

## **Report of the Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics to the University Council**

**April 26, 2023**

**Presented by Committee Chair Luke Naeher**

The Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) is required to report to Council on the academic progress of UGA's student-athletes at least once each semester. I am delivering this report today for the Spring 2023 – drawing partly from our April 17 COIA meeting, and partly from my attendance at the April 24 UGA Athletics Red Carpet Dawgs Choice Awards.

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**First, I will share some of the incredible accomplishments of our student-athletes this past year.**

Last fall was a very good semester for UGA's approximately 550 student-athletes. They achieved an overall year GPA of 3.22 for all teams, men and women, combined. This was the highest semester GPA ever for our student-athletes.

Earlier this week, I had the privilege of attending the UGA Athletics Dawgs Choice Awards. In this event, our student-athletes were recognized for everything from the light and super fun awards centered around community service, to the more intense top academic and top athletic awards, to the more emotional and painful UGA Inspiration Award, given to Devin Willock, received by his friend and teammate Sedrick Van Pran. For me personally, I saw two of my own students, from Environmental Health Science, receive awards, including top GPA for Football and Male SEC Boyd McWhorter earned by Jack Podlesny, and Academic Achievement to Caleb Cavanaugh (Mens Track and Field). I also had the privilege of seeing Meg Kowalksi (Womens Tennis), who I have had the privilege of serving on a committee with, earn the Clifford Lewis Leadership Award, and an Academic Achievement Award. Of course Meg's team also just won the SEC Title this past weekend, Jack's team just repeated as National Champions, and Caleb's track team is having a very strong spring and is preparing for post-season competition as we meet. Our student-athletes are truly an amazing group – in the classroom, in their sport, and in life.

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**Second, I will report on the specific work of our committee this semester.**

The COIA met from 8:30-11:30am on Monday April 17 in the Nalley Lounge in the Butts-Mehre building.

The committee first met with Josh Brooks [J. Reid Parker Director of Athletics], Stephanie Ransom [Deputy Athletic Director – Finance] to hear opening remarks from our Athletic Director.

Following our opening discussion with Athletic Director Josh Brooks, the Committee spent some focused time with Dr. Dylan Firsick, Assistant Athletic Director of Mental Health & Performance. Dr. Firsick shared in detail about the growth in resources and personnel in the important area of Mental Health & Performance in the past 18 months in UGA Athletics since his hiring at UGA in Oct 2022. Our Athletic Department has done an incredible job of growing and strengthening our mental health capacity and services available for our student-athletes at the University of Georgia.

After our time with Dr. Firsick, the Committee spent nearly an hour with several of our head coaches, including Coach Kupets Carter (Gymnastics), Coach Chris Haack (Mens Golf), and Coach Mike White (Mens Basketball). In this time, we had a strong and constructive discussion, through the lens of these coaches, of the support that our student-athletes receive from our Academic Support Group at the University of Georgia. At the same time, these coaches were able to share with us some of the challenges, regarding academic support and otherwise, for our student-athletes at the University of Georgia.

Following our time with the coaches, the Committee spent 45 minutes with over a dozen of our student-athletes. In this time, we listened closely to all that they shared, including things that were going great in terms of their academic and other support at the University of Georgia, while at the same time we also got direct insights into some of the challenges, academic and otherwise, that they faced as student-athletes in today's collegiate environment.

Last, after our time with the student-athletes, the Committee spent around 45 minutes with several of the Academic Counselors from the Academic Support Group of the Athletic Association. In this time, we received great insight into the well-oiled machine that is the Rankin-Smith Student-Athlete Academic Center, and how the terrific staff there is working with, helping, and supporting our student-athletes.

The meetings with Athletic Director, Dr. Firsick, the head coaches, the student-athletes, and the academic support staff were incredibly helpful to our Committee toward helping us get an up close and personal glimpse into, through all of these individuals' perspectives, the very strong state of affairs in regards to academic and other support, as well as helping us identify some remaining challenges, for our student-athletes at the University of Georgia.

Subsequent to this meeting, the Committee, through an electronic vote, elected Dr. Lisa Renzi from the College of Public Health to serve as Chair of the COIA for the upcoming academic year.

**Last, in closing my report, I would like to give a few shout-outs.**

- As we approach the end of the semester, I am pleased to share that there are 85 student-athletes scheduled to graduate this Spring, and 16 this Summer.
- I again want to recognize the incredible work that has been done by the entire UGA Athletics Sports Medicine, Academic Support, and Mental Health & Performance staff under Ron Courson, Magdi El Shahawy, and Dr. Dylan Firsick. We are incredibly fortunate to have these individuals leading the care of our student-athletes.
- Last, I want to wish Josh Brooks and his team at Georgia Athletics health and success as they, and as we all, finish out the spring semester, and continue with our preparations for the fall semester.

Thank you President Morehead.

That concludes my report.