

Faculty Board on Athletics
October 16, 2008
Room 500, Main Building

Members: Donald Pope-Davis (Chair); Michael M. Burns (Student Rep.); Thomas Frecka; Umesh Garg; Patrick Holmes; William Kelley; David Kirkner; Mary Ann McDowell; Richard Pierce; (Rev.) Mark Poorman, C.S.C; Clark Power; Robin Rhodes; and Jack Swarbrick

Members absent: Patricia Bellia and Frances Shavers

Board Liaisons: Missy Conboy and Michael Karwoski of the Department of Athletics

Observers and Guests: Bill Scholl, Senior Associate Athletic Director; Mike Brey, Head Men's Basketball Coach; and Kathryn Lam (Recorder)

1. Call to order and prayer: Prof. Pope-Davis called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. Fr. Poorman said the opening prayer.

2. Luncheon: Prof. Pope-Davis thanked those members who attended the October 14, 2008 luncheon with coaches and senior athletic administrators. He thinks it was a success as he received overwhelmingly supportive comments. He said these types of functions help to close the gap between academics and athletics.

3. Team Captains: Prof. Pope-Davis reminded members that in his capacity as chair, he approves team captains on behalf of the Board. He explained that in the past he notified the Board through an email each time a captain was approved. In an effort to be more succinct, he asked if the Board would consider receiving a summary sheet of all captains in the future. The Board was agreeable.

Prof. Pope-Davis then discussed the current minimum 2.3 GPA requirement for team captains. He said the requirement has been in existence for some time and asked members if it should remain at this level or be raised. After some discussion of the Board, the matter was referred to the Academic Integrity Subcommittee for further consideration.

4. Men's Basketball Team Update: Prof. Pope-Davis explained that Coach Mike Brey was invited to provide an update on the men's basketball team. Coach Brey provided an overview of the team including its recent trip to Ireland. It was the "trip of a lifetime" for many of the student-athletes as only one of the students had previously traveled outside of the country. He commented on the team's senior leadership and the powerful conference in which the team competes. He also noted that the team was recognized as the best academic performing team in the Big East in men's basketball while it tied for second in conference play.

In response to a question from Prof. Kelley regarding the recruitment of middle school students, Coach Brey said that he is a member of the National Association of Basketball Coaches which discourages those kinds of behaviors. He added that coaches do not even know how those students will perform academically in high school at the time they are being recruiting.

Prof. Pierce asked about Coach Brey's perspective on the class miss policy. He responded by saying that he likes the policy and uses it in recruiting because it is something unique to Notre Dame. Furthermore, the Big East Conference is accommodating with the team's playing schedule in regards to this policy.

Prof. Pope-Davis informed members that Coach Brey welcomed the opportunity to join professors in their classrooms should there be an appropriate occasion.

5. Director of Athletics' Philosophy, Vision and Priorities: Mr. Swarbrick provided the Board with an overview of his approach to intercollegiate athletics and the operation of the Department of Athletics including working in consonance with the mission of the University, collaborating with "sister schools," and creating executive committees to serve as resources for each sport.

6. 2008-2009 Subcommittee Initiatives:

a) Student Welfare: Prof. McDowell, co-chair of the Student Welfare Subcommittee, provided an update on the subcommittee's work. The group recently met and identified areas of focus for the year, including internet access for student-athletes while working away from campus and diversity programming for student-athletes. She said the subcommittee will continue conversations with Charmelle Green, Assistant Athletic Director, about diversity programming and how the Board can support their efforts. Prof. Pope-Davis encouraged the committee to not only find ways to support their efforts, but also help think of potential activities that are "outside of the box."

Mr. Burns, co-chair of the Student-Welfare Subcommittee, asked if the subcommittee should consider additional training on the honor code for student-athletes. Prof. Pope-Davis said that Dennis Jacobs, Vice President and Associate Provost, is open to returning to discuss the honor code with the Board and consider ways to address the issue. Prof. McDowell said that perhaps case studies can be part of the student-athlete orientation/training program. She will follow-up with Prof. Jacobs to discuss this issue further.

Mr. Burns noted that most student-athletes earn degrees from the College of Arts and Letters and the Mendoza College of Business. The subcommittee will consider why student-athletes less frequently pursue degrees in areas such as science and engineering.

b) Academic Integrity: Prof. Pierce informed the Board that he was standing in for Prof. Bellia, chair of the Academic Integrity Subcommittee, because she was out of town. He asked about the jurisdiction of the honor code issue being considered by the Student Welfare Subcommittee, to which Prof. McDowell said that it can be passed to the Academic Integrity Subcommittee. Prof. Pierce gave an overview of the areas the Academic Integrity Subcommittee will consider this year including: 1) increasing the visibility of the Board on the internet, 2) directed readings taken by fifth-year student-athletes, and 3) Notre Dame's eligibility requirements.

Regarding the visibility of the Board, Prof. Pierce said the subcommittee would like to post on-line the letter sent to faculty to encourage them to be in contact with Academic Services for Student Athletes (ASSA) and to complete the forms soliciting feedback on the academic performance of student-athletes in their classes. He asked if the response rate from faculty has increased since the letter was sent and if it is possible for Mr. Holmes to provide that information.

Prof. Pierce explained several concerns with the minimal requirements of some directed readings taken by fifth-year student-athletes. He said directed readings should be monitored and have a well developed plan in place. In its review of this issue, Prof. McDowell asked that the subcommittee consider those directed readings that help student-athletes reconcile conflicts with labs in majors not as readily pursued by student-athletes. Mr. Holmes commented that there may be instances where a professor is doing so many directed readings that they cannot possibly be done well. In these instances diligence is needed and perhaps a policy should be established to help manage directed readings. He said that ASSA continues to work with the college deans and associate deans to ensure student-athletes are not taking more than one directed reading.

The final issue to be reviewed by the Academic Integrity Subcommittee is Notre Dame's eligibility requirements. According to Mr. Holmes, the NCAA requires all student-athletes to have passed a minimum of six credit hours in order to be eligible to compete, whereas, in addition to six credit hours, Notre Dame requires every sophomore, junior and senior to have at least a 2.0 GPA and every freshman to have a minimum GPA of 1.7. Fr. Poorman informed the Board that Academic Council is currently considering changing the freshman student-athlete eligibility GPA to 2.0. Prof. Pope-Davis said given the timing of the review of this requirement, the subcommittee might consider weighing in and providing a recommendation to the Academic Council sooner than later.

Board members discussed the impact the data has on the public view of Notre Dame, given that it appears as though Notre Dame is not performing as high as some peer institutions. The higher requirements espoused at Notre Dame are not often publicized and thus the difference in standards used by institutions are not well known. Mr. Karwoski noted that in the past there were great attempts to share this information with the media, but that it was rarely included in their reports. Mr. Swarbrick said that he would like to talk to the NCAA about their publication and encourage them to give an asterisk to those institutions that apply a higher standard. Mr. Holmes added that for the first time this past year, the NCAA asked institutions what rule it is applying when it reports a student-athlete as "not eligible."

7. Ex Officio and Liaison Reports: Mr. Holmes provided an annual report on the academic performance of fifth-year and off-campus housing student-athletes. He explained that the results were consistent with results of the past four to five years. He also noted that the data under review is the last year in which there will be a GPA restriction for off-campus housing. [See March 27, 2008 Board minutes]. Furthermore, Mr. Holmes reminded the Board that typically student-athletes' GPAs increase in the senior year whether or not a student-athlete lives on campus.

Mr. Holmes distributed copies of a report which provided a snapshot of graduation rates, average standardized test scores and average GPAs across different student-athlete populations.

Prof. Pope-Davis asked Mr. Holmes to give the Board a sense of the progress made by the student-athletes who were admitted in January. Mr. Holmes said that there are now three groups of student-athletes who were admitted in January of the past three years. There have been no issues with these student-athletes; in fact, the oldest group is on track to graduate in three and a half years.

With no scheduled time remaining, the meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.