

Faculty Committee – Intercollegiate Athletics & University Advancement

In attendance: Kathleen Barrett (Chair), Morris Council (FAR), David Newton (liaison to Provost's Office), Meredith Brunen (VP for University Advancement), Elaine McKinnon, Mikhail Besnosov, Mariana Sanchez, Javier Hasbun, Scott Gordon, Cynthia Brown, Greg James (SGA Senator) 11/3/2020

Dr Barrett began meeting by having committee members introduce themselves and speak briefly about why the work of this committee is important to them.

Dr Barrett requested that we review and discuss the currently stated purpose of the committee.

- Dr Brunen pointed out that the Athletics Department reports directly to the President rather than University Advancement as they have in the past. This may affect the advisory role of the committee as well.
- Dr Barrett noted that we should include the head of Athletics in our meetings and that the committee could have a role in the relationship between athletics and alumni. Dr Brunen suggested including Kevin Terry from Athletics.
- Dr Council pointed out that Athletics is working to reposition itself as a true stakeholder on campus and in the community. He mentioned as an example the upcoming 'Social Justice March' organized by the Athletics Department, which brought together stakeholders from all over campus and the community. He sees this committee as also being part of that repositioning and important to his role as the Faculty Athletic Representative and noted that he will have the opportunity to share the committee's work directly with the president.
- Dr Newton pointed out that our student athletes are an important group as they help with recruiting new students, building a stronger campus community, and connecting us with alumni, so it is important for us to identify and address the specific barriers to academic success that they face. Other committee members seem to agree that our committee, with its diverse representation, is well-positioned to do this work.
- Dr Barrett noted that focusing on academic success of our student athletes is not included in the currently stated purpose of the committee and asks if we need to re-evaluate our purpose.
- Relating to Dr Newton's comments about barriers to student athletes' success, Dr Council noted that course scheduling in some programs and the attendance requirements of some faculty present challenges for student athletes. He also pointed out that the university is currently focusing more on the overall student experience, and that helping student athletes become more a part of the university community fits with this focus. He mentioned a recently created LLC that includes both athletes and non-athletes with a focus on school spirit and engaging with athletics. He feels that the committee should have a role in influencing these initiatives.
- Dr Brunen indicated that the committee's collaboration with University Advancement could include helping her office disseminate information about events and initiatives to faculty. Dr Barrett pointed out that the committee could also have a more active role in making university event more successful because of its connection with athletes and alumni.
- The committee agreed that Dr Barrett would begin reworking the purpose and share something with the committee in a couple of weeks.

Next the committee discussed ways of increasing awareness of academic accomplishments of student athletes.

- Dr Gordon shared a memo on the impressive academic performance of student athletes over the past five years that was presented in a spring faculty senate meeting.
- Dr Barrett shared more recent information from the spring semester showing even more improvement.
- The committee discussed how such information should be shared going forward. Dr Council suggested also sharing on the athletics podcast and social media. Dr Brown suggested sharing with the press and Dr Council mentioned that Matt Cook could assist with that.
- Greg James pointed out that awareness of academic success of student athletes helps with recruitment. It also helps the athletics department when student athletes earn academic-based scholarships. The department seeks to highlight these accomplishments by having 'all-academic' teams.
- The committee agreed that a report of student athletes' academic performance should be shared with the senate each fall and spring.
- Dr Hasbun inquired about how student athletes' academic performance is recognized. Greg James mentioned the spring WESPY's award ceremony in the athletics department and recognition at some home games.
- Dr Brunen suggested asking students and faculty to be 'digital ambassadors' to share internally and externally. Dr Gordon mentioned that something like this is done for Ingram Scholars. Dr Hasbun suggested the term 'Murphy Scholars'. Dr Newton noted that there may be BOR policies and procedures for creating such an award. Other names were discussed, such as 'Wolfie Scholars' or perhaps naming after an accomplished student athlete. Dr Council agreed to into how this might be done.

Next, Dr Barrett asked that we discuss the academic environment for student athletes, specifically faculty who are unwilling to work with student athletes whose schedule conflict with class requirements. This occurs even in cases where the student has followed all procedures regarding providing faculty with schedule information before the start of the semester.

- Dr Council mentioned that there had been a related policy change that went through faculty senate. Dr Barrett indicated that she would follow up to find out more.
- Dr McKinnon suggested that it may help to work with a chair's council to (Dr Newton suggested the Provost's council) to make sure all faculty understand policies related to working with student athletes.
- Dr Gordon pointed out that some conflicts involve course activities that are not easy or even possible to reschedule.
- Dr Council pointed that conflicts are usually handled on a case-by-case basis, with someone in the athletics department (or the FAR) reaching out to the faculty member to work out a solution.

Dr Brunen also provided examples of websites to highlight student athletes' accomplishments. She has agreed to work with athletics to create similar channels of communication.

It was agreed that we would continue these conversations out our next meeting with David Haase and Kevin Terry in attendance. Dr Barrett and Dr Hasbun agreed to work on surveying faculty senate on these topics.