

# **Annual Report**

**2009-2010**

**Senate Athletics Committee  
Oakland University**

**Submitted by Robby Stewart, Chair  
May 19, 2010**

# Executive Summary

Submitted by Robby Stewart, Chair

## Membership

Faculty: Sheldon Gordon (Biology, CAS), Kenneth Mitton (Eye Institute), Erica Ruegg (Human Development & Child Studies, SHES), Christine Stiller, (Physical Therapy, SHS), Robby Stewart (CAS/Psychology, FAR)

Administration: Laurie Shano (Professional Advisors Committee), David Tindall (Resident Life), Tracy Huth (Athletics), Stacy Mosley (Athletics, ex officio), Holly Kerstner (Athletics, ex officio)

External Community: Henry Mittelstaedt

Student-Athlete Advisory Council Representatives: Kerry Brennan, Jonathon Evans

## Meetings

The Senate Athletics Committee (SAC) met face-to-face every other week throughout the Fall 2009 and Winter 2010 semesters (13 meetings). The committee also utilized an ePortfolio site to permit asynchronous deliberations of committee issues.

## Most Significant Committee Actions

- Initiated a detailed evaluation of academic services provided to student-athletes, as mandated by NCAA; this evaluation included obtaining the following data:
  - Detailed job descriptions of and interviews with all Athletics personnel directly involved in the provision of academic services to student-athletes
  - A web-based survey of student-athlete evaluations of familiarity, use and satisfaction with academic services; 263 student-athletes (72%) completed this survey between Oct 12 and Nov 8, 2009
  - A structured interview for the evaluation of academic services was provided by the Commissioner of the Summit League; ten administrators across campus, OU coaches and a sample of OU student-athletes were interviewed
  - A web-based “End of Season” survey of all student-athletes assessing many issues impacting their lives at OU; 268 student-athletes (74%) completed surveys between April 5 and April 20, 2010
- Monitored the processes student-athletes and faculty were experiencing as they negotiated excused absences; far fewer issues arose with the policy this year
- Organized another “academic/athletics” luncheon; this one informed professional advisors about NCAA policies related to academic achievement

## Other Important Information

- 54% of the student-athletes on campus had GPA greater than 3.0 during the Fall 2009 semester, and this figure rose to 56% after the Winter 2010 semester
- 23% of the student-athletes on campus made the Dean’s List in the Fall, and 27% did so in the Winter
- half of the OU athletic teams and 57% of all student athletes had GPAs in excess of 3.0 at the conclusion of the Winter 2010 semester
- Our student athletes donated time and resources to many organizations in the 2009-2010 academic year.

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## **Meetings**

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## **Summary of Senate Athletic Committee Activities for 2009-2010**

September 21

- Introduction of new members, review of committee charge
- Review of Academic Services: In the near future the Department of Athletics will need to conduct a thorough review of the academic services they provide to student-athletes. Holly Kerstner provided list of the topics and questions governing this review. We will interview staff members directly involved in the provision of academic services (Holly Kerstner, Anne Williams, and DeAndre Shepard) and survey all student-athletes concerning their familiarity with, use and evaluation of academic support services.
- Building a Cadre of Faculty Supporters: One of the direct outcomes of the 2007 FARA meeting was the initiation of 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 2009-2010 we will strive to continue this line of programming.

October 5

- A request for information concerning academic services will be sent to Anne Williams, DeAndre Shepard, and Holly Kerstner. They will post summary statements of what services they oversee on e-Portfolio by 10/11, 10/25 and 11/8 respectively and we will interview each of them on 10/19, 11/2 and 11/16 respectively to resolve any questions or uncertainties about their reports.
- The survey for student-athletes is in final form and will be distributed after a letter from Tracy Huth announcing it and seeking cooperation in completing it.

October 19

- Committee members interview Anne Williams concerning academic services and compliance.

November 2

- Committee members interview DeAndre Shepard concerning academic advising.
- Review of student-athlete responses on survey evaluating academic support services.

November 16

- Committee members interview Holly Kerstner concerning academic services.
- Review of student-athlete responses on survey evaluating academic support services.
  - SAC members will use ePortfolio to engage in extensive discussion concerning the quality and sufficiency of academic services.
  - Three primary themes were identified through this discussion: declaring and changing majors, finding tutors, and registration (especially in context of moving to year-around registration)
  - Robby will prepare a brief comments on themes such as these to present at SAAC meetings and SAAC representatives will then be charged to report these messages to their respective teams; procedures will be employed to verify that messages have been relayed to teammates
  - Holly provided a detailed account of how student-athletes are scheduled for various numbers of hours in the Grizz Academic Center; OU uses a GPA cut-point that is higher than that required to NCAA to identify student who may be at risk for academic performance, coaches may require higher levels if they wish. Hours are scheduled in individual consultation between Holly and the S-A; hours in the Academic Skill Center or Writing Center may be substituted for Grizz time; student-athletes deemed to be at greater risk are required to meet face-to-face with Holly every week. Our conclusion is that the policies and procedures provide sufficient flexibility for individual needs; student-athletes need to understand that they can avoid most if not all Grizz hours by having higher GPAs.

January 7

- The issue of some student-athletes not appearing to have a strong focus on academic matters was discussed. Reference was made to S-A comments that Grizz time was not valuable because there was nothing to do. Perhaps these student-athletes need information on the value of strategic and purposeful studying.
  - Rather than adding more content to orientation sessions, we need to explore means to provide information to student-athletes when they realize they need the information. That is, we should continue to conduct orientations as we have, but we should also find a way to intervene with student-athletes who may be facing academic issues as soon as the evidence of poor academic performance becomes apparent. This may best be handled through the use of increased peer mentoring. Robby will speak to SAAC representatives about this.

January 21

- Detailed discussion on revision of End-of-Season survey
  - Comparable surveys from other institutions are reviewed and “best practices” are borrowed from numerous courses.

- The discussion moved to ePortfolio as drafts of new survey are evaluated.

#### January 28

- A luncheon was held in continued effort to build a cadre of supporters and inform more faculty and staff about academic issues faced by student athletes.
- The 33 new faculty hire, PAC representatives, chief advisors and professional advising staff were invited. No faculty attended but 11 members of the professional advising staff did.

#### February 4

- The task of establishing a process for the identification of three top student-athletes (or teams) to be recognized in the Summit League's "Spotlight" section of website was undertaken
  - Those recognized need to demonstrate excellence in both academic achievement and community service.
  - Holly presented a list of student-athletes for the committee to consider; before the next meeting she will add to this list.

#### February 18

- SAC members agree to highlight the academic accomplishment of Laura Kwaitkowski (golf), Brett Geschke (baseball), and Zack Jones (cross-country/track) on the Summit League Spotlight on Scholar-athletes. Scott MacDonald will deliver this information to the Summit League office.
- Discussion of End-of-Season survey in final stages took place; SAC members were asked to integrate best aspects of two remaining examples to derive our final instrument.

#### March 4

- Questions of career placement opportunities for student-athletes are reviewed.
- The question of whether student-athletes know to obtain over the counter medications for colds, sore throats, flu symptoms, etc., are discussed given the number of student absences related to illness that is currently impacting the campus.
  - It was later clarified at SAAC meeting that student-athletes know to see trainer Tom Ford both because it is cheaper and because this protects them from inadvertent rules violations involving medical prescriptions.

#### March 18

- Final revisions of End-of-Season survey were discussed in detail.
- A detailed review of Summit League evaluation of Academic Support Services documents is undertaken. Plans are derived to obtain responses to this "interview" before the end of the Winter 2010 semester.
- A subcommittee of SAC comprised of Robby with a few members will then compile the data over the summer months for the new SAC committee to review in the fall before submission to the Summit League.

#### April 1

- Surveys were distributed to administrators across campus whose work is related to the academic aspects of student-athlete life, to various personnel within Athletics, to all OU

coaches, and to a sample of SAAC representatives. Early returns of these surveys are reviewed.

April 15

- A detailed review of information obtained from Summit League evaluation of Academic Support Services takes place. The committee continues to identify key concerns via ePortfolio discussions.

April 23

- Four members of SAC (Stewart, Mitton, Gordon, Tindall) attend the annual Graduates and Champions celebration.

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- Our student athletes donated time and resources to many organizations in the 2009-2010 academic year
- Our student-athletes continue to live up to their goals to be "Graduates and Champions"