

Annual Report

2010 - 2011

**Senate Athletics Committee
Oakland University**

**Submitted by Robby Stewart, Chair
May 17, 2011**

Senate Athletics Committee Annual Report 2010 - 2011

Executive Summary

Membership

Faculty: Sheldon Gordon (Biology, CAS), Erica Ruegg (Human Development & Child Studies, SHES), Buck Dillon (Accounting & Finance, SBA) 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 (SAAC): Kerry Brennan, John Ledda

Meetings

The Senate Athletics Committee (SAC) met face-to-face every other week throughout the Fall 2010 and Winter 2011 semesters (14 meetings). The committee regularly utilized an eSpace site to permit asynchronous deliberations of committee issues.

Most Significant Committee Actions

- Completed a detailed evaluation of academic services provided to student-athletes, as mandated by NCAA
 - Submitted this report to the Commissioner of The Summit League on October 1, 2010
 - Recommendations for improvement or further exploration in areas such as advising, academic services staff, academic support facilities, tutoring opportunities, and degree selection were made (See Appendix A)
- A detailed survey of potential advising topics related to professionalism and career choice was undertaken in support of SAC to SAAC programming initiatives
- A detailed assessment of a plan for changes in the administrative structure of athletics was made after receiving the Compliance Report from The Summit League (See Appendix B)
- A web-based “End of Season” survey of all student-athletes assessing many issues impacting their lives at OU; 244 student-athletes (74%) completed surveys between March 31 and April 8, 2011
- Monitored the processes student-athletes and faculty were experiencing as they negotiated excused absences; far fewer issues arose with the policy this year

Other Important Information

- 59% of the student-athletes on campus had GPA greater than 3.0 during the Fall 2010 semester, and this figure rose to 61% after the Winter 2010 semester (both up 5% from the previous year)
- 20% of the student-athletes on campus made the Dean’s List in the Fall, and 22% did so in the Winter
- Half of the OU athletic teams and 62% of all student athletes had GPAs in excess of 3.0 at the conclusion of the Winter 2010 semester

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Meetings

The Senate Athletics Committee (SAC) met face-to-face every other week throughout the Fall 2010 and Winter 2011 semesters (13 meetings). The committee also utilized an eSpace site to permit asynchronous deliberations of committee issues.

Summary of SAC Activities for 2010-2011

July 7

- The draft report of the review of academic services provided to student-athletes conducted in 2009-2010 was posted for outgoing committee members to review. Robby Stewart thanked Holly Kerstner and Ken Mitton for contributing to the writing of this report, and Laurie Shano for reviewing and editing the document. Committee members from 2009-2010 provided comments and suggestions for modifications before this report was presented to the new SAC committee in September.

September 9

- Introduction of new members, review of committee charge
- Review of Academic Services: The final draft of the report of the 2009-2010 survey of academic services provided to student-athletes was distributed to the new committee members for review. After a detailed discussion of the procedures utilized, the committee members agreed to focus their current efforts on deriving a set of recommendations based on the findings from the survey.

September 23

- Continued discussion of specific recommendations that this committee would make concerning the delivery of academic services to student athletes. Issues related to compliance with NCAA rules and regulations, academic integrity and gender equity were explored.
- Discussions and revision continued via eSpace until the final report was delivered to The Summit League Commissioner's Office on October 1, 2010.

October 7

- A brief summary of the recommendations included in the report submitted to the Commissioner were distributed to provide an agenda for the current academic year in the sense that the 2010-2011 SAC committee would devote time and energy in helping the Athletics Department staff implement these suggestions. (See Appendix A)
- A handout presenting one page of information from the recent Oakland County Skills Needs Assessment Project was distributed. This handout illustrates the rank order of skills sought by employers. The other side of this handout is a summary of the "invisible curriculum" that might be assumed to be part of every course taught at the college level. Committee discussion focused on how best to share this information with student-athletes.
- We discussed the need for informing students in general of the needs to not just "get by" but to really understand what will be necessary either to gain acceptance in graduate school or to be successful in getting a position to start their profession career outsider of athletics.
- We talked about the "Achieve" project in SBA and raised questions about assisting other units on campus to develop similar interventions.
- We discussed the potential of expanding the CHAMPS Life Skills program to include information about career development, invisible curriculum items, professionalism, etc. One suggestion was to develop programs tailored for freshman, sophomore, junior and senior student-athletes; another was to focus on the academic major or sets of majors represented by student athletes. Issues of personnel and space were mentioned as potential obstacles to implementing such a program.

October 21

- A handout from Career Services entitled "Ride the Career Express to Success" a 4-year career map checklist was distributed and its relevance to student-athletes was discussed.
- An "advising syllabus" from the CAS advising office summarizing the 2010-2011 activities of that office with declarations of expectations of students and advisors, resources on campus, and a "road map" for graduation in 4 years was reviewed.
- A brochure from CAS entitled "Get Involved" summarizing events and activities sponsored by the College throughout the 2010-2011 academic year and encouraging student to do more than simply come to classes was reviewed.
- We continued our discussion of what might be done to enhance the academic experience of student-athletes. Issues addressed included the following:
 - How departmental requirements impact the General Education process so that students may not have the "freedom to explore" that we might expect.
 - How restrictive requirements in many majors "force" so many transfer student-athletes into BIS in order to maintain eligibility.
 - The tendency to rush students into declaring a major even though they may lack the information necessary for making this decision.
 - The value of being able to explore various potential majors with selected junior or senior students; the value of exploring to discover what one want to do or not to do as a major.
 - The potential need for career exploration in summer months or early in the fall semester.

November 4

- A breakdown of all current student-athletes grouped by major was reviewed. We noted that 62 of the 356 student-athletes (17%) fall into one of a number of “undecided” categories. Another 78 (22%) fall into one of a number of “pre-something” categories. The committee discussed what might be done to [1] decrease the number of undecided, and [2] insure that the “pre-somethings” know what they need to accomplish in order to enter the majors of their choice.
- This SBA Achieve program was then reviewed. Specifically, the Committee reviewed the mission and objectives of Achieve, the syllabus for SBC 199, 299 and 399, the three Achieve courses.
- We reviewed this information to discover what one school has done to structure the transmission of knowledge related to professional and career development to their majors because we were curious as to [1] what we might do to find or encourage units on campus to develop the same sort of program, or [2] what we might do to develop something similar to this for student-athletes.

November 18

- The committee reviewed information of some of the student-athletes who might represent OU on the Summit League's Scholar-Athlete Spotlight for the month of December. Those selected for this honor were Jakob Ziegler (men's golf, sophomore, business administration), John Dreshaj (men's soccer, sophomore, business administration), and Lia Jones (women's cross country, health sciences).
- The attention of the committee then focused on issues of re-organization and the potential hiring of new personnel in response to issues raised in the Compliance Review of OU conducted by the Summit League in February 2010 or in the SAC evaluation of academic services.
 - Tracy described a re-organization whereby an Assistant AD in charge of Compliance and an Assistant AD in charge of Athletic Performance might be hired to fill positions parallel to Holly's position in Academic Services. The person holding the compliance position would probably report directly to the OU General Counsel even though their office would still be within the Athletic Department.
 - There was discussion of making organizational changes within three domains (Compliance, Academics, Performance) that would be necessary to meet local demands.

December 2

- Tracy Huth presented a draft figure illustrating a re-organization of the student-athlete portions of the overall Athletic Department for the committee members to consider. Briefly, this re-organization conceptualizes student-athlete services as existing in three (3) domains: Athletic Performance, Academic Services, and NCAA Compliance. Each of these sections is to be headed by an assistant AD who has the professional expertise deemed appropriate for that sector.
- The committee members briefly heard a summary of Holly Kerstner’s professional background and education to provide a point of comparison for exploring the other two proposed new assistant directors.

- The position associated with NCAA compliance was described as requiring a person with legal training and credentials and knowledge of NCAA legislation and policies. This position was described as having a direct link to the OU Office of Legal Affairs and General Counsel, direct links to liaisons in our Financial Aid and Registrar's offices. This individual would work on a day-by-day basis with other administrators within Athletics, but would have a direct reporting line to the General Counsel office to provide the independence and “check and balance” described as necessary in the compliance review conducted by the Summit League office last February.
- The position associated with Athletic Performance was described as requiring a person with expertise and experience in Sports Medicine and related disciplines such as, but not limited to, strength and conditioning.
- Each of these assistant athletic directors would then have a variety of support personnel working to collectively provide services to student-athletes.
- Group discussion explored many aspects of this structure in an effort to better understand why it was necessary and how it might function.
- Buck Dillon agreed to prepare a brief resolution summarizing our understanding of the re-organization plan and providing a statement of support for this initiative from SAC.

January 5

- The primary agenda of this meeting was to review the statement prepared by Buck Dillon summarizing this committee’s reaction to this proposal. This discussion continued via eSpace after this meeting adjourned.

January 19

- The committee reviewed the document submitted by Buck Dillon summarizing the administrative restructuring proposal previously submitted by Tracy Huth.
- Committee members voted unanimously to support these structural changes and present this document to President Russi.

February 2

- The meeting with Oakland University was cancelled with Oakland University was closed due to a snowstorm.

February 16

- Stacy Mosely presented an update of a Title IX roster analysis. The breakdown of OU students reveals 61% of our population is female. Our current student-athlete population is 49% female.
 - With roster management utilized in the 2011-2012 academic year we can both increase the number of female student-athletes and decrease the number of male student-athletes so that the percentage of female student-athletes increases to 55.75%.
 - A second round of roster management in the 2012-2013 academic year this figure can be raised to 56.75%.
 - This results in a decrease in the total number of student-athletes from the current 355 to 340 to 328 in these future years.
 - The discussion of Title IX issues continued with an exploration of the potential of adding one or more female sports at OU.

- Robby Stewart then distributed a copy of the End of Season Survey used in 2010. We plan to distribute this survey, or one with minor revisions, sometime in early April. Discussion arose as to how student-athletes continue to interpret the items related to equity (item #14) with respect to a “my team in comparison to men’s basketball” rather than in terms of gender equity.

March 2

- Meeting cancelled due to many committee members being away from campus.

March 16

- Final revisions of End-of-Season survey were discussed in detail.
- A detailed review of the gender equity portion of the survey resulted in a number of suggestions for modifications to the survey that will be incorporated before it is distributed in April 2011.

March 30

- The committee did not meet face-to-face due a more pressing need to review the Compliance Review report conducted by Greg Walter, Associate Commissioner of the Summit League in February 2010.
- Committee members were asked to read this report taking special notice of each time Walter's findings lead to a specific recommendation that something be done. Athletic Director Tracy Huth is asking us to list these recommendations so he and the Athletic Department staff can indicate how these recommendations had been implemented.
- We noted that our next face-to-face meeting is scheduled the day and time of the Founders' Day Faculty Recognition Luncheon.
- We agreed to meet on April 27 to complete our annual business.

April 15

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

April 27

- A detailed review of information obtained from the annual “End of Season” survey was reviewed.
 - Most of the 244 student-athletes appear to be quite satisfied with their experiences during the 2010-2011 academic year.
 - Some were disappointed with what they considered the lack of “publicity for their sport”. When these comments are explored further either through open-ended responses or through the senior exit interviews that followed the “End of Season” survey, we discovered that the lack of attendance at some sport events is often associated with a presumed lack of publicity. This will be an issue for SAC to explore with SAAC during the 2011-2012 academic year.
 - Other issues of some concern included the quality of practice facilities, the absence of some competition facilities (a track and on-campus tennis courts), the relative absence of campus life, and the quality of meals while traveling for competition. These issues, especially the one concerning meals, will be explored during the 2011-2012 academic year.

Other Important Information

- 59% of the student-athletes on campus had GPA greater than 3.0 during the Fall 2010 semester (up 5% from the previous year), and this figure rose to 61% after the Winter 2011 semester (again, up 5% from the previous year)
- 20% of the student-athletes on campus made the Dean's List in the Fall, and 22% did so in the Winter
- Half of the OU athletic teams and 62% of all student athletes had overall GPAs in excess of 3.0 at the conclusion of the Winter 2010 semester
- Our student athletes donated time and resources to many community organizations in the 2010-2011 academic year.
- Our student-athletes continue to live up to their goals to be "Graduates and Champions"

Appendix A

Executive Summary of Recommendations

Made in the

**Evaluation of Academic Support Services
Provided to Oakland University Student-Athletes**

September 2010

Evaluation of Academic Support Services Provided to Oakland University Student-Athletes

**Conducted by the Senate Athletic Committee in 2009-2010
and
Presented to the Senate Athletic Committee of 2010-2011**

Submitted to Commissioner of the Summit League on October 1, 2010

Executive Summary of Recommendations

While the committee is pleased with the improvements made in academic services over the past several years, the following recommendations will enhance these services to ensure the student-athletes have all of the tools to be academically successful. Although it may be tempting to develop a list of recommendations associated with each of the eight areas above we have chosen to take an alternative route and propose recommendations in four inter-related areas. We chose this strategy both to focus our attention on a limited number of issues and to draw recognition of the interdependent nature of these areas. What follows then is a summary from the 2009-2010 SAC committee of areas they think the 2010-2011 SAC committee might focus its efforts in the immediate future in order to assist the Athletics Department to improve our collective ability to provide high quality academic services to our student-athletes.

Advising-related Activities

- The Academic Services staff should clarify the complementary roles of various academic advisors available to student-athletes and encourage student-athletes to seek advising from all sources available to them.
- We encourage the Academic Services staff to work with members of SAC to increase connections between profession advisors, departmental chief advisors and the student-athletes.
- Members of SAAC also might be encouraged to assume a more active role in mentoring first-year students in choosing successful academic paths.
- Specifically, we encourage the members of the athletic academic services staff to present the following 4-tier model of advising to all student-athletes as part of their annual orientation efforts:
 1. The student-athlete bears the responsibility of learning all general academic requirements of the university and all requirements of their chosen field of study.
 2. The student-athlete should expect that they can rely on the Assistant Athletics Director for Student Services and his/her staff to provide additional advising information and oversight, especially as it pertains to issues related to eligibility to compete, financial aid, and any other issue related to NCAA or Summit Leagues rules and regulations.
 3. The student-athlete should have regular meetings with a professional adviser associated with their chosen field of study to ensure that they are satisfying university and programmatic requirements.
 4. The student-athlete should seek career-related advising either from a faculty member serving as the chief academic advisor within the department of their chosen field of study or from a member of the Career Services office.

Student Services Staff

- SAC did not feel it was appropriate to make recommendations the Students Services staff increase the range of their activities without mentioning the fact that this group currently appears to be understaffed.

- SAC was not able to indicate what sort of new staff would be most appropriate to add; this issue was beyond the scope of the current review.
- Therefore, we recommend SAC make the question of increased staffing one of their primary agenda items for the 2010-2011 academic year.

Academic Support Facilities

- The primary aspect of academic services identified by student-athletes as needing the most improvement was the Grizz Center.
- We strongly recommend the Student Services personnel within the Athletics Department, as well as the members of SAC, review the policies and procedures associated with the Grizz Center.
- Issues associated with time-management and deliberate study habits should be emphasized as means of shaping behaviors associated with academic success.
- The Student Services staff should be encouraged to consider the use of peer tutoring as long as those in the tutoring roles make careful distinctions between appropriate and inappropriate tutoring behaviors.
- Inter-team competition might be utilized by recognizing the team with the highest GPA for a given term, the greatest improvement in GPA from one term to another, or by rewarding the team whose least academically inclined member has the highest GPA.

Tutoring

- The members of SAC encourage the Academic Services Staff members to continue their efforts in coordinating the needs of our student-athletes with the services provided by ASC and the OUWC.
- The need for tutoring in specific subjects areas might be communicated with the staff of the ASC so they can facilitate meetings with a tutor that do not conflict with athletic practices.
- Detailed information concerning the variety of services the ASC and the OUWC provide should be prominently posted within the Grizz Center.

Student-athlete Degree Selection

- The committee suggests the FAR contact representatives from other institutions within the Summit League to obtain base-rate data concerning potentials obstacles experienced by student-athletes wishing to enroll in academic programs requiring “clinical” experiences.
- Members of the Academic services staff, the faculty athletic representative, and the associate deans of the school or college involved should investigate any situations suggesting that our student-athletes are hindered in enrolling in any particular major at OU.

Appendix B

Proposed Department of Intercollegiate Athletics

Administrative Structure Changes

Reviewed by the Senate Athletic Committee

January 19, 2011

**PROPOSED DEPARTMENT OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS
ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE CHANGES**

REVIEWED BY THE SENATE ATHLETIC COMMITTEE

January 19, 2011

The Senate Athletic Committee has reviewed several proposed changes to the administrative structure of the Oakland University Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, as recommended by the Director of Athletics. The Committee's review is concentrated in the areas of Compliance, Academic Services, and Athletic Performance. The results of that review and the recommendations of the committee are as follows.

COMPLIANCE

Appropriate compliance with NCAA regulations is essential in order to avoid NCAA sanctions and public embarrassment. In fact, significant compliance violations could jeopardize Oakland's Division I status. The Athletic Department has addressed several issues with respect to NCAA compliance in the proposed administrative restructure. These issues include the independence of the staff members responsible for compliance and the resources needed for an appropriate level of compliance.

INDEPENDENCE

To ensure an athletic department complies with NCAA regulations, a dedicated staff member (or members) should have full responsibility for compliance. There may be conflicts of interest between compliance with NCAA regulations and successful athletic performance. For example, eligibility issues may prevent accomplished athletes from competing, resulting in poorer performance by varsity teams. Athletes, coaches and administrators could attempt to bring pressure on the compliance staff to ignore violations.

To avoid such conflicts, the compliance staff should not be directly in the athletic department "chain of command". The concept of independence of an auditor is well-established in the business community. Such independence is also appropriate in athletic compliance. Accordingly, the compliance staff should not report directly to or be directly supervised by the athletic director or other athletic administrators. Institutional control, a major concern of the NCAA, encourages that the compliance staff be independent of the athletic administration.

Historically, compliance has resided in the Athletic Department. Consequently, in the Summit League's February 2010 Compliance Review Report – Oakland University, the league recommended "*To avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest in the eligibility certification process, it is recommended that the institution modify its eligibility certification structure so that an individual with a reporting line outside of the Athletics Department serves as the certifying officer.*"

Accordingly, **The Senate Athletic Committee supports the proposal that personnel responsible for NCAA Compliance be administratively part of and directly responsible to Oakland University's Office of Legal Affairs & General Counsel. The Committee recommends implementation.**

RESOURCES

As noted above, compliance is a significant concern for athletic programs. To adequately ensure NCAA compliance, adequate resources are essential. Resources include both adequate dedicated compliance staff, and cooperation and support from other institutional units.

Support from Other Institutional Units

To ensure compliance, the Athletic Department needs cooperation and timely assistance from several other units on campus. These include the Office of Admissions, the Office of Financial Aid, and the Office of the Registrar. Eligibility of student athletes can only be determined with prompt assistance from these other units at Oakland University.

Some might take the position that it is inappropriate to give priority for these services to student athletes. If only the individual student athlete were affected, that position might be valid. However, as noted above, violations of NCAA regulations can bring sanctions against the entire athletic program, and significant negative publicity due to such violations can embarrass the institution.

The Committee has been informed that it is frequently difficult for the athletic program to obtain timely cooperation and services from these other units on campus. Each unit should have a single staff member, trained in and knowledgeable about NCAA regulations, who as part of their job description is expected to provide timely information to the athletic program. Such is not the case at this time. The Committee has been informed that job descriptions for specific positions in these areas do include such responsibilities, but implementation has not occurred.

Accordingly, **The Senate Athletic Committee supports the proposal that a designated staff member in the Office of the Registrar and a designated staff member in the Office of Financial Aid be identified, trained and tasked with providing timely eligibility information to the athletic department. Further, the President or his designee should ensure such duties are performed. The Committee recommends implementation.**

Compliance Staff

Oakland University's current compliance staff appears too limited, given the size of the program and the number of student athletes. Currently only one staff member, the Compliance Coordinator, is dedicated to compliance. Accordingly, much of the compliance work is performed by other members of the Athletic Department. This could be viewed as a conflict of interests, and a violation of the independence discussed about. Further, especially given the number of individuals involved, errors are more likely to occur.

Also, the Compliance Coordinator position is currently viewed as a lower level position, with little influence in dealing with other units on Oakland's campus. In order to receive appropriate cooperation from other units, the senior compliance officer should be at an appropriate level such as Director of Athletic Compliance.

Accordingly, in light of the limited number of compliance personnel and the level of the current position, **The Senate Athletic Committee supports the proposal that a Director of Athletic Compliance position be created and the current Compliance Coordinator position be retained. The Committee recommends implementation.**

ACADEMIC SERVICES

In the Senate Athletic Committee report, "Evaluation of Academic Support Services Provided to Oakland University Student-Athletes: Report of Inquiries" dated September 2010, the Committee noted the significant shortage of academic and career support personnel. Selected comments from that report follow:

"The members of SAC had no reservations in concluding that the Student Services staff within the Athletics Department was doing an excellent job in supporting the academic needs of our student-athletes. That being said, the committee felt compelled to report that this accomplishment required "heroic efforts" on the parts of several individuals. When OU moved to the ranks of DI institutions there were approximately 200 student-athletes on campus who were being served by a single athletic academic advisor. Today we have over 360 student athletes who are served by an Assistant Athletic Director for Student Services and a single athletic academic advisor. The welcomed comprehensive reforms surrounding academic achievement by student athletes, e.g., the calculation and reporting of academic progress rates, have greatly added to the complexity and volume of the tasks faced by academic support service staff. The committee is informally aware of new developments within NCAA legislation that may increase the responsibilities of this staff even more, and we are concerned that they may face more difficulties in accomplishing academic service objectives in the future.

The members of SAC did not feel that it was appropriate to make recommendations that the Students Services staff increase the range of their activities without mentioning the fact that this group currently appears to be understaffed. At the same time, we are not able at this time to indicate what sort of new staff would be most appropriate to add. The analysis of this issue was beyond the scope of the current review, but the committee feels that the Athletic Department would benefit by adopting a proactive stance. We are aware of preliminary discussions to consider whether the addition of a learning specialist, a staff member committed specifically to the delivery of Champs/Life Skills programs, or some other staff person would enhance our ability to achieve our goal of producing "Graduates and Champions". Therefore, we recommend that SAC make it one of their primary agenda items for the 2010-2011 academic year to explore this issue in greater detail.

The Committee commends the Athletic Department for proposing to address the significant needs in the area of academic services to student athletes.

Accordingly, **The Senate Athletic Committee supports the proposal that additional personnel, specifically a Life Skills & Academic Center Coordinator and a Graduate Assistant, be hired. The Committee recommends implementation.**

ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE

Athletic performance as discussed in this document refers to the areas of Sports Medicine and Strength & Conditioning in the Athletic Department. These areas are important not only to the competitive performance of the student athletes, but also to the health, safety and well-being of those student athletes. Accordingly, measures should be in place to ensure that student athletes have appropriate support in the areas of Sports Medicine and Strength & Conditioning.

Currently, the two areas are independent. In fact, each is administered by a different senior administrator in Athletic Department. Further, according to NATA standards, the current ratio of professional staff to student athletes is inadequate.

The Athletic Director recommendation (copy appended) proposes that the two areas be combined under the leadership of an Assistant Athletic Director for Athletic Performance, a new position in the Athletics Department. This position would be responsible for oversight and coordination of both Sports Medicine and Strength & Conditioning, and for initiating new programs in combination with Beaumont hospital. Further, this position would be responsible for supervision of the unit areas (e.g., Athletic Training Room and Varsity Weight Room) and providing assistance with student-athletes in the absence of other professional staff.

The Committee concludes that there is a need for increased professional staff in the Sports Medicine and Strength & Conditioning areas and for improved coordination in the area of Athletic Performance. However, we find that the shortage of resources in these areas appears to be less serious than in the areas of Compliance and Academic Support.

Accordingly, **The Senate Athletic Committee supports the proposal that an Assistant Athletic Director for Athletic Performance position be created. The Committee recommends implementation.**