

Minutes of the Meeting of the Faculty Board on Athletics
February 21, 2025
3108 Eck School of Law, 2-3:30 pm

Members Present: Patricia Bellia (Chair), Colin Barr, Pete Bevacqua, Annie Coleman, Darrin Davis, Randy Kozel, Annie Wiese, Katie Wowak

Members Excused: Ann-Marie Conrado, Ann Firth, Umesh Garg, Pat Holmes, Mike Niemier, Cara Ocobock, Rev. Gerry Olinger, C.S.C.

Athletics Liaisons: Missy Conboy (Policy/Legal), Jen Vining-Smith (Student-Athlete Services), Jacob Simonis (Compliance)

Guests: Amir Carlisle, Director of Player Development (Football)

1. Opening Prayer

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

2. Minutes

Professor Coleman moved approval of the minutes of November 7, 2024, and Professor Wowak seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Amir Carlisle, Director of Player Development (Football)

Professor Bellia introduced Football Director of Player Development, Amir Carlisle, and noted that she had included his written report in the meeting materials. Professor Bellia invited Mr. Carlisle to share his background and the role he is now playing with Notre Dame Football. He stated that he is originally from Northern California, and transferred to Notre Dame from USC. He enjoyed his Notre Dame journey, made great friends, and felt the Notre Dame experience made a big difference in his life. After graduation, he founded a company with teammate Sheldon Day, which was focused on helping athletes build wealth. When the opportunity presented itself for him to work in the player development space at Notre Dame, it felt like an opportunity he could not pass up. In short, he wanted to build a system that prepared Notre Dame student-athletes to be successful, including by addressing several core challenges involving students-athletes' time constraints and their inability to build a tangible pathway to their goals beyond athletics. The goal of the player development program is to maximize the full potential of both the student-athlete and Notre Dame.

Mr. Carlisle outlined certain program goals. **Career Opportunities (Goal #1)** is focused on helping every student-athlete figure out what they want to do in life. Because of time demands, football student-athletes often do not have an opportunity to take part in traditional internships and job shadows. For those who do not go to NFL, they later have to play catch-up. These career-related discussions begin early, and each academic year the career discernment and

preparation opportunities increase. A second goal of the program is **Financial Wellness (Goal #2)**. This goal emphasizes practical lessons, such as how to manage one's money or how to put a down payment on a house. Mr. Carlisle stressed the importance of giving student-athletes a basic understanding of personal finance, and how to develop a financial philosophy that correctly balances "needs, wants, and growth." The final goal of the program is **Relationship Building (Goal #3)**, and is focused on building a stronger bridge to Notre Dame alumni. Strong alumni relationships—built and leveraged through such events such as informational interviews, industry specific treks, micro internships, Legacy Dinners, coffee chats, and informal meet-ups—can assist student-athletes with various career-related objectives.

Mr. Carlisle described a player accountability program that began with only two student-athlete participants. The program grew from two students to 10, then 18, and this year, 50 individuals. He emphasized the importance of students cultivating certain habits so as to overcome gaps and achieve desired results. Students use a habit share app, and the peer accountability program helps students develop and stick with habits.

Mr. Carlisle fielded questions about the program. Professor Coleman asked if there was an opportunity for better collaboration with faculty, including to leverage speakers who come to campus (for example, in connection with the Sports, Media, and Culture (SMAC) minor). She also asked whether there would be opportunities for faculty members or program directors to schedule differently to make programming more accessible to football players. Mr. Carlisle indicated that he would like to collaborate more to maximize the experience for all parties. He further stated that while scheduling issues may not always be avoidable, he would like a better understanding of what is taking place on campus, and how the player development program can plug into it. Professor Coleman then asked who addresses these needs with the rest of Notre Dame's student-athletes, and Jen Vining-Smith responded that she has three staff members in Student-Athlete Services who are focused on that population.

Professor Davis asked how formal this program is, to what extent the goal setting involves academic goals, and to what extent faculty engagement is part of the program. Mr. Carlisle shared that there is an intention to work closely with Academic Services for Student-Athletes (ASSA), as the Player Development program does not want to replace the good work that ASSA counselors do in the academic space.

Professor Wowak suggested there might be value in connecting student-athletes to MBA students. In addition, for non-business majors, she felt the ND Elevate program organized by Kristen Collett-Schmitt might be a helpful program with which to partner. Mr. Carlisle shared that he is very open to further integrating the football players into the rest of the campus.

Professor Bellia commented on the growth in the number of participants in the peer accountability program, and asked if Mr. Carlisle anticipates the number expanding further. Mr. Carlisle indicated that the current strategy is to plant the seed, build trust, and encourage others to show up. When asked what concerns he has about the future of the program, Mr. Carlisle

shared that college athletics is transitioning into a new landscape in which student-athletes may be directly compensated, and it will be a very competitive market. That said, he believes that Notre Dame needs to double down on its advantage. Notre Dame alumni and fans want to help, so the program needs to continue to build this support. The “4 for Forever” program really requires Notre Dame football to emphasize this support system. Notre Dame football encourages recruits to “choose hard,” and through player development, the program demonstrates that Notre Dame is here to deliver on the “4 for Forever” promise. In the past, there was a big gap between what Notre Dame promised and what it actually did. The player development program is trying to close that gap.

With regard to an assessment of how the program is working, Mr. Carlisle shared that the program is still figuring out how to measure its success, but anecdotally, the GPA of the 18 recent accountability participants was a 3.4 versus a 3.0 overall team GPA.

4. Athletic Updates

Mr. Bevacqua shared several updates.

- **Men’s Swimming:** Mr. Bevacqua will be making a formal recommendation to have the men’s team return to competition for the next academic year. The first-year students and returning upperclassmen have worked diligently since the program was suspended, with good results. Academically, the women’s team had a 3.6 GPA team average this past semester, and men achieved a 3.4 GPA team average.
- **House Settlement:** The *House* settlement hearing will be held at 10 a.m. on April 7th. Should the settlement be approved, the NCAA will make backward-facing payments over the next 10 years of \$280 million per year. The forward-facing part of the settlement would allow institutions to directly compensate student-athletes. The first \$2.5 million of any new scholarships offered at each institution will come off the overall cap. Compensation (nationally and at Notre Dame) will primarily go to football and men’s and women’s basketball. In addition, because of roster mandates, Notre Dame will have fewer student-athletes in its program. Notre Dame is fighting the timing of this aspect of the settlement, but that is unlikely to be successful. There will be a distinct disadvantage for some of our programs. Although Notre Dame will add some scholarships, most of those scholarships will go to female student-athletes. Athletics is working closely with head coaches on future implementation. Mr. Bevacqua noted that he will be back in Washington shortly for more conversations with lawmakers. He also noted that there will be two clearinghouses that will be utilized to help ensure compliance with the *House*/NIL regulations.
- **Communication:** Father Bob asked a group of University leaders, including Ann Firth, Professor Bellia, and Mr. Bevacqua to confer on a campus communication plan regarding the House Settlement. This plan is already underway and has involved or will involve communicating with a variety of groups, including the President’s Leadership Council (PLC) and deans, trustees, donors, faculty, staff, and students.

The goal is to ensure that Notre Dame is as proactive as possible in helping various groups understand the *House* settlement. He shared that Professor Bellia will be involved in addressing the importance of preserving the student-athlete experience in this new iteration of college athletics. Finally, Mr. Bevacqua believes Notre Dame has best one-two punch in the country: if a student wants a combination of elite academics and elite athletics, no one is able to offer what Notre Dame has.

Mr. Bevacqua answered questions about education on sports betting, and noted that the internal and external reviews of the men's swimming program had applauded our Compliance staff for the amount of sports betting education conducted. He also answered a question about the future of the cap, sharing that one of the key elements of the settlement was aimed at protecting schools from similar lawsuits in the future. That said, he feels lawsuits are inevitable, and could be either antitrust- or Title IX-related, depending on how schools choose to distribute cap dollars.

5. Chair's Announcements

Professor Bellia shared that she approved captains for men's and women's lacrosse since the last meeting. In addition, she shared the following schedule approvals (and one non-approval) since the previous meeting.

2024-25 New schedule approvals

- Cheerleading spring schedule: *Approved - 11/8/24*
- Women's Lacrosse spring schedule: *Approved - 11/27/24*
- Baseball spring schedule: *Approved - 12/10/24*
- Men's Lacrosse spring schedule: *Approved - 1/29/25*

2024-2025 Schedule Changes:

- Women's Basketball: Request to be excused from classes after 1:45 pm on 11/21 to allow for the team to practice before departure to the west coast. *Approved - 11/14/24*
- Women's Tennis: Request to be excused from class after 1:45 pm on 1/30 to allow for the team to practice before travelling to NYC for competition. *Approved - 11/21/24*
- Softball: Time changed for Friday night home games from 5 pm to 6 pm to allow for impact player not to miss Friday afternoon class. *Approved 2/5/25*
 - 3/21 v. Stanford
 - 3/28 v. UVA
 - 4/4 v. Pitt
 - 4/25 v. UNC
- **Women's Basketball: Request to be excused from late classes on 2/17 due to 6 pm start. Not approved 2/14/25; WBB agreed to adjust preparation schedule.**

2024-2025 Schedule Changes–Weather:

- Men's Basketball: Request to be excused from classes at 12:30 pm on 12/2 to allow for an earlier departure time due to incoming weather. *Approved - 12/1/24*
- Women's Basketball: Request to be excused from class at 12:20 pm as the charter's departure time was moved up due to winter weather conditions. *Approved - 1/21/25*
- Women's Basketball: Request to be excused from class on 1/24 due to travel issues returning from Boston. *Approved - 1/24/25*
- Men's Indoor Track: Request for 10 men traveling to Boston to be excused from classes on 2/12 to avoid winter weather travel delays. *Approved 2/11/25*
- Men's Basketball: Request to be excused from class on 2/13 due to delayed return from Boston caused by weather and double overtime. *Approved 2/13/25*

2024-2025 Individual student requests:

- Women's Soccer: Request for 3 students to be excused from class on 11/25 as the charter returning earlier could not accommodate the entire team. *Approved - 11/24/24*

Post-Season (ACC, Big Ten, NCAA, CFP)

- Men's/Women's Indoor Track: Request to be excused from classes on 2/28 and 3/3 for ACC Championship travel. *Approved 2/18/25*
- Women's Soccer: Request to be excused from class after 1:45 pm on 11/20 and all day on 11/21 and 11/22 for travel to and participation in NCAA Tournament in Mississippi. *Approved - 11/19/24*
- Cheerleading: Request to be excused from classes on 1/21 to cheer at the CFP National Championship Game on 1/20. *Approved - 1/13/25*
- Football: Request to be excused from classes on 1/17 and 1/21 to compete at the CFP National Championship Game on 1/20. *Approved - 1/16/25*
- Football: Request for certain team members to be excused from classes until 11 am on 1/13-1/16, to allow those members of the team with conflicts between practice and class times to practice in advance of the CFP National Championship; required an NCAA waiver. *Approved - 1/11/25*

6. Adjournment

Noting that the next meeting of the Board would be on March 21, 2025, in 500 Main, Professor Bellia adjourned the meeting at 3:30 p.m.