

Minutes of the Meeting of the Faculty Board on Athletics
November 7, 2024
200 Main Building, 2-3:30 pm

Members Present: Patricia Bellia (Chair), Pete Bevacqua, Annie Coleman, Ann-Marie Conrado, Brian Coughlin for Fr. Gerry Olinger, C.S.C., Ann Firth, Pat Holmes, Randy Kozel, Mike Niemier, Cara Ocobock, Annie Wiese, Katie Wowak

Members Excused: Colin Barr, Umesh Garg, Darrin Davis

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

Guests: Brian Pracht (Industry and Campus Engagement), Nick Mainieri (Transition Program Director/ASSA), Jacob Simonis (Compliance)

1. Opening Prayer

Professor Niemier offered the opening prayer.

2. Minutes of October 8, 2024

The Faculty Board on Athletics (Board) approved the minutes of October 8, 2024.

3. Transition Programs

Mr. Mainieri provided a report on the structure and implementation of the Summer Bridge program, which seeks to assist student-athletes in their transition to Notre Dame. On average, about 70 student-athletes are invited to attend each year. Mr. Mainieri meets with individual coaching staffs and Admissions personnel in order to discuss who should be invited. Factors that might affect invitations include academic need, time away from school, summer access, etc.

Mr. Mainieri stated that an important component of Summer Bridge is the in-person nature of the program. This past summer, it was a five-week program within the framework of the six-week traditional summer schedule. Each student took five hours for credit from a list of different available credit options. While the courses were listed as standard coursework for the term and were open to other students, spots were held for Summer Bridge students. That said, most non-Summer Bridge students did not gravitate to the five-week courses. Summer Bridge students took one three-hour course and two one-hour courses (one course promoting academic resilience and the second course teaching critical reading across the disciplines). Those students who intended to pursue STEM majors took a Chemistry Foundations course.

As a program, Summer Bridge has existed since 2002, and the core pieces remain the same. Over the last couple of years, the University has also developed a Transformational Leaders Program (TLP); that program is not unlike ASSA in its fundamental mission, and it

works with a similar number of students. As of two years ago, TLP created the Summer Academy, which is largely modeled after Summer Bridge. Since forming the Academy in 2023, TLP is approaching 60 students in the cohort. The introduction of the TLP summer program ensures that the student-athletes participating in Summer Bridge are not the only students in summer session classes.

Professor Coleman asked Mr. Mainieri to provide an example of what type of student would be in the Summer Academy. Mr. Mainieri noted that the program might include STEM majors who may not have attended a high school with sufficient course difficulty, but he also indicated that he could not speak to the full breadth of TLP considerations. Professor Conrado asked if the Summer Bridge program services transfer students. Mr. Mainieri indicated that transfer student-athletes could enroll in summer programs, but the structure may not be the same. As more students enter the transfer portal and come to Notre Dame with a need to make up credits, the need to have transfer students enrolled in summer courses may increase. Professor Bellia reported that transfer students represent one of the populations with which Mr. Mainieri works, to facilitate their transition to Notre Dame. In response to a question from Professor Niemier, Mr. Mainieri affirmed that the one-credit courses count as general electives.

Mr. Mainieri shared that discussions in the Summer Bridge program represent the beginning of a four-year conversation about academic goals. The program places an emphasis on students defining the value points associated with the choices they will make at the University. It also places an emphasis on addressing academic approaches that need to be adjusted, such as notetaking, homework, study habits, etc. Finally, there is a focus on communication, and students learn the importance of this skill, particularly as it is tied to engagement with faculty. This engagement is an important part of the education here at Notre Dame. Summer Bridge faculty have extended office hours to assist the participants, and are communicating with Mr. Mainieri if issues arise.

Regarding participation in the program, Mr. Mainieri shared that 81 incoming student-athletes, on summer GIA, were invited to participate. Recruited football walk-ons have an opportunity to attend and pay their own way. Fifty-four of the 81 invited accepted the invitation (34 male/20 female; the number of invited student-athletes represented a more equitable male/female breakdown). Participants in every sport have been invited, although not every program has had their student-athletes choose to participate.

Professor Coleman asked why baseball, softball, and track student-athletes seem to turn down this opportunity. Mr. Mainieri shared that a student's decision often it has to do with completing athletic commitments. He stated that the coaches are very involved in these discussions, and appreciate being engaged. In some situations, Admissions does highlight student-athletes who might have a higher need, and Admissions does have the ability to make summer bridge a condition of acceptance. It is worth noting that the typical start of Summer Bridge (June 8/9) is sometimes earlier than a student's high school graduation. Moving the program to a five-week duration was an effort to allow student-athletes to finish high school and attend associated events, such as prom and graduation. The baseball draft combine has also caused some students to opt out of the program. Summer Bridge is not a requirement, and not

every student invited has a need. It is only mandatory if Admissions requires it. Mr. Mainieri noted that some international students could benefit from attending as well.

Mr. Bevacqua asked whether there was a correlation between those who turn down the opportunity and difficulties with fall coursework. Mr. Mainieri shared that those who attend seem to experience less stress and experience greater cultural literacy if they attend. Mr. Bevacqua also asked about whether mid-year enrollees could attend. Mr. Mainieri responded that mid-year enrollees have a two-day of orientation programming at the start of the spring term that includes education regarding the honor code, community standards. They are then assigned to attend various open houses during the semester. By summer, they engage with coursework as continuing students.

Finally, Mr. Mainieri shared a slide to explain how ASSA is attempting to assess the program. Student surveys, anecdotal student conversation, and outcome tracking with the Registrar are the current assessment tools, but he noted this is still a work in progress.

Mr. Mainieri shared that he and TLP staff are looking for ways to be more intentional about linking the two summer programs. Moving forward, they hope to work together to achieve expanded collaboration with TLP, expanded partnership with Residence Life, consistent attendance policies, and uniform assessment metrics.

3. Compliance Report

Mr. Simonis reported on several categories of information that the Compliance Office tracks.

Demographics. Mr. Simonis shared that 754 SA participated in 26 sports during the previous academic year (58% Males, 42% Females) and 322.2 grant-in-aids were awarded. He noted that Athletics encourage student-athletes to complete the FAFSA, and that receipt of a Pell Grant is the basis for eligibility for Student Assistance Funds.

Scholarships. Mr. Simonis explained that all sports are designated either a head count or equivalency sport. In a head count sport, a grant-in-aid counts as 100% regardless of the size of scholarship awarded. In equivalency sports, there are no specific percentages that a program must provide to a student-athlete, with the exception of baseball, where any student who receives an athletics scholarship must receive minimum aid of 25%. Combining all scholarships across head count and equivalency sports, 322.2 is the maximum number of scholarships Notre Dame can award, based on the maximum NCAA limits for the sports the University sponsors. Mr. Simonis explained how the number of student-athletes will change if the settlement in *House v. NCAA* is approved, and discussed the current plan for adjusting the number of scholarships available. He noted that the *House* agreement is slated to be finalized on April 7, 2025. He added that the National Letter of Intent will no longer be used, and student-athletes will only sign a grant-in-aid agreement.

Alston Awards. Over the past year, Notre Dame continued to award academic benefits under the *Alston* case to qualifying students. Each institution can determine the eligibility

standards for *Alston*; at Notre Dame, students-athletes receiving a full grant-in-aid who are in good academic standing have received \$5980, while partial scholarship recipients and walk-ons receive up to \$2000 per year.

Transfers. Beginning with the 2024-2025 academic year, the NCAA abolished restrictions that had limited students to a one-time transfer exception. This change allows student-athletes to transfer multiple times. Various regulations still govern a student-athlete's immediate transfer eligibility, including sport-specific midyear transfer rules (for sports such as baseball, basketball, tennis, softball, etc.), National Letter of Intent, and individual institution or conference policies. At Notre Dame, transfer numbers are vastly lower compared to other institutions. A total of 65 ND student-athletes—the breakdown being 43 graduates and 22 undergraduates—entered the transfer portal and ultimately transferred. Additionally, Notre Dame welcomed 57 incoming transfers, with the majority—52 of them—enrolling in graduate school.

Official/Unofficial Visits: Mr. Simonis shared that the number of official and unofficial visits had increased this year. The NCAA eliminated the limitation of five visits, so a prospect can choose to visit as many places as he/she wants. That said, prospects typically can make only one official visit to each school, with some limited exceptions.

Waivers and Violations: The University reported 20 violations to the NCAA during the past year. He shared that this is a rather typical number, and shows that we are monitoring our program appropriately. The biggest report involved the men's swimming program, which occurred despite significant education provided the program. The Compliance Office is looking to adopt technology to assist with monitoring conduct to discourage/avoid similar violations in the future.

Internationalization: Notre Dame's teams saw an increase in international recruiting. Given the recent decision about awarding aid to cover full need for these students, global representation could rise in the future.

4. Athletics Updates

House Settlement. Mr. Bevacqua shared with the Board the issues related to the *House* settlement, and the challenges with cutting roster spots. Mr. Coughlin asked if Athletics could communicate with Student Affairs when these cuts were made so that various offices might be able to support these affected students. Mr. Bevacqua emphasized that affected student-athletes would not lose their athletic grants-in-aid.

Mr. Bevacqua gave a brief update on the men's swim team. He noted that he has been happy with the progress to date, including the reintegration of eligible upperclassmen for practice activities, and at this time, we are hoping to bring program back next year.

5. Chair Updates

Professor Bellia shared the following information regarding captain and schedule approvals she had given since the previous meeting (10/9/24):

2024-25 New schedule approvals:

- Rowing spring schedule: *Approved - 10/27*
- Men's Tennis spring schedule: *Approved - 10/13*
- Women's Tennis spring schedule: *Approved - 10/27*
- Indoor Track and Field: *Approved - 10/8*

2024-2025 Schedule changes:

- Men's Soccer: Request to be excused from classes on 10/28 until 11 am due to travel issues returning from California. *Approved - 10/28*
- Cheer: Excused from class at 3:15 pm on 11/4 for a 4 pm report due to a 5 pm Women's Basketball game. *Approved - 10/31*
- Men's and Women's Fencing: Schedule change due to change in venue change location on previously approved competition weekend. *Approved - 10/31*

2024-2025 Individual student requests:

- Men's diving requested one student-athlete to miss class to attend a full team meeting: *Approved - 10/14*
- Men's tennis location change for ITA Conference Masters: *Approved - 10/31*

Post-Season (ACC, Big Ten, NCAA)

- Women's Soccer ACC Tournament game at FSU: *Approved - 11/2*
- Men's Soccer ACC Tournament game at Stanford: *Approved - 11/2*

6. Adjournment

Professor Bellia adjourned the meeting at 4 p.m.