

## Monthly Meeting of the Faculty Senate Athletic Committee (January 18, 2006)

### **Members present at the meeting:**

James Bailey, Eric Brey, Todd Diacon, Joel Diambra, Bethany Dumas, Thomas Handler, Kula Misra, Deb Thomas Donna Thomas, John Venditti.

### *Summary of discussions and decisions*

#### **1. Academic performance of student athletes**

Misra drew the attention of the Committee to the recent release (January 13) by the Athletic Department pertaining to the academic performance of the student-athletes. The release stated that a record number of 243 student-athletes (about 53% of the University student-athlete population on campus) achieved a grade point average of 3.0 or higher for the Fall Semester, 2005; 28 of these earned a perfect score of 4.0. [In the meantime, another release, dated January 19, states that VOLS lead SEC academic honor with 30 football student-athletes!]

Following up on the decision in the last meeting of the Committee, Deb Thomas and Eric Brey (Director, Thornton Center) (Thornton Center) have been working on a comparative analysis of UTK student- athlete graduation rates versus graduation rates of the whole student population at UTK and our peer institutions (as defined by THEC). It is likely to be ready by the next meeting of the Committee.

#### **2. Misconduct of student athletes**

The Student-Athlete Handbook (2005-2006) lists actions that would constitute misconduct and possible consequences of misconduct. The Handbook also states clearly that a student-athlete is "subject to University regulations which apply to all students."

It is, however, not clear on the procedure followed for the determination of misconduct. The Committee decided to invite Timothy Rogers (Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs) for a briefing on the details of the procedure and his assessment of the situation in Knoxville campus. Misra will contact Timothy Rogers with this request.

#### **3. Financial contribution of the Athletic Department to the University**

As summarized in the "University of Tennessee Athletic Department Overview" (for the year 2005), the Athletic Department contributed a total of **\$ 24.425 million** for the fiscal year 2005. The breakdown is as follows (in millions of dollars):

Athletic benefits to University employees and students through free or reduced rate tickets to sporting events, licensing revenue, player of the game scholarships, alumni association ticket	11.99
Costs for facilities and utilities, and maintenance expenses	9.1
Academic scholarships awarded to non-student athletes	1.375
Annual debt service on five University parking garages	1.125
Travel expenses and scholarships for the Pride of the South	0.835

## Marching Band

The "Overview" also reported that, for fiscal year 2005, \$14.76 million was raised through the Volunteer Athletic Scholarship Fund (VASF), out of which approximately \$8.2 million was spent on scholarships and academic support (\$6.4 million on scholarships for men's student-athletes, cheerleaders, dance squad members, managers and trainees; and \$1.8 million for the operation of the Thornton Academic Center) and the rest on operations.

[In a January 19 memo to the Senate Budget Committee, Lou Gross has pointed out that the money spent on scholarships/academics amounted to only 44% of the money raised through VASP. It is likely that this matter was discussed in the Senate Budget Committee meeting on January 19. We may visit this issue in our next meeting.]

### **4. Admission policy concerning marginal student-athletes**

The Committee decided to invite Richard Bayer (Dean, Enrollment Services) for a briefing on the procedure followed at UTK concerning the evaluation of student-athlete applicants who are considered marginal, or even sub-par, relative to the minimum eligibility standards set by UTK. The committee would also like to know what safeguards are (or will be) in place to ensure that UTK does not get embroiled in a scam such as the widely publicized Florida diploma mill.

### **5. Dissemination of information.**

Part of the reason why many members of the UTK faculty do not hold the athletics in high esteem is that they do not hear enough good news about our student-athletes and the Athletic Department, whereas negative allegations and perceived misdeeds receive prominent coverage in local press. The Committee suggested that truthful, success stories about our student-athletes (such as their academic performance last Fall) and the Athletic Department (such as the monetary contribution to UTK to the tune of \$24.4 million in 2005) should be publicized more aggressively than it is done at present. An appropriate place for such stories may be the Faculty Senate web, with possible extensions into the Senate Listserv and the Listservs of the various caucuses. Donna Thomas (Associate Athletic Director) will explore these possibilities through the Athletic Department's Public Relations Office.

### **5. Next meeting of the Athletic Committee**

**February 22 (Wednesday), 11.00 a.m., Thornton Center**

It is likely that either Timothy Rogers or Richard Bayer will participate in this meeting.