Report to the Chair of the Faculty Senate  
By the  
Advisory Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics  
For the Academic Year 2008-2009  
September 15, 2009

Dear Bruce,

On behalf of the Advisory Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics (ACIA), I am pleased to submit this report of our activities during the 2008-2009 academic year.

The year began with the approval of a new charge for ACIA by President Emmert and Faculty Senate Chair David Lovell on August 19, 2008. This new charge made some changes in the membership of the committee (including the addition of the Chair of the Faculty Council on Student Affairs as an ex-officio member of ACIA), and clarified the committee’s relationship to the President’s Office and to the Faculty Senate. The text of this new charge is posted on the ACIA website: http://www.washington.edu/faculty/facsen/adhoc.html

At its October meeting, the Committee approved the appointment of an ad-hoc committee, chaired by Paul LePore, Assistant Dean for Educational Programs in the College of Arts and Sciences, charged to review and report on the performance of Student Athlete Academic Services (SAAS) in the Office of Intercollegiate Athletics (ICA). Periodic reviews of SAAS are mandated by the NCAA as part of its accreditation requirements; carrying out such reviews is among the responsibilities of ACIA. This report, received in January 2009, is posted on the ACIA website. Its recommendations will be discussed more fully below.

Also at its October meeting, ACIA reviewed, and recommended for approval by the Admissions and Graduations Sub-Committee of the Faculty Council on Academic Standards, a set of recommendations governing the admission to the University of recruited student athletes. These recommendations were developed by ACIA in 2005 and 2007, and were approved by the Sub-Committee on October 24, 2008. A copy of this policy is posted on the ACIA website. This policy identifies three admissions categories for recruited student athletes (Routine; Priority; and Special); defines admissions criteria for each category; and sets limits on the number of students who can be admitted annually as Special and Priority admits. No more than 30 students annually may be admitted as Special admits, and no more than 100 students in total may be admitted in the two combined categories of Special and Priority admits. The Sub-Committee will also review annually the academic progress of all special and priority admits, as ACIA has done for some years and will continue to do.

ACIA also recommended, and is implementing for academic year 2009-10, a series of three meetings bringing together the football staff, the UW admissions office, and the ICA compliance officers to review and discuss the academic records of current high school and junior college students whom the football staff is proposing to recruit to UW. These meetings will focus on what potential football recruits need to do academically to earn admission to UW. All three meetings will be held prior to National Letter-of-Intent signing day in February. Our goal here is to make sure that everyone -- and most importantly, the recruited student-athletes themselves -- should be clear on what these students need to accomplish academically in order to qualify for admission to UW. It is hoped that this will reduce the number of admissions appeals cases that arise due to miscommunication between all the parties involved in the
recruitment and admission of student athletes, especially in football. The first of these meetings was held last week, and was regarded by all participants as very successful.

ACIA also reviewed the academic progress data on all special and priority admits currently enrolled at UW. A “snapshot” of this data for the classes of 2005-6, 2006-7, and 2007-8 is posted on the ACIA website. The Committee reviewed not just this cumulative data, but also the academic records of each individual student (without names attached). For privacy reasons, this individual-level data is not posted on the website.

At its December meeting, ACIA discussed at length issues relating to the Student Conduct Code as these pertain to student athletes. This discussion was prompted by revelations in the Seattle Times of serious, even potentially criminal, violations of conduct standards by student athletes that occurred a decade ago. Several deficiencies in current UW policies with respect to such matters were noted, including the absence of any clear requirement that such incidents be reported to appropriate University authorities in a timely manner. That said, there was a strong consensus on the Committee that student athletes should be treated in the same manner as all other UW students if charged with a conduct offense. There should not be a separate set of procedures, or differential penalties, that pertain to student athletes only. Nevertheless, there are certain special features of the student-athlete experience that may warrant specific guidance. To this end, a proposed Student Conduct Code for student athletes is being drafted during summer 2009 by a committee of senior ICA administrators; ACIA will review their recommendations, and forward them as appropriate, during 2009-10.

During December, ACIA representatives also served on the ad-hoc advisory committee appointed by ICA Director Scott Woodward to assist him in hiring a new head football coach.

At its January meeting, ACIA reviewed and discussed the results of the 2008 Exit Surveys administered to all intercollegiate athletes at the end of their period of athletic eligibility. We were pleased to see that participation rates in this survey had risen from 49% in 2007 to 76% in 2008. We were also gratified to learn from the survey that 85% of participants were able to meet most or nearly all of their academic responsibilities despite their participation in intercollegiate athletics. Student Athlete Academic Services was also rated very highly by these students, with mean evaluations between 3.9 and 4.3 (on a 5 point scale) on all measures. Areas of concern included the fact that only 50% of responding student athletes felt a part of the University community (these feelings of isolation were most widespread among student-athletes of color and among football players); and that when asked whether participation in UW athletics enhanced their personal academic growth, the mean rating was only 3.51, with significant gender and ethnic disparities. Women rated academic growth at 3.86; men at 3.2; students of color at 4.13; Caucasian students at 3.58. A copy of this survey data is posted on the ACIA website.

In February 2009, the new ACIA website went “live”. Particular thanks are owed to Nancy Bradshaw for her work in setting up this site and posting material to it, and to Brian Fabien for pushing us to create it. The creation of this website is an important element in ACIA’s ongoing efforts to provide accurate and easily-accessible information to the university community about UW’s intercollegiate athletics programs. Our challenge now will be to draw the attention of interested parties to the website’s existence. The Faculty Senate may be able to be helpful in this respect, especially so as the ACIA website is nested within the Faculty Senate website, under “Other Committees”.

The March meeting was devoted entirely to discussing the review committee’s report on Student Athlete Academic Services. A copy of this report is posted on the ACIA website. The report was highly
and justifiably laudatory with respect to the work SAAS does with our student athletes. To the extent that there are concerns, these fell under two general headings.

First, collaboration between “upper campus” academic services and “lower campus” (i.e., SAAS) academic services is not perfect. Issues arise particularly with respect to tutoring services for specialized courses in majors, which SAAS cannot always provide and which really should be an “upper campus” responsibility. In general, we need to take whatever steps we can to improve the integration between SAAS (which focuses mainly on serving pre-majors) and the academic services available to all students through the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs and through individual departments and colleges. This is an ongoing set of concerns shared by ACIA, UAA, and SAAS. We will continue to work on these issues in the year(s) ahead.

Second, some student athletes complain that they were not encouraged to take demanding and rigorous courses as freshmen and sophomores, with the result that they are then not prepared to enter particular majors as juniors. This is especially a concern with competitive majors. We will return to this issue in autumn 2009, when the administrative head of SAAS will report on her office’s specific responses to the recommendations contained in the report. ACIA holds firmly to the view that student athletes should never be “channeled” into specific courses or specific majors in order to maintain their athletic eligibility. Like all students, student athletes should graduate not only with a degree, but also with a rigorous education. In fall 2009, we will be carrying out our biannual review of the distribution of majors among intercollegiate athletes. This is part of our oversight responsibility to prevent the “clustering” of student athletes in particular courses or majors.

At its April meeting, ACIA reviewed and discussed a report submitted to it in February 2009 by Vivien Savath, research assistant to Faculty Athletic Representative Pat Dobel, that analyzed the reporting structures governing Student Athlete Academic Services at twenty universities comparable to UW. This report made clear that although SAAS officers are almost always located physically within ICA facilities and funded as part of ICA’s budget (as is the case at UW), best practice nationally suggests that the administrator in charge of SAAS should report jointly to the Director of ICA and to an appropriate academic supervisor within the Office of the Provost, and not simply to the Director of ICA. Discussion on this issue continued at ACIA’s final meeting of the year, in June 2009. Out of this discussion emerged a recommendation to Provost Phyllis Wise that she establish a new, dual reporting structure for SAAS, in which its administrator would report jointly to ICA and to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs. Provost Wise approved this recommendation on July 7, 2009. A copy of this recommendation is posted on the ACIA website.

We have a number of upcoming issues on our agenda for the 2009-10 year. In October, we will conduct our annual review of the academic records of all special and priority admits as well as our biannual review of the distribution of majors chosen by student athletes. We will also discuss the Code of Student Conduct for student athletes that is currently being drafted within ICA. And we will hear the SAAS response to the detailed recommendations of the 2008-09 review committee. Later on in the year, we will need to review the extent of our compliance with Title IX requirements. This will be a mandatory part of our next NCAA accreditation review in 2013, but the issue has not been addressed since 2005 and so we want to take an interim “reading” on this issue while there is still time to correct the situation if we should find that we are not in compliance with Title IX requirements. We also anticipate a number of PAC-10 and NCAA policy issues coming before us during the year. At the PAC-10 level, a new television contract will be under negotiation by the Conference, with the prospect that member institutions may be asked to schedule mid-week football and men’s basketball games. We will
be advising President Emmert on this issue, should it arise. We also expect to be discussing NCAA policy proposals on the academic records of recruited junior-college transfer students, a group of students who are failing to graduate in significant numbers from the four-year institutions that recruit them. We will be examining whether UW is an exception to this national trend, or whether we too have problems in this regard that need to be addressed.

ACIA’s commitment is to the academic best interests of our intercollegiate student athletes. Its members take that commitment very seriously, and look forward to continuing to act on that commitment in the years ahead.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert C. Stacey
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