game to a Wednesday night, which resulted in the team missing Tuesday to fly out and Thursday to return.

Members thanked Prof. Bellia for this informative report.

## **5. Introduction of Ryan Sachire, Head Men's Tennis Coach**

Prof. Bellia welcomed Ryan Sachire, the incoming new head men's tennis coach. The current coach, Bobby Bayliss, will soon announce his retirement, effective July 1, 2013. Mr. Sachire has long been connected to the men's tennis team: he played on the team for four years (graduating in 2000) and was a three-time All-American. He participated in the NCAA tournament each of the four years of his tenure here. After graduation, Mr. Sachire played on the professional circuit. When he retired, he moved into coaching, first at Baylor and later returning to Notre Dame in 2007. He has been assistant coach and associate head coach at Notre Dame since then. Prof. Bellia said that "there is no better candidate for this head coach position in the entire coaching universe."

Mr. Sachire thanked the Board for inviting him to attend this meeting and to share his vision for the team and his philosophy of coaching. He noted his long connection to Notre Dame tennis and said that he embraces the responsibility that comes with the program. He expressed his sense of the honor of this upcoming appointment. His major focuses for the program will be on community engagement, academic success, and athletic success. The team culture currently is consistently strong across the board in these three areas. Mr. Sachire aims to add an elevated level of consistency and an increase in dynamic performances.

Mr. Sachire noted that he plans to identify outstanding students among the student-athletes as early as possible, to provide increased support for academic achievement. He said that men's tennis players realistically could be aiming for prestigious post-graduate honors, such as a Rhodes Scholarship. In terms of community service, he noted that the men's tennis team has not identified a specific charity that the team can consistently support. He would like to create a project that can be built on from year to year, and that the student-athletes might identify with and carry on after graduation.

Prof. Bellia asked about how the move to the ACC will affect men's tennis, especially in terms of the class miss policy. Mr. Sachire said that the inclusion of Louisville in the ACC means that there will be 13 men's tennis programs in the ACC, which will require 12 conference matches each season. The conference structures match schedules on Fridays and Sundays, with Saturday as a travel day between matches. It may mean that there are some Thursday travel days that lead to class misses. The conference structure limits out-of-conference matches. Notre Dame is fortunate from a geographical position to maximize quality opponents for its non-conference matches while not incurring class misses. Nonetheless, the ACC schedule may indeed affect the requests by men's tennis for class misses.

Prof. Fallon asked about Mr. Sachire's recruiting experiences. Mr. Sachire reported that he has been deeply involved in recruiting since he returned to Notre Dame in 2007. He noted that it is "fun" to recruit for Notre Dame, because the recruiter is "selling what he believes in, and is passionate about." Noting that tennis is a year-around sport, Mr. Sachire said that he recruits student-athletes with a clear sense of the balancing that will be part of the undergraduate

experience for a student-athlete at Notre Dame. He is confident that he has a good grasp of the recruitment process at Notre Dame. He noted that Notre Dame has strong connections in Florida, California and the Midwest, which are the big markets for tennis. In terms of international recruiting, he added that Notre Dame works hard to identify the international prospect who is well positioned to compete both athletically and academically. This can be a challenge.

In response to a question, Mr. Sachire noted that the ACC is an “incredible tennis conference,” which gives Notre Dame some “high-end opportunities.” The depth is greater than the Big East; there is an opportunity to play 11 ranked opponents each year. In addition, during spring break, Notre Dame will have an opportunity to travel to California, Texas, or Florida for meaningful tournaments.

Prof. Botting asked about men’s tennis’s policy on early recruiting. Mr. Sachire said that tennis is fortunate that the calendar is “more traditional.” Official visits come in the senior year of high school. It is important to evaluate the physical development of a player, so he is not in favor of making many early commitments.

Prof. McKenna asked Mr. Sachire if his experience as a student at Notre Dame has provided him with a special insight as coach. Mr. Sachire said that he is fortunate to have personal knowledge of what it is like to live on campus, to be part of a close yet competitive student body. He noted that student-athletes need a level of personal development to be able to succeed at Notre Dame. The student-athlete is “not isolated” at Notre Dame, and he or she needs to be able to fit into the student body. It’s a “bit of a different culture” here, and so coaches seek out student-athletes who want to be here. He would encourage student-athletes to stay on campus for all four years.

Erin Hoffmann Harding noted that there are challenges for student-athletes in residential life. She asked about training table. Mr. Sachire stated that coaches are “up front” with student-athletes about the requirement to live on campus, and that most likely a student-athlete will not have another student-athlete as a roommate. On training table, he noted that men’s tennis participates in the training table four nights a week. While he appreciates the comment that training table limits interaction with other students, he would advocate the importance of nutrition in a student-athlete’s life. The coaching staff tries to support a balanced approach.

Ms. Conboy reported briefly on the process of interviewing for this coaching position. The current coach was deeply committed to the promotion of Mr. Sachire; however, the interview process was conducted under the usual rigorous standards. Mr. Sachire had been approached by other top programs. The hiring of Mr. Sachire “is a great thing for Notre Dame.”

Prof. McKenna, noting that there remains something of a separation between the academic and athletic cultures at Notre Dame, asked if men’s tennis holds a Faculty Day. He mentioned that it would be beneficial for the coaches and faculty to get to know one another better. Mr. Sachire said that there have been several different programs over the years to connect faculty with the team. For instance, there was a Coach-for-a-Day program during his student years. There have been opportunities to recognize individual faculty members who have played key roles in student-athlete development. Drawing on his own student experience at Notre Dame, Mr.

Sachire said that his success was due not just to the athletic culture, but also to a supportive academic culture. He mentioned rectors as well as faculty who provided guidance. Just recently, the team held a “pro-am” event, which featured faculty members teaming up with student-athletes for doubles competition. He noted that it is a benefit for the student-athletes to “interact with successful people.”

On the question of international recruits, Prof. Bellia said that she has the perception that peer institutions have greater numbers of international players than Notre Dame. Mr. Sachire agreed; recently, no team that makes it to the final site of the NCAA tournament (the Sweet 16 level) has had more than half American players—Duke, Stanford, Northwestern, Vanderbilt provide examples. Many of the international players who might consider competing at Notre Dame’s level also consider going pro. These students do not get a lot of support to pursue academics. While it is necessary to keep working on the international connection, Mr. Sachire noted that his continued emphasis will be on recruiting capable, balanced American student-athletes.

Mr. Sachire thanked the Board for this opportunity to meet with them.

## **6. Proposed Amendments to Undergraduate Academic Code**

Prof. Bellia reviewed the recent process of revising the Undergraduate Academic Code. Since the newly revised code was implemented in 2011, there have been discussions of amendments that are needed. In summer 2012, following lengthy discussions between Academic Services, the College of Arts & Letters, and Professor Bellia with respect to the standards for accepting transfer students’ coursework, the Provost’s Office decided to convene an ad hoc working group to clarify and revise the code. Dr. Don Pope-Davis chairs the group, which consists of representatives from each undergraduate college, plus Prof. Bellia and Captain Earl Carter of the ROTC program. The group has crafted a draft to present to the Undergraduate Studies subcommittee of the Academic Council; this draft will be submitted prior to the next FBA meeting, so Prof. Bellia provided members with a summary of the proposed amendments, inviting members to share with her (or their college representatives) any concerns with the proposed changes.

Prof. Bellia noted that the working group’s focus has been to amend the code to facilitate rather than impede students’ academic and personal growth. Prior versions of the code have tended to have a punitive tone, which the working group has tried to eliminate.

First, Prof. Bellia discussed issues related to transfer students. The College of Arts and Letters was interpreting the code to permit the transfer of credits only for courses in which the grade received was B or higher, even when a student met the overall B threshold that ordinarily applies before a student is permitted to transfer. This interpretation of the code was based on a separate provision that, by its text, applied to matriculated students who wished to count non-Notre Dame courses toward graduation. If adopted, the reading limiting transfer credits to those earned at the level of a B would have affected student-athletes’ ability to meet NCAA progress-toward-degree rules in later semesters. The proposed amendment would clarify that each college has the discretion to award transfer credits based on a student’s “anticipated course of study.” For Engineering, for example, a B- in Calculus might not be transferable, but the grade may be

adequate for a student pursuing an Arts & Letters degree. Each college will post its practices on the Admissions website, and the Provost's Office will review those practices, so that consistency is maintained and the policy is transparent. Prof. Bellia expressed her "absolute ironclad commitment" to ensuring that the student's anticipated course of study is the major determining factor as to which credits will be counted. Ann Firth noted that the biggest benefit with this amendment is that the Provost's Office will review and approve the policies. Students will have clarity on which courses will be accepted, and the Provost's Office will ensure that each policy is clear and fair.

Second, Prof. Bellia discussed the question of readmission of students who have left the University. In the prior revision, the Board worked hard to secure elimination of a provision under which students' credits were forfeited after five years of non-attendance. Readmissions decisions were still made on a college-by-college basis. The new code centralizes readmissions decisions (as well as transfer decisions) within the Office of Admissions. The draft code provides, however, that the student's dean can require that a student demonstrate a certain proficiency or skill level before the readmission application is accepted. This issue is of most concern for Science and Engineering and will likely have minimal impact on returning student-athletes.

Third, the working group is proposing an amendment regarding the requirement that a student spend his or her final semester in residence. In the prior revision of the code, the requirement was reduced from a year in residence to a semester in residence. The new version of the code would clarify that a summer can serve as the student's final semester in residence. In addition, the revision provides a broader waiver power for the dean, permitting a waiver at the dean's discretion rather than only in "extraordinary circumstances." Prof. Bellia believes that these changes will be helpful for student-athletes returning to campus after pro careers. For example, two hockey players returned to campus over the summer to make progress toward their degrees, and each likely will graduate after next summer. Two other former student-athletes were able to complete their degrees over the summer. The broader waiver power will permit some student-athletes who are leaving early to pursue professional careers to finish their final credits at another institution.

Fourth, the working group is proposing an amendment to the rule governing reading days. The proposed rule would preclude faculty members from assigning extra work during the reading period, since such work has chiseled away at students' study time. The provision prohibits a professor from scheduling a class-wide examination during reading days without permission of a the department chair and dean. The language was carefully drafted to ensure that the prohibition on scheduling a class-wide examination does not eliminate the individual accommodations contemplated by the Board's policy on the rescheduling of final examinations in the case of post-season competition.

Prof. Pierce asked about the viability of scheduling class-wide oral examinations during the reading period, relevant particularly for the College Seminar requirement in Arts & Letters. Prof. Bellia noted that she would bring up this question to the working group; she also encouraged faculty to contact their college representatives.

The working group is also proposing a range of other changes, including: (1) expanding mid-term deficiency reporting to include C- grades in addition to Ds and Fs; (2) expanding the range of activities in which a student on academic probation is precluding from participating; (3) clarifying an already-existing provision that permits a student on academic probation in the spring semester to “right” himself or herself in the summer; (4) providing more concrete procedures for students appealing an academic dismissal; and (5) adjusting the timetable for considering such appeals, so as to eliminate the need for the colleges to decide the appeals during the Christmas break.

As time had expired, the meeting was adjourned.