

**FBA Meeting Minutes
November 30, 2006
Monogram Room, JACC**

Members: Prof. Donald Pope-Davis (Chair); Prof. Patricia Bellia; Prof. Harvey Bender; Prof. Eileen Botting; Mr. Patrick Holmes; Prof. David Kirkner; Ms. Kathryn Lam (Student Representative); Prof. Richard Pierce; (Rev.) Mark Poorman, C.S.C.; Prof. John Weber.

Members Absent: Prof. Francis Castellino; Prof. Stephen Fallon; Prof. F. Clark Power; Dr. Frances Shavers; and Dr. Kevin White.

Board Liaisons: Mr. Michael Karwoski and Mr. Stan Wilcox of the Department of Athletics

Board Liaison Absent: Ms. Missy Conboy

Observers and Guests: Ms. Nina Stephan, director of rules education in the Notre Dame Office of Athletic Compliance; Ms. Mary Hendriksen; Ms. Kitty Cooney Hoye, recorder.

1. Call to Order and Prayer: The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. Prof. Bender offered the opening prayer.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting: After some minor changes to the draft distributed in advance of the meeting, Fr. Poorman moved for approval of the minutes from the meeting of October 25, 2006; Prof. Botting seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3. Discussion of Possible FBA Contribution to the Celebration of 35 Years of Women's Athletics at Notre Dame

Prof. Botting suggested that the FBA make some type of contribution to the year-long tribute commemorating 35 years of women's athletics at Notre Dame. Although different events and activities are scheduled throughout the 2006-2007 academic year, the anniversary celebration will culminate with a "Weekend of Champions" celebration from April 27-29, 2007. After a brief discussion on the schedule of events [see <http://und.cstv.com/wsport35/wsport35-celebration-schedule.html>], Fr. Poorman and Prof. Botting agreed to gather additional information on the weekend and to report back to the Board with ideas/proposals. One possibility mentioned was lending the FBA name to an event; another was honoring the first women faculty and student members of the FBA.

4. FBA Response to Issues Raised by Dr. Harry Edwards at August 2006 Forum

In an address to the FBA and others in August 2006, Dr. Harry Edwards, professor *emeritus* of sociology at the University of California at Berkeley, raised a number of serious issues facing collegiate athletics. Prof. Botting lead a brief discussion on ways the FBA might develop programming or facilitate an academic forum to discuss these issues and their specific manifestation at Notre Dame. She would like to see student-athletes as well as alumni (Alan Page, for example) participate in the discussion. Mr. Wilcox suggested including Ms. Charmelle Green, director of student-athlete development and welfare, to "work in the student perspective." Fr. Poorman believes the subject has a wide appeal and suggested opening up any type of forum to the campus community at large. Prof. Pope-Davis asked members to bring ideas to the next meeting and noted that there are resources available to support an initiative by the Board.

5. Subcommittee Reports

Harvey Bender: Academic Integrity -- Prof. Bender reported that it has been “a very quiet month” for his sub-committee and he, therefore, has no formal report at this time.

Eileen Hunt Botting: Student Welfare – Prof. Botting provided a brief update on the subcommittee’s ongoing discussions on ways to build bridges with student-athletes. This includes, she added, continued discussions on increased student-athlete participation and/or representation on the FBA.

Prof. Pope-Davis noted that he has received very positive feedback from both the Student-Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC) and the coaches on the initiative that pairs FBA members with every team.

Prof. Bender asked if the Student Welfare committee has any plans to address the issue of “high-profile” student-athletes. The integration of student-athletes with the student population has always been “part of the joy of Notre Dame” argued Prof. Bender. “Now, students are coming in as ‘high-profile’ athletes and are much more vulnerable than before. What can or should we be doing to make their experience more ‘normal’ at Notre Dame?”

Fr. Poorman explained that it is best to monitor situations individually and to address concerns as they arise.

The subcommittee has plans to review the current policy on off-campus housing and will report back at a future meeting.

Patricia Bellia: Communications

Prof. Bellia reported on the subcommittee’s recent meeting with undergraduate advisors. The meeting was also attended by Mr. Holmes and members of his staff. There were two broad topics discussed at the meeting: (1) pre-registration and class scheduling, and (2) status/level of engagement for fifth-year student-athletes.

While the advisors believed that registration for classes is generally going well, they expressed some concerns about schedules that conflict with activities that are “expected” to occur outside the formal practice times—namely, weightlifting and other conditioning. Time and space restrictions, especially during the winter months, limit the use of indoor athletic facilities such as the Loftus Center. Combined with the mandate to departments from the Registrar’s Office to “spread out” the class day, student-athletes can encounter difficulties in scheduling. Prof. Bellia noted that advisors were not clear whether the pressure was coming from the coaching staff or the student-athletes themselves. It would be helpful to re-publicize (particularly to coaches) the University’s policy on the hours during which student-athletes must be free from athletic obligations.

At Fr. Poorman’s request, Mr. Holmes explained that there are essentially 10 class slots available to most athletes; only Football (fall and MWF spring) and Men’s and Women’s basketball (spring) are generally foreclosed from the 2 pm class slot. Broken down even further, he explained, there are six slots available on MWF from 8-3:15 and four slots available on TTH until 2:45. A discussion followed on whether the problem with a compressed class day was rooted in the policy itself or only with certain academic departments. Mr. Wilcox added that with an increase in the number of student-athletes and resulting scheduling problems with facilities, any changes to the class-day policy will have a direct impact on student-athletes, coaches, and the athletic administration.

Prof. Bender argued that while the issue of a compressed class day is inherently complicated, it is exacerbated by three factors: (1) faculty preferences for teaching in certain time slots; (2) the regular scheduling of labs in the late afternoon; and (3) the limited number of student-athletes in

the pre-professional programs. Prof. Kirkner described how a student-athlete was advised against enrolling in bio-chemistry "if he was serious about his sport."

Prof. Bellia observed that even if the FBA could cause the re-issuance of any official policy on the hours during which student-athletes must be free of athletic obligations, it will be more difficult to fight some of the informal norms that seem to be developing regarding when weight training, conditioning, and other skills training must occur. She described the continued shrinking of the academic day as a "disturbing development." Prof. Botting argued that ensuring a quality education for our student-athletes is the "single most important issue" for the FBA. The Chair gave the subcommittee the following charge: To investigate whether a University policy on the hours during which student-athletes must be free of athletic obligations in fact exists and, if so, to review the policy and report back to the full board at an upcoming (December or January 2007) meeting.

Prof. Bellia reported that the advisors also expressed their widespread dissatisfaction with the current policies governing fifth-year student-athletes. The advisors are concerned that many of the fifth-year students are not truly working towards a graduate degree and are enrolling in classes for which they are neither prepared nor qualified. In addition, fifth-year graduate students considered to be "non-degree seeking" have no field of study, which means that they have no advisory "home." Finally, the advisors were concerned that fifth-year student-athletes registered for undergraduate classes are taking up valuable seats in University classes. After a lengthy discussion, Prof. Bellia acknowledged that she and the members of the subcommittee who attended the meeting with the advisors were left with a mixed picture of the situation. They are uncertain whether the dissatisfaction expressed at the meeting is shared by the faculty as a whole or whether it is limited to the advisors themselves. After the meeting with the advisors, the subcommittee asked the advisors to discuss the issue with their faculty members. The subcommittee has not yet received extensive feedback.

The issues surrounding the academic engagement of fifth-year student-athletes, argued Fr. Poorman, are addressed annually. Despite what subcommittee members heard from advisors, the reports coming from Mr. Holmes and his office would indicate the fifth-year student-athletes are, in fact, doing quite well. Prof. Pierce asked for clarification on the actual number of fifth-year student-athletes, specifically, the number registered for undergraduate courses. Mr. Holmes indicated that the numbers were very small. Prof. Bender went on to explain that fewer than 12 students make up the entire fifth-year group, and of that small group, the number enrolling as undergraduate students is "minimal at best."

Noting that he is "bewildered" by the concerns expressed during the meeting with advisors and that concerns regarding fifth-year student-athletes resurface with some frequency, Prof. Weber suggested that it would be useful to circulate to advisors a summary of FBA minutes in which the Board rules on petitions for a fifth year. In this way, the advisors will know that the FBA has tackled this issue and is making steady progress towards addressing their concerns.

Finally, Prof. Bellia noted that at least one advisor suggested exploring the possibility of offering key upper-level classes over the summer, as is done in the Mendoza College of Business. The subcommittee has agreed to explore that possibility more thoroughly and to report back to the Board at a later meeting.

6. Ex-Officio and Liaison Reports: No reports were given.

7. Student-Athlete Grade Report: Mr. Pat Holmes

Mr. Pat Holmes, director of academic services for student-athletes, provided the board with a detailed summary of the student-athlete grade report (as of Spring 2006). Highlights from the report are:

- All twenty-two teams had semester GPAs over 3.0.

- Two teams (Soccer (W) and Track (W)) had team GPAs greater than 3.40.
- Eleven full-time student-athletes had perfect 4.00 GPAs.
- 14.8% of the student-athletes were on the Dean's List and 42.9% had GPAs > 3.40.
- 73.6% of the student-athletes had GPAs > 3.0.
- Fourteen student-athletes—"the highest number ever"—earned Academic All-American honors during the 2005-06 academic year.
- Stacy Cowan became the 39th Notre Dame student-athlete to be awarded the NCAA postgraduate scholarship.
- Baseball, Football, Soccer (M), Soccer (W), and Track (W) had their highest semester averages ever.
- Baseball, Basketball (M), Fencing (W), Football, Hockey, and Soccer (W) also currently have their highest cumulative team GPAs ever.

Fr. Poorman asked how the averages provided by Mr. Holmes compare with the recalibrated Dean's List. [Until 2003, Dean's List honors were given to students carrying a 3.4 GPA; now, Dean's List Honors are established by each college individually but, generally, about 30% of students receive Dean's Honor List in a given semester. See *Academic Code* Sec. 21.2(1).] Mr. Holmes referred to page two of his report for a table with information on student-athlete GPA trends over the past three years. He explained that to compare relevant Dean's list statistics, the most accurate method would be to look at the percentage of student-athletes in Spring 2003 with a 3.4 GPA or higher (35.5%) and the percentage of students with grade points in that category in Spring 2006 (42.9%).

Prof. Kirkner brought up the topic of grade inflation and academic probation, specifically as it relates to football players. He noted that the number of football players on academic probation is very small. Mr. Holmes explained that his office's focus on transition programs for incoming student-athletes has improved the grade points of students on the lower quarter of the academic spectrum quite dramatically.

Prof. Bender asked how the "numbers relating to student-athlete projected GPAs v. realized GPAs" are used. Mr. Holmes explained that while these numbers are difficult to generate, they are used internally to modify programs, challenge underperforming student-athletes, and to change team cultures.

Prof. Weber commented on the "tremendous job" Mr. Holmes and the members of his department are doing in support of Notre Dame student-athletes. Referring to a previous comment from Prof. Kirkner, Prof. Weber noted that although it is a common perception among faculty members that increases in the student-athlete average GPA is due to grade inflation, the numbers provided by Mr. Holmes indicate otherwise and support what he referred to as a "significant student-athlete contribution to higher GPAs."

8. Discussion of NCAA Legislative Items: Mr. Mike Karwoski and Ms. Nina Stephan

Due to time limitations, this agenda item was deferred and will now be addressed at the December meeting.

9-10. New / Old Business

In light of the depth of recent FBA discussions, the Chair asked board members to consider extending their monthly meetings from 90 minutes to two hours. In light of this change, he asked members to submit to Mary Hendriksen—prior to the December meeting—their available meeting times for the second semester.

The Chair announced that Mr. Philip Purcell, a member of the Notre Dame Board of Trustees and chair of its committee on athletic affairs, will be at the December FBA meeting.

Adjourn

Fr. Poorman made a motion to adjourn. Prof. Kirkner seconded the motion, and the Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.