

**Faculty Board on Athletics
Meeting of November 9, 2018
12:00 pm - 1:30 pm, 500 Main Building**

Members Present: Patricia Bellia (chair), Jaimie Bleck, Pat Holmes, Dan Kelly, Sean Kelsey, Mary Ann McDowell, F. Clark Power, Aaron Striegel, Cameasha Turner, Jack Swarbrick, Kevin Vaughn

Members Excused: Corey Angst, James Brockmole, Ann Firth, Erin Hoffmann Harding

Athletics Liaisons: Missy Conboy, Mike Harrity, Jody Sadler, Angie Torain

Guests: Claire VeNard, Assistant Athletics Director, Student Welfare and Development; Heidi Uebelhor, Assistant Athletics Director, Compliance (Recorder)

1. Opening Prayer

Professor Bellia welcomed the group and offered the opening prayer.

2. Minutes of the Meeting of October 5, 2018

The Board approved the minutes of the meeting of October 5, 2018, without changes.

3. Chair's Announcement

Professor Bellia announced that she had approved a half-day class miss, affecting approximately eight student-athletes, associated with a schedule shift in the swimming and diving contest at Ohio State.

4. Introduction of Alison Silverio, Head Coach, Women's Tennis

Professor Bellia invited the recently hired head women's tennis coach, Ms. Alison Silverio, to attend the meeting and to introduce herself to the Board. Ms. Silverio was asked to share her background, coaching philosophy, and experience thus far with the program.

Ms. Silverio thanked the Board and shared her gratitude for the opportunity to coach at an institution where Catholic character is a major focus. Ms. Silverio remarked that her coaching philosophy is to build champions on and off the court in every way. Her number one concern is the development of her student-athletes. She went on to state that how student-athletes conduct themselves in every aspect of their lives is important, and that hard work and clear communication make student-athletes' goals achievable. She views consistent effort, smart decision-making tactics, and the ability to take care of details as traits that build champions.

Ms. Silverio went on to outline her vision for the program: to graduate student-athletes, to win national championships, and to help students develop holistically as members of the

community. Ms. Silverio challenges student-athletes to leave Notre Dame in a manner that makes them proud.

In response to a question about what she perceives as the biggest challenge for student-athletes at Notre Dame, Ms. Silverio observed that Notre Dame student-athletes see a lot of success in the classroom and proactively manage their schedules, but that class miss is a concern. Tennis competes in two distinct seasons and travels aggressively in the spring term. Ms. Silverio shared that the team recently had two student-athletes find success in the Midwest ITA tournament, reaching the doubles quarterfinals. She noted the support she received from Professor Bellia and from Academic Services for Student-Athletes (ASSA) to accommodate the additional class miss request. Ms. Silverio observed that the women's tennis program has a rich tradition of academic success, consistently maintaining a semester grade point average above a 3.0.

In response to a question from Professor McDowell, Ms. Silverio explained the nature of tennis travel in the fall and spring. Ms. Silverio noted that student-athletes do feel pressure to excel on the court and in the classroom, and she discussed the mental demands felt by tennis student-athletes. Professor Power inquired about the extent to which the problems of youth tennis, including sportsmanship issues, persist in the college game. Ms. Silverio outlined the importance of sportsmanship in tennis. She noted the ability of student-athletes to play as a team and as members of an extended family, leading with character, and representing Notre Dame's values. She has seen student-athletes respectfully and honestly engage in disputes with opponents while embracing good sportsmanship, and she is proud of the on-court behavior of her student-athletes.

Professor Kelly inquired about the use of the Eck tennis facility and the demands for court space with the men's tennis program and the community. Ms. Silverio recognized Coach Ryan Sachire as a mentor for her as they work together to identify facility needs. Mr. Swarbrick noted that there is a need in tennis and swimming to create a better team space for student-athletes to dress and meet. Professor Bellia pointed out that such a space is necessary from a medical perspective as well, as it is not uncommon for tennis students-athletes to be receiving treatment from a trainer in view of community users of the facility.

Professor Bellia inquired about the recruitment of international prospects in tennis. Ms. Silverio agreed that tennis is an international sport, but emphasized that it is important to find students who are the right academic fit for Notre Dame. Prospects are attracted to Notre Dame because of the academic nature of the institution. Ms. Silverio would not rule out recruiting international prospects who can excel academically.

Professor McDowell inquired whether women's tennis does anything as a team to address mental health. Ms. Silverio stated that student-athletes work individually with sport psychologists with the assistance of Student Welfare and Development, and that the team plans to work collectively with a sport psychologist soon.

Professor Striegel asked Ms. Silverio to identify the largest or most unique challenge when recruiting students to Notre Dame. Ms. Silverio remarked that the current facility is a

concern. She observed that morale makes a difference for student-athletes; the recent installation of a new scoreboard in the Eck was a morale booster. Ms. Silverio noted that other programs are investing in Olympic sport facilities, and athletes notice. Ms. Silverio went on to state that Notre Dame's uniqueness in most areas is a positive and that some differences make Notre Dame more prestigious.

Professor Striegel inquired about the use of technology and analytics in tennis. Ms. Silverio noted that the team has begun using Cizr Tennis to collect statistics in matches (e.g., first serve percentage, points won at the net, errors, return percentage). Ms. Silverio stated that the data allows student-athletes to understand the incorporation of coaching tactics and strategies. Ms. Silverio also noted that the team will visit the new state-of-the-art USTA National Training Center while competing against Iowa over spring break.

Professor Bellia thanked Ms. Silverio, wishing her luck this season.

5. Student Welfare Subcommittee Report

a. Revised Grant-in-Aid Agreement

Professor Bellia asked the Board to consider approving changes to the Athletics Multi-Year Grant-in-Aid Agreement. Professor Bellia noted that the National Letter of Intent signing period is quickly approaching (November 14). Any expansion of the grounds for reducing, canceling, or declining to renew a grant-in-aid requires approval of the Board. The revision does contain an additional ground for canceling a grant-in-aid. Specifically, it allows Notre Dame to reduce or cancel an award at the end of a semester in which a student submits his or her name to the new NCAA transfer database. This change provides the coach with an opportunity to re-award the grant-in-aid to another student. Professor Bellia noted that the major point of discussion within the Student Welfare Subcommittee (via e-mail) was whether the cancellation should occur at the end of the academic year rather than at the end of the semester. Professor Bellia observed that if a student-athlete needs to protect his or her grant-in-aid for the spring semester, he or she could wait until January to submit his or her name to the transfer database.

Professor Bellia noted two additional revisions to the agreement. The first adjusts the agreement to encompass the changes to the approval process for students seeking to exhaust their final year of athletics eligibility as fifth-year students. The second revision addresses the circumstances in which a student-athlete who is not practicing, competing, or otherwise participating in countable athletically related activities might be assigned to perform other activities on behalf of the Athletics Department. The new language eliminates the reference to a student-athlete not being in "good standing" with the team, as that language has academic connotations.

The Student Welfare Subcommittee had previously reviewed and approved these revisions. After a motion for approval from Professor Kelsey, the Board unanimously approved the revisions.

b. Report on Summer Bridge Transition Course

Professor Bellia introduced Claire VeNard, Assistant Athletics Director for Student Welfare and Development, and invited her to present a report on a transition course offered during the Summer Bridge program for incoming first-year student-athletes. Professor Bellia noted that in 2014, she and Mr. Swarbrick had chaired a Student-Athlete Task Force that addressed, among other things, the challenges that some student-athletes face in making the transition to Notre Dame. The group's report had emphasized the need for more robust transitional support for student-athletes.

Ms. VeNard began by discussing the evolution of transitional support for incoming student-athletes. She shared three distinct scenarios for initial enrollment and spoke of the unique transition timeline and opportunities provided for each: enrollment in the summer prior to the first year (June), fall enrollment, and midyear (January) enrollment. Ms. VeNard noted that for football student-athletes entering in Summer Bridge and at midyear, the University had used the services of an outside consultant specializing in transitional adjustments. The consultant had offered a one-credit course called Inner Challenge, and although the course had significant positive benefits, an ad hoc group overseeing transition programming made the decision before the 2018 Summer Bridge session to bring the transitional course "in house." Three staff members from different University units—Ms. Venard from Athletics, Mo Doyle from Student Affairs, and Samira Payne from ASSA—worked to develop a one-credit transitional course that would streamline all summer programming.

Ms. VeNard explained the approach the group took in developing the course. The group's underlying approach was informed by research on transitional support, including from the annual Black Student-Athlete Summit and the work of the Center for First Generation Student Success, and by the work of others on campus in the Posse and AnBryce programs. The group also undertook a review of all current programming, including Welcome Weekend, the Moreau First Year Experience Course, and the programming coordinated by ASSA and others on Fridays throughout Summer Bridge. The group decided that the approach should be ongoing transitional, meaning that the relationships should continue despite the conclusion of a course or session.

Ms. VeNard stated that the 2018 summer course was entitled Designing (Y)our Notre Dame Experience. It included all Summer Bridge enrollees, not just football, and encouraged student-athletes to decide the type of experience they intended to have in college and to identify the resources that could support their individual goals. The course generally included information that had previously been provided, but the course encouraged students to become motivated and engaged in charting their paths through Notre Dame. The eight-week course met twice weekly, with a large group session early in the week followed by small discussion groups later in the week. Upperclassmen were hired in paid internships to drive weekly "real talk" sessions with their assigned groups. The course was introduced during the Summer Bridge Welcome Weekend itinerary that also included a Basics Fair, Mass, and necessary information regarding Community Standards, the Honor Code, and NCAA Compliance.

Ms. VeNard concluded with an outline of her takeaways from the process and the revamped approach. Ultimately, the course feedback was positive. Participants cited a

comfortable small group setting, a cultivation of sense and belonging, and the overall relevance of the curriculum. Ms. VeNard suggested that the University consider hiring a dedicated support professional who could oversee all transition programming for student-athletes, and who could continue to interact with and develop student-athletes after the conclusion of the scheduled course.

Professor Bellia opened the discussion for questions and suggested that the Faculty Board further review the approach supported by the Student Welfare Subcommittee: to appoint a staff member to track best practices, to develop and oversee transitional programming in cooperation with other University units, and to coordinate the transition course.

Ms. Conboy inquired whether other populations on campus could benefit from such a position and the course content. Professor Bellia noted that the support envisioned is not unlike that offered through the Posse program and the AnBryce Scholars program. One could imagine a unified position dealing with transitional support in the future, but the Board's first obligation is to ensure that student-athletes receive appropriate support.

Professor McDowell inquired about where such a position would report. Professor Bellia suggested the role could report to the President's Office or to Academic Services for Student-Athletes.

Ms. Torain wondered how students are identified for the Summer Bridge Program. Professor Bellia explained the nature of the committee formed to collect coach nominations and the criteria considered when filling the cohort.

Professor Striegel asked how the January transition will be handled in light of the staffing recommendation. Professor Bellia agreed that it would be unrealistic to have a staff member in position to handle the midyear transition, but noted that discussions are underway about how best to handle the midyear group. If the Board recommends moving forward with a request for the position, the hope would be to have someone in place to coordinate programming for the summer session.

Professor Kelly asked what the position description would include. Professor Bellia noted that Ms. Venard and Ms. Doyle had worked to draft a position description. While not ready for circulation, that description called for candidates to have a Master's degree in college student personnel, social work, higher education, or similar areas, and to have experience working within a Division I FBS university. Professor McDowell stated that in light of the goal of helping students to transition to Notre Dame, a detailed understanding of the University support structure will be important; as a result, an internal candidate may be helpful. Professor Bellia agreed.

Professor Kelsey inquired about how faculty members could continue to assist students in their transition throughout the year. Ms. VeNard agreed that helping students to develop relationships with faculty members would be beneficial. Professor Kelly and Professor McDowell discussed how the Board and ASSA could incentivize faculty members to become more involved in assisting in student-athlete transitions.

Professor Bellia thanked Ms. VeNard for her presentation.

6. Academic Reports

Professor Bellia invited Mr. Holmes to share his reports on fifth-year student-athletes and on the academic performance of student-athletes during the 2017-18 academic year. She noted that the Board typically has a report on graduation rates at one of its fall meetings, but the NCAA had not yet released this year's rates.

Mr. Holmes shared two handouts with the Board. Mr. Holmes began by outlining the 2017-18 academic outcomes for the fifteen approved fifth-year student-athletes who enrolled in specific graduate programs, enrolled as unclassified graduate students, or remained at the institution in order to complete an undergraduate degree. Mr. Holmes noted that the term grade point average earned was consistent with previous cohorts and that the degree-seeking graduates tend to earn the highest academic marks. Mr. Holmes explained the potential future impact of the newly adopted football redshirt rule, which permits student-athletes to compete in four or fewer contests in their first year without exhausting a year of eligibility. The redshirt rule makes it likely that more students will have eligibility remaining after four years. He discussed the interplay of this new redshirt rule in football with the existing rule allowing students who graduate to have immediate eligibility at another institution without serving the academic year-in-residence requirement that otherwise applies in football, basketball, hockey and baseball. The combined effect of these rules will be to increase the number of football student-athletes who will have eligibility remaining after four years and who could compete as fifth-year students, either at the original institution or at a new institution.

Mr. Holmes went on to outline the academic achievements for all student-athletes in the previous two terms. He presented information by term, gender, and scholarship status. Mr. Holmes additionally provided a three-year academic comparison for term and cumulative grade point averages, noting strong marks in the spring term and the fact that no student-athletes were on academic probation following the spring term. Mr. Holmes also provided a comparison between the general student population and student-athletes.

Professor Bellia noted the strong spring academic performance and inquired as to what factors Mr. Holmes felt may have attributed to the success of student-athletes. Mr. Holmes stated that the effort was collaborative, attributing success to coaches, Admissions, faculty, college advising offices, and the newly created Learning Specialist roles in ASSA. Mr. Swarbrick echoed Mr. Holmes' thoughts, adding that the quality of Mr. Holmes' staff and the level of engagement was positive.

7. Adjournment

Professor Bellia adjourned the meeting at 1:29pm, announcing the next meeting would take place on December 7, 2018.

