

Report of the Faculty Senate Athletics Committee, 2002-2003

The Faculty Senate Athletics Committee (FSAC) established several objectives for this year. These were to:

1. Update report of academic success of student athletes compared to non-athletes.
2. Gather data and report student athletes' perceptions of academic experience- follow up from Spring 2002 meeting with student athletes.
3. Provide Faculty Forums on athletics and academics issues.
4. Continue to monitor Thornton Center academic support programs
5. Finalize proposed position description for the Faculty Athletic Representative.

The following reports were generated:

1. The data concerning student-athletes academic success compared to non-athletes is being finalized and the full report will be available on the Senate web site as soon as it is completed. A summary of findings to date is attached.

2. The FSAC changed the focus of this objective after meeting with a group of student - athletes who were interested in identifying faculty perceptions of student-athletes. The student-athletes advisory committee and the FSAC collaborated to do this survey. Results are attached.

3. The FSAC met with head football coach Philip Fulmer to discuss issues of concern regarding academic performance of football team members. Coach Fulmer shared his philosophy of encouraging success both on the field and in the classroom. Graduation rates for football were discussed.

4. The Vice Provost and Director of the Thornton Center is an ex-officio member of this committee and reports activities of the Thornton Center regularly to the full committee.

5. The FSAC approved a proposed position description for the Faculty Athletic Representative. This will be sent to Dr. Shumaker

Respectfully submitted,
Margaret Pierce
Chair

Report of Academic Performance of Student-athletes
April 2003
Faculty Senate Athletics Committee

The review of academic performance of student athletes data is being reviewed for accuracy so no specific numbers will be shared today. It appears that the cohort of student- athletes in the data set was smaller than expected. As soon as the data is confirmed a full report will be made available to the Athletics Board and the Faculty Senate. Once again the Student-athletes were compared to the non-athletes in terms of mean cumulative GPA at the end of summer term 2002. These data are being compared to data included in a similar report of 2001 that reviewed summer 2000 GPAs.

If the data we now have is confirmed, there has been an overall improvement in mean GPAs of SAs when analyzed by class standing, sex, and by sport. It is also noted that the academic performance is similar to, and in some groups superior to the performance of non-athletes. This is most apparent among Freshmen where non athletes have a mean GPA of 2.00 and athletes a significantly higher mean GPA. It appears that Freshman student-athletes are benefitting from the structure of required study sessions and the academic support of the Thornton Center. These differences are similar among both sexes with females achieving higher levels of academic success than males among all groups reviewed.

Data by sport for athletes was provided by the Thornton Center and can be compared to data reported in 2001. In the attached table one will note several significant findings:

- A trend of improving GPAs among SAs across most sports
- Significant improvements in mean GPAs of male basketball, baseball, and football SAs
- A significant decrease in mean GPAs in women's golf and men's tennis. Both of these teams are comprised of small numbers of participants which would make the academic performance of one or two members of the team have a significant impact on the means. The graduation of or resignation from the team of a small number of team members could also account for these differences.

The results indicate that the Freshman experience continues to need attention for the general student body. Students who have not developed good reading, study, and time management skills may not recognize these deficits until they find themselves in academic difficulty. The student-athlete may have some of the same deficits as an entering freshman and the Thornton Center is well equipped to assist them in the development of such skills. The availability and use of similar services for all entering students is an area in need of evaluation and possible intervention.

Cumulative GPA by Sport

Females

Sport	August 2002	August 2000
Basketball	2.84	2.85
Cross country	(combined with track)	3.18
Golf	2.39	3.37
Track	3.03	2.75
Rowing	3.17	3.06
Soccer	3.24	3.16
Softball	2.62	2.76
Swimming	3.39	3.31
Tennis	3.03	3.08
Volleyball	3.19	3.16

Males

Sport	August 2002	August 2000
Baseball	2.94	2.53
Basketball	2.63	2.20
Football (all)	2.61	2.32
(scholarship)	2.57	NA
(walk-on)	2.69	NA
Golf	3.15	2.96
Track	2.74	2.56
Swimming	3.14	2.87
Tennis	2.12	3.02

Faculty Perceptions of the Student-Athlete

The faculty senate athletics committee and the student-athletes advisory committee developed a survey to determine faculty perceptions of the student athlete. Three hundred eighty-eight surveys were emailed to faculty who taught a student athlete during the Fall of 2002. Twenty four responses were received for a 6% response rate. 60% of the respondents taught student athletes in 100 and 200 level classes, 52% had more than 40 students in the class with 54% of the classes being a lecture format. Most of the faculty had fewer than five students athletes each semester.

This summary highlights some of the key questions that were asked:

- An overwhelming 96% agreed that student athletes are considered to be ambassadors for the university.*
- 83% agreed that student athletes discussed class absences in advance of the competitions.*
- When asked if coaches made an effort to help students be successful academically by being flexible with practice and travel, 67% were neutral in their response.*
- Although 58% of the faculty respondents disagreed that student athletes request special accommodations in their courses, we do need to consider that 32% agreed.*
- 100% of the faculty agreed that they have policies that allow for some absences when scheduled in advance.*
- The majority (83%) felt it was important to provide feedback to the Thornton Center.*
- Even though 41% did not think that student athletes received inappropriate assistance on assignments and 54% felt they did not expect special treatment, 16% of the faculty believe that inappropriate assistance is given and special treatment is expected.*

- *When asked if student athletes were as committed to their academic success as to their athletic success, it was evenly distributed with 30% of the respondents agreeing, 30% disagreeing, and 30% remaining neutral.*
- *91% of the faculty were aware of who the student athletes were in their classes.*

The survey also provided the respondent with an opportunity to comment on any positive or negative experiences with student athletes in their courses. Some of the positive comments included:

- *Most of the student athletes were very conscientious and responsible about keeping up with their assignments*
- *Overall, student athletes work as hard or harder than the rest of the students.*
- *Lady Vol coaches do an excellent job in emphasizing academic success and encouraging the student athlete to communicate with faculty.*

Negative Comments:

- *Although student athletes' absences are excused, they don't consider attending a different section when they have to miss class.*
- *I do not always receive a letter with their schedules to know when they are traveling, etc.*
- *Mens' athletics need to emphasize academics.*

The results were reviewed by a group of faculty and student athletes. Based on that discussion, the recommendations for improving student athletes' relationships with faculty were developed. These recommendations included:

- *Earlier distributions of class performance and recommendation forms. Mid-semester is often too late, especially for a math class.*
- *Student athletes should take the responsibility of developing a relationship with their faculty members through communication, visiting during office hours, and asking for feedback about their progress instead of the Thornton Center.*
- *Develop a "Meet the Coach" program that would involve inviting the faculty to meet with the coaches of their student athletes. During the meeting, the coach could discuss how they encourage academic as well as athletic success and what steps are taken to*

help athletes succeed in class. Faculty feel that they take their time to monitor the student athlete and are flexible with rescheduling assignments so it would mean a lot when the coach and staff take a little time out of their busy schedule to meet with the faculty and athletes to start building a relationship and to show their appreciation and commitment to academic success.

Proposed Faculty Athletics Representative Job Description

The President of the University appoints the Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR), with the advice and recommendation of the Faculty Senate and the Provost (Chancellor). The university recognizes this position as one that requires greater commitment of time than typical faculty service positions. To accomplish the duties the FAR should receive up to 50% release time and appropriate secretarial help. The FAR should be a tenured faculty member whose appointment as FAR will be a 12 month appointment. If possible the terms of office should overlap by 6 months to allow smooth transition of the position.

It is the FAR's duty to know and apply the rules and procedures governing compliance with NCAA and SEC conference regulations. "Faculty athletics representatives are expected to take an active role in the institutional control of the intercollegiate athletics program on their campuses." (NCAA Faculty Athletics Representative Handbook, page 13. Overland Park, Kansas 1998). This means the FAR must be familiar with NCAA and SEC regulations, and must apply these regulations. The NCAA does not excuse the lack of FAR involvement, nor the lack of familiarity with rules, should a major violation occur.

In addition to familiarity with regulations that govern institutional compliance with the NCAA, the FAR is also to understand the procedures for certifying student-athletes as eligible for practice, competition, and financial aid.

The primary duties of the FAR are:

1. To provide oversight for those individuals and offices with responsibilities for compliance of NCAA and Southeastern Conference by-laws.
2. To chair a policy board with formal authority for overseeing the student athlete academic support programs including tutoring programs for student athletes. This policy board, consisting of the FAR and two other faculty members, will report to the Provost (Chancellor).
3. To represent the university to the SEC and the NCAA including attending appropriate regional and national meetings. The FAR should be encouraged to attend as many university athletic functions as necessary. Travel, game tickets, and other expenses incurred as FAR will be paid by the University, not the Athletic Department.

In general, this position is to be governed by the NCAA's declaration that "...student athletes are to be students first..." (NCAA Faculty Athletics Representative Handbook, Page #? Overland Park, Kansas 1998). To accomplish this mission, the following items are also included in the FAR job description:

1. The FAR should be appointed to a six year non-renewable term.
2. The FAR must be familiar with university curricula and processes and must monitor the academic credentials of student athletes and their progress to graduation.
3. The FAR ensures the provision of proper academic support to student-athletes.

4. The FAR should act as an independent source of support and advice for student athletes.
5. The FAR will meet regularly with the Student Athlete Advisory Committee, and will participate in, or at least be familiar with, the mandatory exit interviews with student athletes.
6. The FAR will report to the Faculty Senate regularly (at least annually) on graduation rates, the oversight of student athletes, and on other concerns.