

Minutes of the Meeting of the Faculty Board on Athletics
April 15, 2025
500 Main Building, 1-2:30 pm

Members Present: Patricia Bellia (Chair), Colin Barr, Pete Bevacqua, Annie Coleman, Ann-Marie Conrado, Darrin Davis, Randy Kozel, Mike Niemier, Cara Ocobock, Annie Wiese, Katie Wowak

Members Excused: Ann Firth, Umesh Garg, Patrick Holmes, Rev. Gerry Olinger, C.S.C.

Athletics Liaisons: Missy Conboy (Policy/Legal), Heidi Uebelhor (Compliance), Jen Vining-Smith (GLD Center), Jacob Simonis (Compliance)

Guests: N/A

1. Opening Prayer

Professor Bellia called the meeting to order and offered the opening prayer.

2. Minutes of March 21, 2025

The Faculty Board on Athletics (Board) unanimously approved the minutes of March 21, 2025.

3. Chair's Announcements

Professor Bellia announced the following schedule approvals and changes:

2024-2025 Schedule Changes (Travel)

- Baseball: Request to be excused from class through 10:15 am on 4/14 due to delayed return travel. *Approved 4/13*

2024-2025 Individual Student Requests

- Basketball (Hannah Hidalgo): Request to be excused from class on 4/11 to attend the John R. Wooden Award presentation in Los Angeles

2024-25 Schedule Changes (Weather)

- Women's Soccer: Game against Tennessee on 4/6 was not played due to weather and was replaced with a scrimmage against the ND Men's Club team on 4/8. *Approved 4/4*
- Softball: Game on 4/9 rescheduled for 5/1 due to potential inclement weather. *Approved 4/9*
- Baseball: Game on 4/2 (already rescheduled from 3/5) rescheduled for 5/13 at 4:30pm due to potential inclement weather. *Approved 4/9*
- Baseball: Game on 4/12 moved to 4/11 due to forecast of inclement weather. *Approved 4/14*

3. *House* Settlement Update

Mr. Bevacqua provided an update on the *House* settlement. He shared that Judge Wilken heard the case the previous Monday, and two issues arose: (1) The lack of a grandfather clause protecting current student-athletes from being cut, and (2) The question of who is representing the interests of future student-athletes. Mr. Bevacqua shared that defendant's counsel was scheduled to circle back yesterday regarding those issues, but the expectation was that counsel would hold firm on the roster limits (even though Notre Dame does not agree with this position). He also indicated that the night before, he held a Town Hall open to all Notre Dame student-athletes, and shared the unfortunate reality that if the *House* settlement is approved, roster limits will be in place next year. That would result in tough conversations with 50-plus students who are currently members of our teams. In short, he thinks the agreement is likely to be approved in the next two weeks.

Professor Bellia asked how Notre Dame is handling future commitments and signings. Mr. Bevacqua answered that we need to deal with that process imminently because the transfer portal opens for football tomorrow. He shared that we have documents in place that will be binding if the settlement is approved, but further shared that "smart agents" are asking what happens if the settlement isn't approved. He believes that the NCAA or Congress would push forward with some kind of compensation regulations if the *House* settlement were not finalized.

Mr. Bevacqua was asked about the fate of walk-ons in football. He shared that while we currently have 85 scholarships in football, post-*House* there would be no scholarship limit. A school would be able to promise scholarships up to the *House* roster limit of 105. That said, he does not anticipate Notre Dame increasing scholarships to 105, but noted that we may offer another 7 or 8 scholarships, and operate with fewer walk-ons. Further, if we do have to make these roster cuts, we will try to keep those individuals losing roster spots as closely connected to the teams as possible.

Mr. Bevacqua said that he was a guest at a Student Affairs meeting hosted by Father Olinger earlier in the day, and the group discussed the topic of how Notre Dame will continue to support students who have been cut from teams. He stated that in an effort to be as fair as possible, we are trying to assign some administrative help to support those students who lose their roster spots. In addition, he noted that many universities will no longer have walk-ons, and will fully scholarship their rosters, particularly state schools with lower tuition costs.

Professor Coleman asked if we were able to utilize practice players in this "new world order?" Mr. Bevacqua indicated that if the *House* Settlement is finalized, practice players can no longer be used in that capacity. Professor Bellia asked how student-athletes reacted to the information shared at the student-athlete Town Hall. Mr. Bevacqua noted that these are tough conversations. Even though some individuals will not be personally impacted, they are also sad for their teammates. In short, he believes it is a bad day for college sports, but the fact that there is currently no certainty is also a problem. Professor Niemier asked if there will be a domino effect taking place, with students transferring to other institutions after losing a roster spot. Mr. Bevacqua confirmed that if student-athletes transfer to or from another institution, it could result in another student losing a roster spot. He added that we are hoping most student-athletes who

lose their roster spot will choose to stay at Notre Dame to complete their education, but we also believe we should be timely with notification so that the student-athletes can make decisions in their best interests and enter the transfer portal if they choose.

Professor Conrado asked about the recent Biden administration Department of Education interpretation suggesting that NIL compensation had to be provided with Title IX in mind. Mr. Bevacqua clarified that Trump administration had quickly withdrawn that interpretation, and that it appears that the vast majority of the cap money will be used for football and men's and women's basketball, possibly resulting in future Title IX lawsuits. That said, he noted that if the cap money were to be "equitably deployed" by gender, there could also be lawsuits. He went on to share that schools are justifying their cap rationale by referencing the back pay penalty structure. Most schools are following that same model as they plan how to distribute future dollars. Finally, Mr. Bevacqua shared that a school does not have to hit the cap, but those universities without major football programs will likely go all in supporting basketball. Each school can make a unilateral decision about how it will spend its cap dollars.

4. Kanaley Award Nominations

Professor Kozel, chair of the Academic Integrity Subcommittee, explained the criteria of the Kanaley Award, as well as the selection process. He noted that there were 13 nominees this year, seven of whom the subcommittee felt were on a higher tier and deemed worthy of the award. He asked the full Board if they were comfortable with the recommendations of the subcommittee, or if they would like to bring forward any of the other nominees for consideration.

There was a motion and a second to approve all seven recommended honorees, and unanimous approval. The student-athletes selected to receive this honor are Diana (Rebeca) Candescu (Women's Fencing), Sonia Citron (Women's Basketball), Nibi Ghosh (Women's Tennis), Justin Janicke (Hockey), Jack Kiser (Football), Jadin O'Brien (Women's Track and Field), and Ben Ramsey (Men's Lacrosse).

4. Discussion of the Northwestern Report

Professor Bellia provided background on hazing and bullying incidents at Northwestern University that had prompted the university to engage outside counsel to review its athletics program, including its reporting and accountability mechanisms. The report, released in summer 2024, focused in part on the faculty/athletics relationship at Northwestern, including on the role of Northwestern's faculty athletics committee, the Committee on Athletics and Recreation (CAR). Professor Bellia indicated that she felt it was important for the Board to review the report's observations regarding the faculty/athletics relationship. (The report's recommendations on substantive policies on bullying and hazing, as well as training on those policies, will be the subject of a separate review including other campus partners.) The observations and recommendations on faculty and athletics fall into three buckets:

a. Composition, Structure and Mandate of the faculty committee: At Northwestern, all of the faculty members were appointed to the CAR committee, and the CAR did not have a set committee structure or a clear mandate. In addition, there were no term limits. Professor

Bellia shared that after reviewing the report and the specific recommendations, she is not especially concerned about how Notre Dame is operating in this space. The Board has both a structure and established term limits, as well as a clear mandate derived from the Academic Articles. Professor Coleman noted that Northwestern's CAR oversees club and intramural sports in addition to intercollegiate athletics. There may be value in making sure Student Affairs (the department that oversees RecSports at Notre Dame) is included in any broad discussion of hazing education provided to athletic teams.

b. Communication and Transparency: Professor Bellia noted that the Northwestern Report cited a lack of communication and transparency between athletics and the faculty, as well as faculty frustration about class misses, as sources of tension between the faculty and athletics on Northwestern's campus. The report included a recommendation that the CAR's mandate and role be publicized more broadly. She noted that the Board's Student Welfare Subcommittee was already in the process of discussing ways that the Board, to enhance transparency and to improve support of student-athletes, could more broadly and effectively share both its mandate and how it operates. Professor Bellia observed that while she submits an annual report to the Academic Council, she has not received feedback on it or a request to speak with that group. That said, she does interface with the chair of the Faculty Senate annually, and also sits on the Advisory Committee on the Academic Code and Policy Committee (ACACP), which includes assistant or associate deans from the colleges and schools. In short, while there is some communication and transparency, she acknowledges that there could be more. She also shared that there may be additional guidance or greater emphasis needed to define appropriate communication between coaches and faculty members. She cited other distinctions between how Notre Dame and Northwestern faculty committees operate in this space. (At Northwestern, the Academic Services department operates within the Athletic Department structure, so there may be a greater need for more strict guidelines. At Notre Dame, Academic Services for Student-Athletes (ASSA) reports to the Provost.) Professor Bellia shared that while many of our teams have sponsored "faculty games" in the past, it does not happen consistently or with every team. Professor Ocobock shared that there was recently a planned faculty event at a baseball game, but the planners failed to tell the student-athletes, resulting in a disconnect.

Professor Bellia also feels that the Board needs to do a better job of defining the role of the Board liaison to each team. She believes this would allow the liaisons to improve connections with student-athletes on their assigned teams. Another faculty member suggested that more could be done to educate new faculty on the work of the Board during new faculty orientation. Another idea discussed was whether there might be a greater opportunity to connect with the working deans on the ACACP, ideally using them to help push out important information to the colleges.

c. Exit Interviews and Surveys: The Northwestern Report indicated that members of the CAR conducted exit interviews with groups of student-athletes, with no guidelines. Northwestern also conducted annual student experience surveys, not unlike what we do at Notre Dame. Professor Bellia noted that at Notre Dame, we already have a standard process by which the exit interviews are conducted. In short, that responsibility falls to the sport administrators. Ms. Vining-Smith stated that she has not seen a faculty group, like CAR, involved at any school other than Northwestern, and views their process as a bit of an anomaly. She also noted that at Northwestern the exit interviews are optional, whereas Notre Dame makes great efforts to meet

with all graduating student-athletes. Professor Bellia suggests that, in the future, it might make sense to have Ms. Vining-Smith share general themes with the Board to promote a greater understanding of issues that arise related to academics and/or student welfare. To increase the possible points of contact between student-athletes and Board members, there was a suggestion that Board members be invited to sit in on SAAC meetings in somewhat of a liaison role, or to meet with the leadership group of the SAAC.

Professor Bellia's presentation included a color-coded map, highlighting action items in red, and highlighting in yellow those items which the Board already has been working on. Professor Coleman thanked Professor Bellia for using the chart to isolate actionable issues, commented that she is very open to attending some SAAC meetings, and believes this type of engagement could easily be formalized. The group also discussed the importance of engaging the Board and student-athletes in various social activities, and Ms. Vining-Smith noted that the semester family dinners might be ideal opportunities to connect. She has observed that the teams often sit together at these events, so it would be easy for the Board liaison to use this opportunity to sit and eat with his/her team members in a casual sitting. Professor Conrado noted, in closing, that for some time before she joined the Board, she didn't know this Board even existed. Since she has been on the Board, she has noticed that you have to really search to be able to find information related to its work. She further stated that there was no opportunity for faculty members to learn about Athletics during their orientation process.

5. Report of the Student Welfare Subcommittee

With Professor Niemier having left the meeting to teach his class, Professor Bellia commented on the work the Student Welfare Subcommittee has undertaken to try to increase faculty members' knowledge of how they can support student-athletes, how ASSA operates, and how the Board operates. The subcommittee drafted language intended both for the Board's website, fba.nd.edu, and for ASSA's website, assa.nd.edu. It was noted that Provost McGreevy recently invited all faculty members to attend a conversation (with guests Professor Bellia and Mr. Bevacqua) designed to explain many of the changes currently affecting college athletics, and to specifically address questions that faculty might have about these current issues; it may be beneficial to make the link to the recording of this session more widely available. Finally, Professor Bellia stated that while this subcommittee's communication project is still underway, she will share the work of this group for the benefit of the full committee.

6. Redlined Statement of Principles on Intercollegiate Athletics

Per a request at the previous meeting, Professor Bellia noted that she had shared a redlined Statement of Principles on Intercollegiate Athletics to make it easier to track the changes that were made.

7. Adjournment

Professor Bellia adjourned the meeting at 2:10 pm.