

# FACULTY BOARD ON ATHLETICS

## UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

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Meeting of March 4, 2004

5<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room, Main Building

**Members Present:** Prof. Fernand Dutile (Chair); Prof. Matthew Barrett; Dr. Matthew Cullinan; Prof. Stephen Fallon; Prof. Umesh Garg; Mr. Patrick Holmes; Prof. David Kirkner; Prof. Layna Mosley; (Rev.) Mark Poorman, C.S.C.; Prof. Donald Pope-Davis; and Prof. John Weber.

**Members Absent:** Mr. Bobby Brown; Prof. Harvey Bender; Prof. John Borkowski; and Dr. Kevin White.

**Observers Present:** Ms. Sandy Barbour and Mr. Bernard Muir, of the Department of Athletics; and Ms. Kitty Hoye, recorder.

**Guest present:** Mr. Peter D'Alonzo, senior counselor, Office of Academic Services for Student-Athletes.

- 1. Call to order and prayer:** The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:50 p.m. Father Poorman led the group in prayer.
- 2. Minutes of previous meeting:** Dr. Cullinan moved that the minutes of the meeting of February 10, 2004, be approved. Prof. Barrett seconded that motion, which passed unanimously.
- 3. Announcements:** The Chair announced that he had approved, on the group's behalf, the following team schedules: rowing and men's soccer (both for spring 2004). The Chair also approved several changes, made necessary by a cancellation, to the men's-lacrosse schedule. Those changes carried only the following class-miss implications: one-half day (Wednesday, March 31) added; one full day (Friday, April 23) subtracted. At this point, the Board ratified these decisions.

The Chair announced that at a February 17 meeting attended by, *inter alia*, Dr. Nathan Hatch, provost, Mr. Holmes, Mr. Muir and the Chair, the provost had agreed in principle to the idea of advance registration for fifth-year student-athletes in the "unclassified graduate student" category. Past Board discussions have stressed the difficulty this group of student-athletes faced in securing appropriate courses. The provost has charged Mr. Holmes to work with the various deans to implement the proposed process.

The Chair announced that he would arrange a breakfast meeting of the subcommittee on academic integrity to consider the nominations for the Byron V. Kanaley Award submitted by head coaches. The rest of the Board would be invited to participate. From this meeting would eventuate recommendations to the full Board for the final selection of Kanaley Award winners.

**4. Policy on unanticipated problems in connection with team travel:** Prof. Barrett reminded the group that on March 18, 2003, it had “given its Chair the discretion to authorize, for teams at away competitions, additional class-miss excuses when reasonable due to travel or weather complications.” A specific problem at an “away” site had occasioned the provision and its restrictions on the Chair’s discretion. Because similar problems arise before teams leave Notre Dame, Prof. Barrett moved that the Board broaden the provision’s reach to “home or away” and to any complication unanticipated at the time the team’s schedule had been approved. Even under the proposal, of course, the Chair could refer issues to the Board for enlightenment or approval. The motion, duly seconded by Prof. Mosley, passed unanimously.

**5. Applications for a fifth year of eligibility:** Prof. Pope-Davis, for the subcommittee on academic integrity, introduced the topic. Mr. D’Alonzo attended this meeting as principal academic advisor to the football team. [Note: As customary, these public minutes do not report the Board’s discussion of individual student-athletes.] The subcommittee recommended approval of the applications of the following seven student-athletes: Kyle Budinscak, Derek Curry, Michael Goolsby, Carlyle Holiday, Preston Jackson, Cole Laux and Gregory Pauly (all football players). In a related discussion, Prof. Barrett asked about the availability of any report on the academic performance of unclassified graduate students during the fall of 2003. None is available, Mr. Holmes responded. The category of unclassified graduate student presents the most difficulty, Prof. Barrett continued; does some criterion—perhaps GPA—reliably predict the probability of success as a fifth-year student-athlete? Mr. Holmes: The “carrot” for fifth-year football players is a bowl game. The Chair: It’s troubling if the only carrot is a bowl game; what about some interest in academic engagement? Mr. Holmes pointed out that grants-in-aid are awarded semester by semester in the fifth year; that fact presents some possibility of incentive. In response to a question from Prof. Fallon, Mr. Holmes responded that about five or six fifth-year football players would normally participate in the NFL “combine,” *i.e.*, try-outs for a professional career. Prof. Weber, with whom Prof. Pope-Davis concurred, emphasized that, despite our problems, we are making significant progress with regard to fifth-year players. Prof. Weber noted that the process for fifth-year applications is better, but that we still need significant improvement. Prof. Pope-Davis worried that students approved for a fifth year might end up on probation at mid-semester of the fall of their fifth year. Prof. Fallon: I’m always impressed after the personal interview. The student-athletes “present” well, but the essays have much in common; I worry that these student-athletes are being coached. Is there some kind of measure besides the file and the face-to-face discussion? Should we have some kind of threshold requirement? Prof. Weber responded that we have advised them to seek out help; the essays reflect exactly what we asked of the student-athletes. Prof. Barrett, noting the 2.0 GPA requirement at mid-semester for fifth-year student-athletes, asked whether we monitor adherence to that requirement. Mr. D’Alonzo: At mid-term, Mr. Muir and I talk to the students; we speak with their professors; in short, we try to find out how they are doing. Father Poorman asked whether we should worry more than we do about the spring (tenth) semester. Given the new requirements issued by

the department of athletics, maybe we don't need to, Prof. Mosley observed. Exactly, Ms. Barbour added; a fifth-year student-athlete who academically reflects bad faith in the fall will receive no grant-in-aid in the spring. Moreover, Mr. Muir noted, if a student-athlete shows academic bad faith in the spring semester, we try to get our money back from that student-athlete, withholding transcripts as leverage if we have to. More discussion then ensued concerning what the expectations should be during the spring semester for fifth-year student-athletes no longer competing. Some Board members felt that such student-athletes should still be "engaged" academically as a condition for receiving room-and-board funding from the University. Others felt that, since these student-athletes were not representing the University on the playing field, they, like any other student, could take as few credits as they cared to. Dr. Cullinan, endorsing the latter view, asked: How much more can we expect of them? They have given us four-plus years. We enforce a higher standard than does even Stanford. Prof. Barrett nonetheless expressed his concerns about a one-credit, directed-readings program, which remains possible in the tenth semester. Prof. Pope-Davis moved that the Board approve a fifth year of eligibility for Messrs. Budinscak, Curry, Goolsby, Holiday, Jackson, Laux and Pauly. The motion passed unanimously.

At this point the Chair thanked the subcommittee on academic integrity and all others involved for their work in connection with these applications.

**6. Report on practice and competition during Commencement weekend:** At its meeting of February 10, 2004, the Board had asked its subcommittee on student welfare to look into whether the University needed guidelines regarding team practice or play during Commencement weekend. Prof. Barrett, chair of that subcommittee, informed the Board that eight sports at Notre Dame could be affected by limitations on practice or competition during Commencement weekend: baseball, softball, rowing, men's and women's tennis, men's and women's lacrosse, and outdoor track. Most of these teams have experienced conflicts with Commencement, but these have normally been post-season events, whose scheduling remains virtually impossible for us to control. The conflicts have also usually, but not always, involved away sites. For example, the track team competes each year at Georgia Tech on that weekend (the track coach gives seniors the option of attending Commencement rather than the competition); in 2002 the baseball team played a doubleheader at home on Commencement Saturday; and in 2003 that team traveled to Virginia Tech University on Commencement weekend for a doubleheader on Saturday and a single game on Sunday. The baseball team's proposed competition on the afternoon of this year's Commencement brought the issue to the attention of the Board (that game has now been moved to Commencement evening). The Department of Athletics has apparently received no complaints from student-athletes or their families about athletics activities scheduled for Commencement weekend. Moreover, Prof. Barrett reminded the Board, Commencement tickets remain scarce. He summed up the reasons for a new policy regulating practice or competition on Commencement weekend. Such a policy would 1) stress the importance of that weekend for student-athletes, their parents and other family members; 2) empower head coaches to secure alternate scheduling; and 3) recognize the similarity of Commencement weekend to Orientation weekend (now significantly regulated), although Orientation, unlike Commencement, constitutes a compulsory event for students. Prof. Barrett did note two reasons against such a policy. 1) despite our lack of a policy, we have experienced no real problems to date; student-athletes and families understand that missing events

like graduation represents the cost of participation in varsity athletics. 2) Such a policy could put Notre Dame at a competitive disadvantage with respect to our peer teams. Prof. Mosley favored the status quo; most coaches are reasonable about such things. Prof. Kirkner had the impression that the head coach of track, at least, would see such a policy as a significant hindrance. Prof. Pope-Davis added that we make student-athletes accountable over a four-year period; we should be wary of adding still another requirement. Prof. Fallon asked if student-athletes were pressured to miss graduation. Prof. Barrett: We have not yet taken the issue to the Student Athlete Advisory Council. Mr. Muir stated that the coaches try to accommodate with regard to this matter. Indeed, some coaches conduct mini-graduation ceremonies at their away sites; Mr. Chuck Lennon, president of Notre Dame's alumni association, has "officiated" at such ceremonies. Ms. Barbour added that when student-athletes receive their degrees in front of their families at these away events, "it's actually pretty special." The Chair mentioned that he had raised the issue originally because graduation is such an important "passage." Perhaps the best result is to discourage, rather than prohibit, practice or competition that weekend. He stated that he would, in any event, discuss the issue with other NCAA faculty athletics representatives in the Big East Conference. Prof. Garg agreed that graduation should be a special day for student-athletes. Would a policy of discouragement at least give the coaches some leverage in scheduling? Prof. Barrett responded that at least one coach favored such a policy for exactly that reason. Mr. Muir worried that any policy might make still more difficult the already challenging task of scheduling spring sports; there are just so few weekends available, especially in our climate. Furthermore, said Ms. Barbour, no coach intentionally schedules events for that weekend. Father Poorman felt that the student-athletes represented the "missing piece;" we need to ask them, and not necessarily through the Student Athlete Advisory Council, what they think. Indeed, perhaps we should survey all student-athletes to get a complete picture. Perhaps this could be done as part of the annual exit interviews, the Chair suggested. The Chair then thanked Prof. Barrett and the other members of the subcommittee on student welfare for their work on this issue. The Chair committed to distribute to the Board the subcommittee's draft proposal and schedule it for discussion at the next Board meeting.

**7. Report on off-campus residence:** Grant-in-aid student-athletes must live on campus until their senior year. During that year, they may live off-campus if their academic records meet specified criteria. Each year the Department of Athletics reports to the Board on the number of such student-athletes living off-campus. Mr. Muir reported to the Board that 63 student-athletes applied to live off-campus for the 2003-04 academic year; 61 of the applications were approved.

**8. Update on FBA Website:** Prof. Mosley, for the subcommittee on communication, reported on the process of deploying a Faculty Board on Athletics website. Conceding that the website would not attract 1,000 "hits" per day or generate paid advertising, she did hope it would enable more people to know "who we are and what we do." The website will provide contact information, be linked to other campus websites, and contain the *FBA Manual* and the minutes of the Board's meetings (edited only to excise confidential information). The subcommittee has hired a graduate student to implement the plan. An early version of the website should be in operation just after spring break. Prof. Mosley will provide Board members with the link as soon as possible.

**9. Adjournment:** At 6:10 p.m., Father Poorman's motion to adjourn, duly seconded by Prof. Barrett,

passed by acclamation.