

Minutes of the Meeting of the Faculty Board on Athletics
September 15, 2025
200 Main Building, 2:00-3:30 pm

Members Present: Patricia Bellia (Chair), Colin Barr, Pete Bevacqua, Annie Coleman, Ann-Marie Conrado, Patrick Corrigan, Darren Davis, Brigid Deehan, Ann Firth, Pat Holmes, Cara Ocobock, Brian Coughlin for Rev. Gerry Olinger, C.S.C., Katie Wowak

Members Excused: Mike Niemier, Umesh Garg

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

Guests: Jacob Simonis (Compliance), Mike Norment (Peterson Family Head Swimming and Diving Coach)

1. Opening Prayer

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

2. Minutes of May 7, 2025

Professor Coleman proposed one amendment to the minutes. Professor Bellia agreed to amend the minutes as suggested, and the Board unanimously approved them.

3. Chair's Announcements

Schedule Approvals. Professor Bellia announced that, since the last meeting in May, she had approved numerous competition schedules.

Championship Segment

Approvals for teams competing in their championship segment included:

Fall: volleyball, women's soccer, men's soccer, cross country, and football. Professor Bellia specifically noted the following exceptions to the Board's scheduling policies:

- Volleyball had four misses in the M/W/F segment (down from six in the most recent two fall schedules);
- Football was approved for four M/W/F misses, including a Monday miss following the night game in Miami, consistent with previous approvals by the Board or the chair for Louisville in 2019 and Texas in 2016;
- Men's soccer received a waiver to compete on Welcome Weekend.

Winter: hockey (non-conference only, followed by conference), women's basketball, men's basketball (non-conference only), and men's and women's swimming and diving. The hockey conference schedule in the spring will require four misses in the M/W/F segment and

four in the Tu/Th segment. Women's basketball will have four misses in the M/W/F segment in the spring, but only two in the Tu/Th segment.

Non-Championship Segment

Approval for teams in their non-championship segment included several teams that typically do have class misses in that segment (women's tennis, men's tennis, women's golf, and men's golf). The men's golf schedule involved five misses in the M/W/F segment and four in the Tu/Th segment. Professor Bellia referred this schedule to the Academic Integrity subcommittee, which found the rationale for the class misses compelling. Professor Bellia also noted that the tennis schedules require special attention. Tennis has shifted the individual NCAA championship to the fall, and there are multiple tournaments that provide avenues for qualifying. The result is that different student-athletes will travel to different events. This year is the second year under the current format, and the counselors in Academic Services for Student-Athletes (ASSA) are closely tracking individual class misses.

Professor Bellia also approved non-championship segment schedules for softball, women's lacrosse, and baseball. Under NCAA rules, these teams cannot miss classes for travel in the fall semester. She also approved the schedule for cheerleading.

Schedule Changes

Professor Bellia approved a schedule change in women's soccer (within allocated class misses), as well as a class miss excusing a leprechaun from an evening class to attend a volleyball match. She approved numerous other schedule changes with no impact on class misses.

Individual Class Misses

Professor Bellia reminded the Board of the new policy it adopted in Spring 2025, providing an opportunity for coaches and sport administrators to seek excused absences for individual student-athletes with competition opportunities that will have a significant impact on their personal development. During Summer Bridge, she approved excused absences for three hockey players, one baseball player, and one football player (for a baseball opportunity) under the new policy. Given the compressed Summer Bridge schedule, these absences were limited to two days. There were also two approvals under the policy for the academic year, one involving a golf student-athlete (Jacob Modleski) representing the United States in the Walker Cup, and the other involving a tennis student-athlete (Sebastian Dominko) competing in an event in his native Slovenia in an attempt to qualify for the Slovenian Davis Cup team.

Professor Bellia also approved individual absences for certain summer enrichment events conflicting with summer classes, and for ACC basketball media days in the fall semester. The new policy encompasses these approvals as well, even though the policy simply codified longstanding practice in this respect.

Captaincy Approvals. Professor Bellia approved team captains for football, men's soccer, and men's golf. She observed that there were fewer captaincy approvals than is typical at this point in the year; some programs are relying on senior leaders without naming captains.

Summer Business. Professor Bellia noted that, over the summer, she worked with the University Registrar to propose some modifications to the early registration process for student-athletes. The Provost approved these modifications. First, volleyball will be part of the pre-registration process for the fall semester, for a three-year trial period. The Board has advocated this change for a few years, in part to allow team members to avoid scheduling discussion-intensive classes or labs on Fridays, because of the number of Fridays the team misses for travel. Second, if women's soccer makes the second round of the NCAA tournament, the sophomore class will receive an adjusted priority registration time to avoid the need for an extremely early wakeup on game day for registration. The proposal was stated in general terms, permitting an adjustment for any team facing a game-day conflict with registration in the final elimination phase of the season. Women's soccer is thus far the only team known to have such a conflict.

Informational Items. Professor Bellia called attention to the annual report to the Academic Council. She noted that subcommittee assignments and liaison assignments were uploaded to Box. She indicated that she would follow up with an email describing the liaison role.

4. Introduction of Michael Norment, Peterson Family Head Swimming and Diving Coach

Professor Bellia introduced Coach Norment and shared information about his background. Coach Norment began by sharing that his short tenure has been progressing very well. His first priority was to ensure that the team culture is moving in the right direction. He spent about three weeks having conversations with all sixty student-athletes to make sure everyone was on the same page. His second priority was to get a better understanding of how things work at Notre Dame. He shared that the men's and women's teams are in different places. He made sure the men's team understood the gift they had been given to have been reinstated. He wanted the women's team to understand that they are powerful and awesome, and to make sure they felt both seen and heard. In short, he told the men to "protect the club and the team," and the women to "continue to move the program forward." Ann Firth, during his interview, asked how he would be a "Force for Good." He described the four pillars he envisioned for the program (Commitment, Community, Excellence, and Legacy), and he then described how each of these pillars would work. The coaching staff must adhere to the same standards that he has set for the team, particularly when it comes to excellence.

Professor Davis asked what he thought about taking over the program at this point in time, given the recent suspension of the men's team. Coach Norment indicated that while he knew something negative had happened here, he tried to keep an open mind about it. He shared that he had interviewed here three years ago and he felt the interview process was different from what he had seen at other places, and that spoke to him. He was excited to have another chance to interview, and while he knew the former coaches, he had not discussed the Notre Dame position with them. Professor Conrado asked about the current make-up of the team. (Mr.

Bevacqua gave a quick update, sharing that on the men's side, Coach Norment inherited last year's freshmen, some upperclassmen who were invited back to the team, and quite a few incoming freshmen.) Coach Norment followed up, sharing that there are only three seniors on the men's side and four on the women's side, so it is important for the seniors to know that they are the de facto leaders.

Mr. Holmes asked about whether the roster cap emerging from the *House* settlement would present challenges. Coach Norment explained that he had to cut twelve athletes last year, so he has been through roster cuts before. College swimming traditionally has been a sport that has given people a chance to be a part of the program, and to grow and develop. The new roster caps make it difficult to offer that opportunity going forward. That said, Notre Dame's roster cap is 30, versus the cap of 22 he previously faced in the SEC, so he feels that our number does allow Notre Dame to cultivate talent. Professor Coleman asked about name, image, and likeness (NIL), and how much of his time, if any, it consumes. Coach Norment stated that only the most elite, national-level swimmers typically receive NIL opportunities. He is more concerned about how revenue sharing and NIL pressures are playing out at various schools. Swimming is not focused on generating revenue; it is more focused on youth sports and the Olympic movement. It will be unfortunate if the current pressures result in fewer swimming programs. He also shared that one of the highest causes of death for Latino and African American children is drowning; bringing swimming to broader communities has a positive impact, and that has long been a focus of his.

Professor Bellia asked how Coach Norment would go about addressing any tensions between the men's and women's programs. Coach Norment shared that the men's and women's programs want to be a team, but for four workouts each week, they will practice separately. The coaching staff wants to be able to focus on the needs of the female swimmers, and separate practices will allow them to have an excellent coach-to-swimmer ratio. That said, the two teams enjoy training together as well. (Mr. Bevacqua shared that the women's team wanted the men's team to be reinstated, and they also wanted to return to a joint program.) Coach Norment reiterated that the mixture of separate and joint training will continue to be a focus.

Professor Bellia noted that in interviewing Coach Norment, she was moved by his family's story, particularly about his father's commitment to education. She asked Coach Norment to provide some additional information about his background. Coach Norment shared that he is here because of the sacrifices made by his parents. His father had a difficult life, coming up as a sharecropper, and later moving to Chicago, Gary, and Fort Wayne. His father had suffered physical abuse as a child and had taken a job in a commercial bakery while attending high school. Upon graduation, his father played football at Ball State, worked at a hotel, and earned his degree. His father then put his mother through school. He spent thirteen years working on his PhD while working to support his family. His father's brother and sister-in-law both passed away, leaving two young children. Coach Norment's parents adopted these two children and raised them as their own. His father did eventually earn his PhD, and this journey helped solidify (for Coach Norment) the importance of education and how it has the potential to change lives. He closed by saying that he believes a Notre Dame degree has integrity; it means something, and people recognize its value. He wanted to coach at a place where education is the pinnacle, and where student-athletes are being prepared for life after college.

Professor Bellia thanked Coach Norment for sharing his time with the Board.

5. Athletic Updates (Pete Bevacqua)

Professor Bellia asked Mr. Bevacqua to provide the group with an update on the intercollegiate athletics landscape, given that there have been many changes since their last meeting in May. Before beginning the update, Mr. Bevacqua shared his observation that Coach Norment is the perfect person, at this critical point in time, to lead the swimming program.

Mr. Bevacqua then reminded the Board that the *House* settlement has been approved, and that athletic departments can now compensate student-athletes directly. While the amount that can be shared annually is \$20.5 million, that amount will increase and could reach \$30 million in ten years. Another component of the settlement defines roster limitations for each team, but there are no longer team scholarship limitations. For example, Notre Dame currently offers 322 scholarships for over 700 student-athletes. Notre Dame will be using the allowable amount of cap dollars (\$2.5 million) to add 29 scholarships, 19 for women's programs and 10 for men's programs, including an increase in football scholarships from 85 to about 94. Despite Notre Dame's many advantages, its biggest competitive disadvantage is its lack of scholarships, particularly vis-à-vis state schools, which can offer comparatively more scholarships with less money.

A major concern is that, without a better means of enforcing the new rules, particularly with respect to collectives, there will continue to be an "arms race" among schools. There is not unlimited money in the system. Olympic sports will be in danger of getting cut if college athletics cannot figure out a better system. Notre Dame (among others) continues to press for help from Congress in creating a more stable system with a level playing field. He shared that President Trump issued an executive order seeking to offer protections for Olympic sports, but overall, the system is not protecting student-athlete opportunities. Notre Dame was vocal about implementing a grandfather clause to protect student-athletes who would lose roster spots by virtue of the *House* settlement, and although the settlement ultimately protected such student-athletes, there are other ongoing threats.

Mr. Bevacqua turned to departmental updates. He shared that the Department of Athletics began a strategic planning process this past spring, with the help of David Bailey and an internal strategic planning committee. The process included reviewing the proposed language with key internal and external groups. After much feedback, he believes that the department's plan melds well with the University's strategic plan. Mr. Bevacqua believes plans need to be brief and simple. He shared the Department of Athletics mission statement, which reads: "*Notre Dame challenges every student-athlete to pursue excellence and to be a force for good in the world.*" The vision statement reads, "*Lead collegiate athletics by defining the integrated student-athlete experience and forming champions.*" Both statements have been well received. In short, we aspire to be *Champions for Good*.

In response to a question, Mr. Bevacqua then provided an update on the transfer portal, and noted that we only had five football transfers, while West Virginia had 53 and Purdue had 51. He indicated that our coaches would tell you that we are being very strategic in this space. Hi

invited Professor Bellia to comment on the academic challenges. Professor Bellia noted that Notre Dame takes a fairly restrictive approach to transfer credit, accepting only those credits that correspond to the content and modality of courses offered at Notre Dame. Coaches therefore need to be selective in finding students who will have sufficient transferable credit to maintain their NCAA eligibility. Notre Dame will not admit a student unless there is a path to an undergraduate degree. Ultimately, a student may choose not to complete a degree here, but the student will have an option to do so.

6. Academic Reports (Pat Holmes)

2023-24 APR Report. Mr. Holmes reported on Notre Dame's 2023-2024 Academic Progress Rate (APR). The APR is one of two metrics the NCAA uses in its Academic Performance Program (APP) to track the academic performance of student-athletes from member institutions. The rate is a "real-time" measure calculated by giving each grant-in-aid student-athlete the possibility of earning an eligibility point (by maintaining academic eligibility) and a retention point (by staying enrolled in the institution) for each term that the student is receiving athletics aid.

Mr. Holmes shared that our APR numbers have been consistently at the top of the NCAA rankings. Seventeen of our 24 teams achieved perfect APR scores, which is the highest of any FBS institution. Notre Dame was one of only five institutions with 10 or more teams with perfect scores. Notre Dame has ranked first or second in the number of teams with perfect scores in each of the last 19 years.

Mr. Holmes then referenced graphs provided in the material to show that Notre Dame is, in fact, an outlier. Focusing on the single-year APR from 2019-2024, Notre Dame's numbers are consistently higher than the average numbers for Power 4+ private institutions, for all Power 4+ institutions, for the ACC, for all FBS institutions, and for all Division I institutions. Mr. Holmes noted that an Academic Code change in 2022 added an "academic warning" category at Notre Dame, such that students who drop below the minimum semester GPA that the Academic Code requires do not immediately go on academic probation and lose an eligibility point. In response to a question from Mr. Bevacqua, Mr. Holmes confirmed that improved numbers in 2023 and 2024 reflect this Academic Code change. Even with that change, however, the playing field is not level. Notre Dame still calculates academic eligibility based on students' semester GPA. Many other schools focus on students' cumulative GPA; still others use the NCAA metric and ask only if a student has passed six hours. In this environment, the fact that Notre Dame's APR is consistently high is impressive.

Spring 2025 GPA Report. Given the time constraints, Professor Bellia asked Mr. Holmes to hold on the Spring 2025 grade report until a future meeting.

7. Cheer Her Name Celebration

Professor Bellia asked Ms. Conboy to give a quick update on the Cheer Her Name Celebration, honoring 50 years of varsity women's athletics. Ms. Conboy summarized the goals of the celebration.

- Acknowledge and Honor—Achieved through a Fighting Irish Media announcement, signage (static and video board), sizzle reel, student-athlete gifts, usher buttons, social media/email campaign.
- Activate Engagement: Purdue Alumni Weekend activities include the Main Circle dedication, reception, volleyball game, private shopping experience, Pete's Pre-game and brunch, on-field opportunity/flag presentation, Mass, and Irish Goodbye and Good Bites.
- Access New Resources: Using the celebration as an opportunity to shine a spotlight on existing strategic priorities.

8. Adjournment

Professor Bellia adjourned the meeting at 3:35 pm, postponing the selection of subcommittee chairs until a future meeting.