

Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics
Report to Council, March 22, 2007

The Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics met on Tuesday, February 20, 2007 at 2:00 pm in the Rankin Smith Student-Athlete Academic Building. Committee members present were Malcolm Adams (chair), Bill Barstow, Denise Mewborn, Jere Morehead, Dean Rojek, and Claudia Shamp. Visitors were: Glada Horvat, Carla Williams, and Ted White of the Athletic Association, Academic Counselors Rhonda Kilpatrick, Darrell Bryant, Claire Foggin, Danez Marrable, Becky Galvin, and Sarah Howard, student athletes Anjelica Partridge, Ross Ridgewell, Nathan Rolfe, Whitney Wade, Mikey Henderson, Kris Durham, Kade Weston, Jeff Owens, and Mike Mercer, Rebecca Quigley of the Athens Banner Herald, and Peter Steinbauer of the Red and Black.

This meeting was devoted to the NCAA required interviews of student-athletes and academic support staff. We began with a discussion of study hall requirements for students-athletes. Each sport has their own methods for determining the requirements but for the most part, first year student-athletes are all required to use the study hall for some minimum number of hours per week. For students beyond the first year, the number of hours required is usually determined on more of an individual basis involving data such as gpa and progress toward degree. Some of the student-athletes were very appreciative of the quality of help they received from the tutors. The discussion then turned to how much time the student-athletes devote to their sports. The NCAA sets a maximum time for practice at 20 hours/week but this only counts supervised practice. It does not include travel time, warm ups, or unsupervised training. Student-athletes estimated that in reality they are spending nearly 40 hours/week on their sport. A few student-athletes provided examples of their daily schedule. At present the football team starts the day with mat drills at 4:45 am, and between classes, study hall, homework, and team practice can be going pretty much nonstop until 10:00 pm.

The student-athletes were asked if the coaches were supportive of their academic efforts. All students said that the coaches stressed that the student-athletes' responsibilities included academic achievement. Some of the student-athletes said that their coaches were generally accommodating if they needed release from practice time to complete a class project or study for an exam. Others said that they would not ask for such accommodations as it would reflect poorly on their sense of responsibility. Student athletes were also asked if instructors were accommodating and understanding of the demands on their time. All student-athletes felt that, for the most part, the faculty are helpful and understanding, although they did relate some anecdotes of instances when instructors were unyielding about exam schedules. It was also mentioned that sometimes scheduling classes can be a problem because of their practice schedules.

After about 45 minutes, the student-athletes were allowed to leave and the academic counselors were asked to join the meeting. Becky Galvin began the interview by describing how the Student Athletic Advisor Counsel was becoming more active by increasing membership, community service, leadership opportunities, and SEC involvement. The discussion then turned to the academic progress of student-athletes. In particular, the football advisor, Rhonda Kilpatrick, spoke enthusiastically that this was

perhaps one of the best academic years the football program has had. GPA,s have increased, academic progress has been good, and some students who had left UGA to become professional players have returned to complete their degrees. She felt the academic improvements were due in large part to the increased communication between the coaching staff and the academic staff and to the individualized academic assistance that the student-athletes are receiving. She has weekly meetings with the coaching staff to discuss each student-athletes' progress as well as immediate communication with the coaching staff if an academic issue arises.

The counselors felt that, for the most part, faculty were helpful in dealing with student-athlete issues, but that ongoing education of faculty is important. They said that academic departments have been open to considering scheduling issues when they have brought them up, but they also mentioned that some academic majors are almost impossible for student-athletes because of conflicts with afternoon labs and studios. It was also mentioned that transfer students can be a particular problem because of course equivalence issues. If their courses do not transfer in as equivalent UGA courses then they may lose eligibility because of lack of progress to their degree.

The counselors were asked about career counseling. They mentioned that ECHD 2015 (Academic and Career Planning) was particularly helpful for student-athletes looking for an appropriate major, and that ECHD 3050 (Career and Life Planning) was a good follow-up course for career planning. They also discussed that all first-year student athletes take freshman seminars in groups of 10-12 students led by distinguished teaching faculty which include discussions of time management, decision making, communication, and NCAA compliance. It was said that these are not only important topics for incoming student-athletes to discuss, but that establishing an early link to a faculty member gave very important mentoring opportunities.

The committee adjourned at 3:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
William Barstow for Malcolm R. Adams