

Minutes of the Meeting of the Faculty Board on Athletics
April 24, 2026
200 Main Building, 2:00-3:30 pm

Members Present: Patricia Bellia (Chair), Colin Barr, Ann-Marie Conrado, Brian Coughlin for Rev. Gerry Olinger, C.S.C., Patrick Corrigan, Bridget Deehan, Umesh Garg, Patrick Holmes, Mike Niemier, Katie Wowak

Members Excused: Pete Bevacqua, Annie Coleman, Darren Davis, Ann Firth, Cara Ocobock

Athletics Liaisons: Missy Conboy (Policy/Legal), Jacob Simonis (Compliance), Heidi Uebelhor (Compliance)

Guests: Nick Mainieri (Student-Athlete Transition Program Director), Mary Tarsha (Office of Institutional Research, Innovation and Strategy)

1. Opening Prayer

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

2. Minutes of Meeting of February 27, 2026

The Board unanimously approved the minutes of the February 27, 2026.

3. Chair's Announcements

a. Schedule Approvals

Spring Schedules. Professor Bellia approved spring schedules for men's lacrosse and outdoor track and field (with class misses within normal limits), and men's soccer, women's soccer, and volleyball (with no class misses, as these teams are in their non-championship segment).

Spring Schedule Changes. Professor Bellia approved numerous schedule changes. Most involved game time changes dictated by the ACC Network and required no adjustments to students' excused absences. In addition, rowing canceled but replaced one trip with no class miss impact and added a scrimmage over spring break with no class miss impact. Softball and baseball had several weather-related game time adjustments, game day adjustments, or cancellations due to weather, with no impact on class misses.

Of the schedule changes involving adjustments to excused absences, three involved weather affecting a team's return to campus (men's tennis, women's tennis, and softball) on the back end of spring break, and a fourth involved an early departure for women's tennis because our weather did not permit the students to practice outside in advance of an outdoor competition. Track and field also adjusted its departure time for two events, resulting in class misses for a handful of student-athletes that were still within normal limits.

Post-Season Competition. Professor Bellia approved post-season travel for women's basketball for the ACC Championships, for select men's and women's swimmers for the NCAA championships, for women's basketball and cheer for the NCAA Championship, for men's tennis for the ACC Championship, and for men's golf for the ACC Championship. Women's tennis and women's golf also traveled for their respective ACC Championships, but their itineraries were accurate in their original schedules. Men's and women's fencing competed at home for the NCAA Championship, but that event still required class misses for both squads. Hockey traveled for the Big Ten Championship, which fell during spring break and required no class miss.

Individual Absences. Professor Bellia reminded the Board of their approval a year ago of a new process to accommodate class misses for individual students, separate from the team approval process, in certain circumstances. In terms of applying the new policy to elite competition, she reminded the Board that the process involves a coach describing the importance of the event for the student's development, as well as an assessment of the impact of the event on students' academic commitments. Similar to her last report, Professor Bellia noted a number of approvals related to fencing: She approved three fencers for World Cup competitions, five for Junior World Championships, and four for Grand Prix events. Professor Bellia declined to approve excused absences for another fencer for World Cup and Junior World Championship participation, in view of the number of absences the student had already accumulated.

In terms of other individual absences, Professor Bellia approved absences for two women's swimmers to participate in national team events and for six football student-athletes to participate in NFL Pro Day. Finally, she excused a women's soccer player for competition with the Canadian national team and excused Hannah Hidalgo to travel for the Naismith Player of the Year event.

b. Kanaley Awards

Professor Bellia confirmed that the full committee had voted to confer the Byron V. Kanaley Award on nine students: Aamil Wagner, Leah Klenke, Micaela Kastor, Cailey Dockery, Sebastian Dominko, Rylie Hanford, William Donovan, Jonathan Hamilton-Meikle, and James Dillon Edge. Student Affairs also completed a conduct check on the students, with no issues.

c. Swimming Practice Schedule

Professor Bellia discussed a request from the men's and women's swimming coach, Mike Norment, to adjust the team's lift and practice times, which would have affected the windows during which students could attend class. She noted that the Academic Integrity Subcommittee had met to discuss this request, had posed additional questions for the coaching staff, and had exchanged additional information by email. Professor Bellia shared the longstanding guideline that each coaching staff preserve 10 class slots during which student-athletes are free to attend class. In practice, the 10-class-slot guideline translates to students being in class from 8 to 2:50/3:15 on M/W/F and 9:30 to 3:15 on Tu/Th.

The swim proposal was well-intentioned, in that it aimed to provide students with additional rest and recovery, in recognition of the fact that swimmers typically have two practice sessions in a day. In addition, the request would have permitted the team to have a strength and conditioning session at a time when the weight room could accommodate all the team's student-athletes. The subcommittee concluded, and Professor Bellia conveyed to the coach, that an adjustment of the morning class slot would be workable, but that the proposal to end the academic day by 2:15 pm slot on M/W/F would be problematic. The shortening of the academic day would make it difficult to fit in students' academic obligations, particularly as the University approaches year two of the 75-minute Moreau and 4-credit Calc schedule for many first-year students. Professor Bellia shared with the coach that the subcommittee would be willing to revisit the request in a future year. The subcommittee would like to see how the later morning start time affects students and to assess the extent to which the opening of Shields Hall alleviates congestion in other weight rooms, possibly enabling all team members to lift at the same time without shortening the academic day.

4. Summer Bridge Program (2025-26) Summary and Report

Professor Bellia introduced Mr. Mainieri and Ms. Tarsha to present the Summer Bridge Report. Mr. Mainieri provided background on why we sponsor this program and how the student selection process works. In short, nominations involve collaboration between the Office of Academic Services for Student-Athletes (ASSA), Undergraduate Admissions, and coaches. The nominations reflect academic needs, social needs, and summer access rules for specific sports. Invitations are sent out after the admissions cycle is completed, and the program covers tuition, room, board, books, and a small travel stipend. Last year, 65 individuals attended the Summer Bridge program. Fewer students declined Summer Bridge invitations than had declined in recent years; the higher yield may be attributable to the fact that the program is somewhat shorter than previously and the fact that the program now accommodates a small number of excused absences for athletic/professional development. Also, individual athletic programs are increasingly supportive of this opportunity. Mr. Mainieri noted that on rare occasions, Admissions conditions an offer of enrollment on the student's participation in Summer Bridge.

Mr. Mainieri shared that the Summer Bridge program builds in class time and study time but also expects students to engage with various campus offices (and report on those experiences) and to visit their faculty during office hours. The Summer Bridge staff also works closely with the Transformational Leaders Program (TLP), which focuses on low-income, first-generation college students who are engaged in a similar summer program.

ASSA has typically administered an end-of-summer survey. There has been consistency in responses through the years, and one consistent takeaway has been the students' increased confidence in communicating with faculty, as well as a better understanding of the Notre Dame community. Some student-athletes come from less traditional educational backgrounds (than their Notre Dame peers), so this summer preparation is particularly helpful. Mr. Mainieri also seeks out the Summer Bridge students in the fall to see how they feel the program experience prepared them for the fall semester.

This year, Mr. Mainieri and Ms. Tarsha worked together to develop a more robust survey mechanism. Ms. Tarsha noted that the involvement of Institutional Research, Innovation, and Strategy (IRIS) in the survey development allowed IRIS to connect information from the survey with other institutional data, to better assess the impact of Summer Bridge. The survey was sent midway through the fall semester to all first-year student-athletes, with responses equally split between Summer Bridge and regular fall enrollees. Items on the survey instrument included validated measures of “belonging” and “mattering” as well as items that addressed academic experience, self-perceptions, and engagement. IRIS merged the survey data to corporate data to investigate additional outcomes such as GPA and pre-matriculation academic preparedness differences.

Mr. Mainieri and Ms. Tarsha shared that Summer Bridge participants reported a greater sense of belonging; they had fewer extreme values (low scores) on this metric compared to those who did not attend Summer Bridge. Although Summer Bridge students did not, in terms of first-semester GPA, outperform those students who did not attend, the trends indicated that Summer Bridge participation leveled the field, helping to bridge the gap between pre-matriculation academic preparedness and academic performance. Mr. Mainieri also shared open responses from students, in which several students discussed how Summer Bridge prepared them for upcoming coursework, helped them understand campus resources, and gave them opportunities to form friend groups before the start of the fall semester.

Professor Barr asked whether IRIS had considered tracking the effect of Summer Bridge on GPA beyond the first year. Ms. Tarsha does not believe that the data would show continued impact because the data is blunt. She stated that if analyzing this effect was of interest, IRIS would need to be more intentional about how it measures the data. She is not sure if it would be worth it, in part because the first-semester data is more generalizable.

Mr. Mainieri shared that Summer Bridge is supposed to be an introduction to the rest of the work students will do throughout the fall semester, so the impact on the fall semester is of most interest. Mr. Holmes mentioned that the vast majority of the 33 students who enrolled at mid-year this year would have been in Summer Bridge in the past. Ms. Uebelhor and Mr. Coughlin both commented on what we may be losing with regard to mid-year enrollees, given what they no longer enjoy in terms of the benefits of Summer Bridge. Mr. Coughlin noted that the Welcome Weekend experience in the spring semester is not as robust as the experience in the fall. Mr. Mainieri discussed the partnership with Student Affairs, acknowledged the very compressed timeframe for the spring Welcome Weekend, and reviewed some of the different models used in the past to try to supplement the Welcome Weekend programming. Additional discussion ensued, including about the need for a more robust transition experience for transfer students (something that Mr. Mainieri is focusing on as the summer approaches).

Finally, Mr. Mainieri noted that this summer, 82 student-athletes have been invited to Summer Bridge. The acceptances are coming back now. The invitations were 50 percent male and 50 percent female. He believes that the stronger equity in numbers may have been affected by the removal of football players who would have been in Summer Bridge but instead enrolled at mid-year. To date, 58 invitees have confirmed with a few decisions still pending. The Transformational Leadership Program expects to enroll 40 students.

Mr. Mainieri outlined the academic course options for the 2026 Summer Bridge session. In response to a question, Ms. Deehan shared that she was invited to and attended the Summer Bridge Program in 2017. At the time, it included two three-credit courses. She noted the impact her experience had on her confidence in the dorms and in the overall community, as well as the positive effect it had on her concerns going into her initial term away from home.

Professor Bellia further addressed the history of the Summer Bridge Program and the impetus for the creation of the Transition Program Director position at Notre Dame, noting that she is grateful for Mr. Mainieri's thoughtful leadership of the Summer Bridge program and of his attention to helping all student-athletes transition to Notre Dame, whether they enroll at mid-year, in the summer, as first-time first-year students in the fall, or as transfer students.

5. Final Exam Rescheduling Request – Hockey

Professor Bellia outlined a request for Hockey student-athlete, Danny Nelson, to reschedule one final exam for participation in an elite-level athletic event. Following a brief explanation and reference to the materials provided, the Board voted unanimously to approve the request.

6. Compliance Annual Report

Ms. Bellia charged the Board with a review of the Compliance Report and encouraged members to direct questions to Ms. Uebelhor or Mr. Simonis.

7. NCAA Legislative Update

Mr. Simonis outlined several new legislative changes to pre-enrollment NCAA bylaws that are effective August 1, 2026, including updates to preparticipation prize money, the use of sports agents, and opting into professional drafts. Mr. Simonis additionally addressed new legislation in effect that was adopted to curb recruitment outside the NCAA Transfer Portal process. Under the new legislation, if an incoming transfer student-athlete (who did not enter the Transfer Portal) participates on a team, the Head Coach (of the new school) will be suspended for 50% of the season and that institution will incur a fine valued at 20% of the sport's operating budget. Mr. Simonis provided several examples outlining the occurrence of transfer participation at Notre Dame prior to and during the 2025-26 academic year. It was also noted that incoming transfer student-athletes could enter the Transfer Portal after enrollment but before participation if provided an entry window in the particular sport.

Ms. Uebelhor shared NCAA legislation, effective immediately, that allows foreign tours in all sports once per year. Previously, legislation restricted tours to once every four years. The provision that the tour occurs during an official university vacation period still applies.

Ms. Uebelhor discussed a concept that has not been scheduled for a formal vote, but which would alter the eligibility clock and seasons of competition bylaws for all student-athletes. Following a Presidential Executive Order on April 3, the NCAA Division I Cabinet charged the

NCAA with creating a solution to simplify eligibility rules, eliminating all exceptions. Ms. Uebelhor shared that 1,400 NCAA waivers and 70 court cases occurred in the 2025-26 academic year, which added pressure for a swift response. To date, a preliminary concept has circulated that would eliminate seasons of competition eligibility rules and establish only a running five-year eligibility clock that would begin upon the academic year following a prospective student-athlete's 19th birthday or high school graduation, whichever occurs first. In the concept, the five-year clock could be paused only for pregnancy, religious missions, and military service. Further details are unknown at this time.

Ms. Uebelhor and Mr. Simonis entertained questions regarding a phase-in approach, the impact on current senior student-athletes, and sport-specific delays such as hockey deferments. Ms. Uebelhor stated that the Cabinet is scheduled to officially meet on May 22 and Mr. Simonis added that it may meet informally as early as April 27.

Ms. Uebelhor and Professor Bellia discussed the effects the extended eligibility clock could have on academic enrollment in a fifth year, options for graduate programs, and the requirement for fifth-year Board approval. In anticipation of the possible change, Professor Bellia had reached out both to Mike Hildreth, dean of the Graduate School, and Kristen Collett-Schmitt, the associate dean in Mendoza who oversees the specialized masters' programs. She and Mr. Holmes will meet with Dean Hildreth in the coming weeks. Professor Bellia will keep Dean Collett-Schmitt updated on NCAA developments in this area.

8. Adjournment

Professor Bellia adjourned the meeting at 3:30 P.M.