

Annual Report

2007-2008

**Senate Athletics Committee
Oakland University**

**Submitted by Robby Stewart, Chair
May 30, 2008**

**Executive Summary
of the
Senate Athletics Committee
Annual Report 2007-2008**

Submitted by Robby Stewart, Chair

Membership

Faculty: Caroline Jumel (French), David Kidger (Music), Karl Majeske (Business, QMM), Kenneth Mitton (Eye Institute), Robby Stewart (Psychology, FAR)

Administration: Tamra Bays (Professional Advisors Committee), Omar Brown-El (Multicultural Initiatives), Tracy Huth (Athletics), Holly Kerstner (Athletics, ex officio)

External Community: Henry Mittelstaedt

Student Representatives: Courtney McCracken, Nikki Pawson

Meetings

The Senate Athletics Committee (SAC) met 6 times during the 2007-2008 academic year (two meetings were canceled due to insufficient agenda or scheduling conflicts). Committee members corresponded via email regularly and were able to complete some of their business without face-to-face meetings.

Most Significant Committee Actions

- Reviewed the senior exit interviews from the previous academic year and began the development of a new survey to be completed by all student-athletes at the end of their competitive season
- Monitored the process of establishing an excused absence policy at Oakland University meeting with various constituents throughout the fall semester
- Monitored the processes student-athletes and faculty were experiencing as they negotiated excused absences using the new policy in the winter semester
- Regularly interacted with the Student Athlete Advisory Council to discuss issues of mutual concern
- Reviewed Title IX activities at Oakland University
- Reviewed implementation of NCAA APR audit procedures at Oakland University and plans to improve academic success with specific teams that are experiencing some difficulties
- Organized and held the first “academic/athletics” luncheon to build a cadre of faculty to discuss issues pertaining to the academic success of student-athletes; this activity was a direct development of the “Faculty Engagement” themes presented at the Faculty Athletic Representative Association Annual Meeting and Symposium held in November and attended by Robby Stewart
- 207 student-athletes completed the new “end of season” survey summarizing their perspectives of experiences at Oakland University
- 204 student athletes earned positions of the Academic All-Summit League (maintaining a 3.0 GPA in addition to eligibility) placing OU at the top of the Summit League standings

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The Senate Athletics Committee (SAC) met 6 times during the 2006-2007 academic year (two meetings were canceled due to insufficient agenda or scheduling conflicts). Committee members regularly corresponded via email and were able to complete much of their business without face-to-face meetings.

Summary of Senate Athletic Committee Activities for 2007-2008

September 10, 2007

The following list of tasks/issues was distributed to committee members at an earlier date. Each was briefly reviewed at this meeting.

- Any re-organization or re-structuring of the Athletics Department personnel or the Summit Conference
- Senior exit interviews of Student-Athletes from 2006-2007
 - Robby Stewart has received one paper copy of this report. He read it, summarized it for the committee, and made copies available to all committee members wanting to read it as well. The value of the report was judged to be rather limited because it presented comments from a very small number of student-athletes.
 - The SAC members began discussion of creating a new survey instrument to be completed by all student-athletes at the completion of their competitive season.
- Continued monitoring of status of proposed excused absence policy
 - The proposal to establish an excused absence policy is in the process of governance review.
 - A substantial portion of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of the current situation faced by student-athletes enrolled in some course sections where faculty appear to be unresponsive and uncooperative with requests to make accommodations for these students.
 - Concerns were raised about not having a sufficient number of faculty willing to work with student-athletes' absences. There are concerns that encouraging greater enrollment in on-line courses might not be the appropriate solution for missing face-to-face classes. We agreed that we would seek dialogs with others

in the university community such as CAS Dean Sudol and perhaps with Rhetoric Professor Marshall Kitchens.

- Interaction between SAC (Senate Athletic Committee) and SAAC (Student-Athlete Advisory Committee)
 - Stewart reported that he had attended the first meeting of SAAC and had made a brief presentation at the orientation of student-athletes new to OU (freshmen and transfers rather than the entire group of student-athletes).
- *Other items to be added*
 - Question was raised of the potential for season ticket holders to purchase “nice professional-looking” shirts in OU athletic colors, logo, etc., as a means of showing support. The basic idea was to have something other than T-shirts available and thus provide something that a professor could wear to class.
 - Question was raised of the potential to place a sign near the bend in Pioneer Drive near the Grizz statue announcing the game taking place that day, or the games taking place this week.
 - Question was raised of the potential to encourage more cooperation between students involved in club sports, IM sports, and other student organizations to attend OU athletic events.
 - Question of monitoring brother-sister team arrangement to reward/recognize group that best achieves the goals of this endeavor.
 - Question of seeking a means of tying brother-sister team activities with “Grizz Gang” or “O-zone” group comprised of larger student body,

October 8, 2007

- The review of our official charge revealed that current reporting practices have changed such that references to the Vice-President for Finance and Administration no longer appear to be applicable. The chair will draft a statement to the Senate Steering Committee suggesting that the charge be revised to replace all references to this Vice-President with “President”.
- The chair distributed a document provided by Holly Kerstner entitled “SAAC report to the Intercollegiate Athletic Council, April 14, 2005”. This document, originally prepared at Radford University, was given to the members of SAAC on September 30, 2007 with the request that they review it and consider preparing something comparable to summarize the state of affairs at OU. The request was made with the understanding that this might provide a structure to organize discussions between SAAC and SAC.
- The committee members focused the remainder of their time together on a discussion of issues detected in the 2007 senior exit survey report. We concluded that these data remain difficult to interpret given the small sample size and the question of the representativeness of the data itself. In an effort to consider an alternative means to obtaining this sort of data committee members were asked to review the survey itself with the goal of identifying 10 to 20 questions that could be addressed to all current student-athletes, perhaps at the conclusion of their competitive season, so as to provide a more complete and timely assessment of currently functions. Committee members were asked to interact with one another via email as they made progress in exploring means to reduce the number of questions raised on by the survey.

November 12, 2007

- Report from Tracy Huth and Holly Kerstner on new developments at the NCAA or Summit League level.
 - Institutional plan (a 5-year plan outlining the direction of athletics at OU) is being developed by Huth, Kerstner, Dover and President Russi. When it gets to a more complete form this committee will be asked to review it and make comments
- Report from Robby Stewart on outcome of FARA annual meeting and symposium held last week
 - A great deal was learned from colleagues at other institutions about being proactive rather than reactive to problems. We could easily have agenda items for many meetings to come.
 - The primary theme of the annual meeting focused on the importance of and means for creating greater faculty engagement with student-athlete affairs.
 - Members of the SAC informally agreed that building “a cadre of faculty interested in, supportive of, and willing to assist OU student-athletes in academic issues should be one of our goals.
- Report from SAAC leadership concerning previously distributed “What is working?/What needs improvement?/What ideas do we have?” summary.
 - Holly Kerstner and Robby met with the SAAC subcommittee before their meeting already scheduled for 4 pm Sunday, November 18.
- Suggestions from SAC members as to how we might reduce the senior exit interview to a small enough list of questions so that it could be used every season with every team.
 - Holly Kerstner will send me an electronic copy of the current senior exit survey and Robby Stewart will forward this to all committee members.
 - Karl Majeske agreed to assume responsibility for reducing this survey to something short enough to be given to every team at the end of their competitive season.
 - Everyone will look over the current survey in an effort to both reduce it’s length and make it more informative.
- Report concerning the progress of the excused absence policy currently under consideration by the OU Senate.
 - A number of committee members indicated that they would be able to attend the Senate meeting on Thursday, November 15, at 3:10 pm in the Gold Rooms to support the original proposal or some amendment thereof.
 - Holly Kerstner in particular will be on hand to describe how Athletics is already monitoring itself to reduce the number of absences and limit the travel of students who are at risk academically
- Report from Holly Kerstner concerning RPI, APR and the need for Academic Improvement Plans to structure a process to enhance the academic success potential of student-athletes.
 - Samples of past plans were distributed
 - This committee, or some subset thereof, needs to assess in the process of developing plans to improve the academic success of the Women’s Track & Field, Softball, and Men’s Swimming and Diving teams. Holly Kerstner, Anne Williams and Robby Stewart will develop these plans and bring them to the committee for review/comment.

January 14, 2008

- Means of building a larger cadre of faculty who are interested in, supportive of, and willing to assist OU athletics in general, OU student-athletes in particular were discussed
 - This group of faculty/staff would provide a resource for issues such as how should we advise student-athletes to approach faculty in order to obtain accommodations when they must miss a class due to an athletic competition, how to get the most out of their academic major, and general career advising within the major.
 - Committee members were asked to consider people within their circle of OU contacts who might fit this description and suggest one or two to the chair before the next meeting.
- Robby Stewart presented a summary of the recent FARA Conference; committee members were asked to review it to obtain a better understanding of the broad range of activities the FAR, and thus the SAC could be doing. This summary has been presented to President Russi and Provost Moudgil as well.
- President Russi has indicated that he would appreciate it if we would host a series of lunches for faculty with a coach present to build some linkage between athletics and academics.
 - Suggestions included:
 - Becky Francis and Greg Kampe speak on the topic of the role of academic performance in recruiting
 - Tracy Huth, Holly Kerstner and Robby Stewart speak on the topic of NCAA guidelines and policies (APR) and how we are working to meet these
 - A group of student-athlete alumni who are academic success stories (now have careers we can brag about) speak on the topic of how their OU experience prepared them for life after athletic competition.
- The SAAC report summarizing their view of what is working, what needs improvement, and suggestions for making these improvements is in its final stages of preparation.
- Karl Majeske presented his working draft of a new survey that would be distributed to all student-athletes at the end of their competitive season

February 11, 2008

- In an effort to build a larger cadre of faculty who are interested in, supportive of, and willing to assist OU athletics in academic issues, committee members provided a list of 19 people within their circle of OU contacts who fit this description.
- President Russi has indicated that he would appreciate it if we would host a series of lunches for faculty with a coach present to build some linkage between athletics and academics.
- Tracy Huth reported that there was no space in the OC open for us to hold a luncheon in the near future. We either may [1] hold this event in the Elliot Room in the Athletics building, or [2] shift from the idea of a luncheon to something held at another time of the day. Committee members agreed that holding the event in the Elliot Room would be better than not having the event. April 14 was identified as being the date that suits most people's calendars.

April 18, 2008

- The “end of season” survey was distributed to student-athletes prior to the Graduates and Champions banquet; 207 completed surveys were obtained and will be analyzed over the summer months. Review of these data will be the first agenda item for SAC in September.

May 6, 2008

- The luncheon originally scheduled for April 14 was canceled due to the emergency closure of campus. The event was later rescheduled for Tuesday, May 6. Approximately 24 faculty and staff attended the luncheon and listened to comments by Robby Stewart, Tracy Huth and Holly Kerstner.

Supplemental Materials

1. Stewart's Summary of the FARA Annual Meeting and Symposium (excepts)
2. SAAC 2007 – 2008 report of the current status of athletics at OU

Summary of FARA Annual Meeting and Symposium Baltimore, MD November 8-10, 2007

Key points from Orientation for new FARs

- FARs ought to be doing more on their campuses than most currently do.
- FARs ought to be present for every exit interview involving student-athletes.
- FARs ought to inform faculty Senate of academic progress of student-athletes.
- FARs ought to be more involved at the conference and NCAA level.
- FARs ought to collaborate across institutions to develop better position descriptions.

Keynote address: Myles Brand, President of the NCAA on *Academic Reform: The Critical Years*

- Each sport within each institution has its own culture; the FAR needs to get involved on a team-by-team basis to develop plans for academic success that recognize these differences.
- New governance plan within NCAA opens opportunities for FARs to become more involved at this level; someone needs to step up to do the job.
- FARs ought to work to develop a cadre of faculty who understand/appreciate athletics and then take action to correct misconceptions identified in Knight Report.

Presidential Task Force Responses: Roger Caves, FAR San Diego State

- We need to focus on the integration of student-athletes into the academic mission of institution.
- We need to educate governing boards on the basic needs and rules of academic progress and athletic eligibility.
- We need to celebrate all accomplishments of student-athletes; focus more on academic success.
- *Or, we need to assess how far we at OU already do this and then act accordingly.*

Research on Transfer, Academic Outcomes and the APR

- Proactive stance required by APR is paying off; graduation rates are improving.
- Most problems with APR and GSR appear to be associated with transfers from a 2-year college to a Division 1 institution

Faculty Engagement and the Oversight of Intercollegiate Athletics: President Jack DeGiola, Georgetown University

- Most faculty recognize conflict between striving for excellence and breaking the boundaries of knowledge (appreciating liberal arts vs. making discoveries of new things).
- A similar tension exists within athletics as some “join the arms race” to have bigger stadiums, more TV coverage, etc. while others seek more traditional values.
- The fundamental role of the institution is to support this tension and seek a balance within its walls.
- We need more interaction within the conferences; ADs, SWAs and FARs need to meet regularly and work together.
- FARs need to work on their campuses with coaches, teams, faculty and staff to find a balance that promotes APR and GSR (the tangible, measurable deliverables).

Engaging Your Faculty Colleagues: Ted Leland, Vice President for University Advancement, University of the Pacific, *The Importance of FARs in Governance*

- We need to recognize the tension between the educational/development model and the high performance/entertainment models of collegiate athletics.
- Student-athletes, departments, teams, and institutions will be a blend of the two tensions.
- We need to recognize that the conference is an economic animal; they will not inherently be interested in academics. This is why the FAR must be active at the conference level.
- FAR mission should be to slow down the economic train; not stop it, just slow it down so that growth can be deliberate and within bounds of institutional mission.
- Consider holding campus conference on the role of athletics on campus when appropriate; accreditation reviews are strategic moments.

Improving your APR: Alan Hauser, FAR Appalachian State

- FARs need to work with compliance officer and SWAs who have oversight of APR plans to ensure that academic component is present.
- Strong emphasis that duty/responsibility of the FAR is much greater than merely signing eligibility rosters.

What is working?

What needs improvement?

What ideas do we have?

Athletic Facilities

- Facilities are in good shape
- The new additions to each building are impressive

- Golf course is not cooperative
- Lights on our lower fields
- Locker room should be equal to team size
- Speaker systems for softball
- Tennis and Track Facilities

- Make more manageable times for fall and spring seasons of golf
 - Night games increase attendance
 - Showers/Bathrooms/Locker room/ Concessions on the lower field
 - Use of intramural fields to put a track around it as well as tennis court
 - Better communication with golf courses for better hours and use
-

Academic Support

- Lap top availability
- The Grizz
- Tutoring and Monitoring

- The Grizz needs to be bigger and have more computers
- Sanitation
- Out of toner/stock
- Hours to be completed at the Grizz

- Team up with the library or others rooms i.e. The Elliot Room and Grizz Den
 - Keep supplies readily available
 - To limit for hours except on Sunday since there are a lot of hours to be completed
-

Awards and Recognitions

- Names on windows of O'Rena
- Graduates and Champions Recognition

- Equality in recognition
- Athlete recognition
- Team Banquets
- Recognizing Championships

- Announce everyone's name or just their team for each sport
 - Hold an athletic banquet for all athletes while recognizing each senior; parents of the seniors are invited as well
 - Athletic Director's recognition to seniors and their parents for each team
 - Being fair to each sport
-

Equipment and Supplies

- Satisfies with uniforms
- Increased supplies fore specific sports
- Regular inventory for equipment

- Equality to all sports ("Donations")

- Equally distribute donations to all sports

Financial Aid

☐ Helpful to students and Athletic staff when questions arise

☐ Spring Aid
 ☐ Housing Situations
 ☐ Better understanding of Financial Aid possibilities

☐ Hold meetings for whom financial aid applies to and make sure each athlete fully understands their circumstance
 ☐ Better communication between housing and our Athletic Director
 ☐ Voluntary meetings about housing where athletes can go to get sufficient advice

Faculty Support

☐ Excused Absence Policy was passed

☐ Attendance to Oakland competitions

☐ Marketing department to advertise and send out competition schedule to each department

Faculty Advising/Registration

☐ Early Registration
 ☐ Advising outside of the Athletic Department is good

☐ More academic office support
 ☐ Absentee letters earlier

☐ More people to help De'Andre
 ☐ Availability of absentee letters to give to professors at least a week before the missed class

Marketing and Promotions

☐ Facebook events
 ☐ Good promotion outside of Oakland's campus

☐ Name the fields
 ☐ OU athletic website to be more attractive
 ☐ Promotion of all sports
 ☐ Media guides and Poster schedules for each team
 ☐ Athletic open-house during welcome week
 ☐ Marquee and signs to announce game days and times

☐ Name the fields after a coach
 ☐ Live feed and Game Tracker on each site
 ☐ Work with our University Marketing department to put the athletic schedules around campus
 ☐ Arrange for an open-house to all OU students to meet and receive schedules for all teams

Transportation and Lodging

☐ Satisfies with lodging
 ☐ Satisfied with transportation

☐ Eliminated fast food from road trips

☐ Delivery options to be available after a late game