

# **Annual Report**

**2008-2009**

**Senate Athletics Committee  
Oakland University**

**Submitted by Robby Stewart, Chair  
May 19, 2009**

# Executive Summary

Submitted by Robby Stewart, Chair

## Membership

Faculty: Caroline Jumel (French), Karl Majeske (Business, QMM), Kenneth Mitton (Eye Institute), Erica Ruegg (SHES), Robby Stewart (CAS/Psychology, FAR)

Administration: Maria DeWitt (Professional Advisors Committee), Omar Brown-El (Multicultural Initiatives), Tracy Huth (Athletics), Stacy Mosley (Athletics, ex officio), Holly Kerstner (Athletics, ex officio)

External Community: Henry Mittelstaedt

Student Representatives: Stew Givens, Julie Hintermeister

## Meetings

The Senate Athletics Committee (SAC) met 2 times during the 2008-2009 academic year and set up an ePortfolio site to permit asynchronous deliberations of committee issues.

## Most Significant Committee Actions

- Reviewed data obtained by the newly developed survey completed by all student-athletes at the end of the 2007-2008 academic year
- Monitored the processes student-athletes and faculty were experiencing as they negotiated excused absences and found far fewer issues with the policy this year
- Regularly interacted with the Student Athlete Advisory Council to discuss issues of mutual concern; FAR attended all but one meeting
- 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 difficulties
- Organized and held another “academic/athletics” luncheon to inform faculty and coaches of the potential use of Elluminate software to provide another means for student-athletes who are traveling for competitions to keep up with classroom activities;
- Agreed to explore web-based data collection for future end of season surveys of student-athletes and to make the FAR available to student-athletes for senior exit interviews

## Other Important Information

- Our student-athletes continue to excel both on the field and in the classroom
  - 57% of the student-athletes on campus had GPA greater than 3.0 during the Fall 2008 semester, and this figure rose to 62% after the Winter 2009 semester
  - 23% of the student-athletes on campus made the Dean’s List in the Fall, and 30% did so in the Winter
  - OU placed 65 student-athletes on the Summit League All Academic Team in the Fall semester, the most of any institution in our league
  - OU also leads all other Summit League teams in the Commissioner’s Cup ranking based on athletic success in official competition
- Our student athletes donated time and resources to 24 different organizations in the 2008-2009 academic year
- Our student-athletes continue to live up to their goals to be “Graduates and Champions”

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## Meetings

The Senate Athletics Committee (SAC) met 2 times during the 2008-2009 academic year and set up an ePortfolio site to permit asynchronous deliberations of committee issues. In the past, committee members corresponded via email regularly and were able to complete some of their business without face-to-face meetings and this year we elected to experiment with the possibility of conducting the majority of our work through these media.

## Summary of Senate Athletic Committee Activities for 2008-2009

### September 8, 2008

The purpose of this first face-to-face meeting is to briefly outline a few points that will be guiding our efforts this year. The first point is meeting times – traditionally this committee meets from 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm in the athletics department conference room on the second Monday of each month during the academic year. This appears to be difficult to maintain in the Fall semester so we will experiment with the use of asynchronous deliberations via ePortfolio.

- **Analysis of Student-Athlete Survey Results:** analyze the surveys obtained in April 2008 from the 207 student-athletes in attendance at Graduate and Champions.
  - How do we share the results of this survey with the student-athletes? With coaches?
  - Are there items that need to be re-worded before we use the survey again?
  - Do we want to move this survey online to facilitate its use?
  - Conclusions: a detailed summary report was reviewed by all members of the committee; among the findings are the following:
    - Some teams may benefit from consultation concerning the role of team captains and means of establishing clear lines of communication between coaches and team captains. The FAR and the Assistant Athletic Director in charge of Student-athlete services each provided this consultation during the 2008-2009 academic year.
    - Student-athlete perceive the athletic staff as quite supportive of their academic needs; more so that they perceive faculty supportive of their athletic needs

- Student-athletes do not appear to perceive problems with regards to gender equity, facilities, housing or food services
  - The committee elected to leave the wording of the survey as it is for another year, and to explore means of distributing the survey in a web-based manner at some point after the end of the competitive season rather than at one time for all student-athletes.
  - The FAR was directed to have meetings with the SAAC and with coaches to summarize the survey findings.
  - This survey was presented to the FARs throughout the Summit League and many have expressed interest in adapting it for their campuses.
- **Review of Academic Services:** the Department of Athletics will soon need to conduct a thorough review of the academic services they provide to our student-athletes.
  - Holly Kerstner will initiate this discussion area when she posts a list of the topics and questions governing this review.
  - Conclusions: the NCAA-provided measurable standards for Academic Integrity and Academic Support were posted and reviewed by committee members
- **Building a Cadre of Faculty Supporters:** One of the direct outcomes of the 2007 FARA meeting was encouragement that we initiate programs aimed at building a cadre of faculty willing to assist student-athletes in finding solutions to academic issues they might face.
  - Last April we hosted a luncheon to introduce this new program, and in 2008-2009 we will strive to continue this line of programming.
  - Outcome: A working lunch was held on October 16, 2008 to discuss new teaching software recently obtained by e-Learning. George Preisinger and members of his staff demonstrated the use of Elluminate and answered questions regarding the software capabilities.
    - An unexpected turn of events involving the men's basketball team made the search for a means to connect student-athlete who were "on the road" with classroom activities.
    - Student-athletes on a competition road trip travel with a set of well-equipped laptop computers.
    - Through the use of the Elluminate software available from e-Learning, the student-athlete will be able to connect to the computer operated by the support team member and participate fully in the classroom activities
    - Members of the Athletic Department were in attendance to discuss issues pertaining to situations where student-athletes are required to miss class to travel to competition sites.
    - Approximately 20 faculty members were in attendance
    - Some faculty adopted the use of Elluminate to assist student-athletes; Professor Stewart did the same to assist general population students when he missed on-campus lectures to attend FARA and Summit League Conferences
    - Despite being off campus for an extended period of time, the fall semester grades for the men's basketball team were higher than in past semesters, suggesting that further use of the Elluminate software might be considered.

- **2008 FARA -- Enhancing the Student-Athlete Experience:** This is the theme of the 2008 FARA convention. Based on information and suggestions obtained at the 2008 convention, we will explore what we might do to enhance the academic experience for athletics at OU.
  - Conclusions: The question of who conducts senior exit interviews (athletic personnel or FARs) was discussed at the FARA conference.
    - Pros and cons for each position were discussed as they relate to local norms
    - Agreement was reached that the FAR will be considered to be one of number of options the student-athlete may select to conduct their exit interview.
    - Agreed to pilot test a simple exit interview closing strategy involving three items [“Tell me three positive things about your SA experience, three negative things, three things we might look into changing in athletics, and three things we might look into changing at the university.”] that was suggested at conference

### **March 23, 2009**

A face-to-face meeting was held on this date to review each of the conclusions summarized above. Committee members were pleased to enjoy each other’s company, but concluded by agreeing to return to the ePortfolio once again in April to make final comments on each of the key issues.

### **Other Important Information**

- 57% of the student-athletes on campus had GPA greater than 3.0 during the Fall 2008 semester, and this figure rose to 62% after the Winter 2009 semester
- 23% of the student-athletes on campus made the Dean’s List in the Fall, and 30% did so in the Winter
- 8 out of 16 teams had team-wide GPAs of 3.0 or greater in the Fall, and 10 out of 16 did so in the Winter
- The cumulative GPA of all student-athletes at OU was 3.0 at the end of the Fall semester and 3.07 at the end of the Winter semester
- OU placed 65 student-athletes on the Summit League All Academic Team in the Fall semester, the most of any institution in our league; Winter data are not available for the league at this time
- OU also leads all other Summit League teams in the Commissioner’s Cup ranking based on athletic success in official competition at the end of the Fall semester
- Our student-athletes donated time and resources to 24 different organizations in the 2008-2009 academic year; Men’s and Women’s cross country/track and field, men’s soccer and baseball were recognized for their exemplary community service
- Our student-athletes continue to live up to their goals to be “Graduates and Champions”