

## Athletic Advising Committee Report and Recommendations

Submitted to SACUA, January 26, 2009

### Overview and Recommendations:

Our concerns about the academic environments of our student-athletes flow from the following realities. First, student-athletes must spend substantial amounts of time preparing for and participating in intercollegiate competition. Practice times are set by athletic department staff and, as a result of practice schedules, departmental course offerings necessarily constrain academic choices. Well over ninety percent of these students will never have athletic careers and their academic choices are important to their futures.

Second, the options for careers available to our student-athletes, consistent with their capabilities, are sometimes reduced as a result of their admission to particular colleges within the university. Nearly forty percent of first-year scholarship athletes enroll in programs they almost certainly will not complete. Too many student-athletes transfer from one school or college to another, and by the time that takes place many of them have access to only a very limited number of academic options. Student-athletes admitted to LSA and Engineering, because of time constraints mentioned above, have somewhat narrower options compared to other students admitted to these colleges; a scholarship athlete initially enrolled in Kinesiology who then transfers to LSA as a junior, has much narrower options and may not be able to meet the requirements for an LSA concentration.

Our charge is to examine student-athlete advising and make recommendations to SACUA regarding our findings. What we discovered is quite encouraging. The support staff provided by various advising groups is excellent. Sweetland Writing Center advisors assigned to the Academic Success Program are trained in the same manner as other writing advisors in LSA. This is not true of all such support staff, however, and consistency in training would be beneficial to the student-athletes.

Our recommendations are based on one principle: all students---regardless of their participation in intercollegiate athletics---should have a rich choice of options in terms of courses, concentrations, and advising. These choices must be consistent with the high expectations we have for all Michigan students and also consistent with the capabilities of the students we admit.

Our recommendations primarily address structure. Student-athletes should be enrolled in programs that will allow them a rich choice of courses, concentrations, and degree programs. The advising function with regard to course selection, choice of concentration, and student

performance and standing should be primarily in the hands of trained academic advisors. Given the extraordinary time commitments of intercollegiate athletics, fostering an environment that permits a wide range of choices and encourages academic success also requires a support program that should be well-integrated with academic advising. Therefore, we offer the following set of recommendations:

- The Academic Success Program for student-athletes should report to Dean Esrold Nurse of LSA Student Academic Affairs. It should be well-integrated with the LSA Academic Advising Center, the Bridge Program (which also currently reports to Dean Nurse but serves the needs of any undergraduate college/school on campus), and Academic Standards and Academic Opportunities.
  - Records should be kept of all advising sessions in order to improve the effectiveness of academic advising.
  - Employees in the Academic Success Program should benefit from the professional development opportunities available in LSA.
  - Academic advisors should be trained to understand the special time and schedule demands on student-athletes.
  - Every effort should be made to ensure that each student-athlete is pursuing an academic program that reflects his/her interests and capabilities, challenging each student to perform his/her best in both academics and athletics.
- New concentrations within the Individual Concentration Program (ICP) should be developed that are attractive to many students, including student-athletes.
  - Many of the programs preparing students for teacher certification in secondary education require an LSA concentration or its near equivalent; a Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) degree sometimes will not suffice for this purpose.
  - Joint programs, including minors, should be considered between schools and colleges (e.g., Social work and LSA. Education and LSA) to create more opportunities for all students.
  - The Bachelor of General Studies degree, which currently serves many of our students very well, should have a faculty advisory committee that works with advisors to require written approval of each BGS student's program, both at the point of declaring and completing the program.
- Responsibility for making recommendations to the Provost on student-athlete eligibility based on standards set by the University of Michigan should be transferred from the Academic Performance Committee (APC) to Student Academic Affairs in LSA.
  - Assessment of student-athlete academic performance and standing within a school or college should be managed as we do for other students. The faculty members and advisors making these recommendations should have the appropriate experience working with undergraduates.

- The NCAA supports this recommendation. According to NCAA Bylaw 14.012.1, “A student-athlete shall be in good academic standing as determined by the academic authorities who determine the meaning of such phrases for all students of the institution.” The academic authorities who make these determinations are located in the academic advising units of the schools and colleges where the student is enrolled. Therefore, we propose that the academic standing of student-athletes be determined by these same academic authorities.
  - Adjustments in the timing of recommendations should be made to meet NCAA requirements. In order to accommodate the timing requirements of determining eligibility each semester, the academic advising units should set timelines for approving academic plans and recommending certification of eligibility to the Provost by the first day of classes each semester.
- An enriched “Bridge Plus” Program coupled with the Academic Success Program should continue to serve as resources for the enrichment of student capabilities. The existing programs need to be augmented in various ways, including some provision for the support of students who enter in mid-year. Currently, the Bridge Program does not accommodate the schedules of some student-athletes. The tutors provided by the Academic Success Program should be trained in a consistent manner.
  - Implementation of this plan should be reviewed by our committee every six months for the next two years.
    - There is a substantial history of agreements that were not acted upon by those who agreed.
    - The change in management of advising should result in consistency of standards, and this will need to be examined.
  - Undergraduate Admissions should continue to oversee enrollment in the Bridge and Bridge Plus programs based on current levels.
  - The “Sliding Scale” for student-athletes, implemented by the NCAA, should be replaced by separate standards for GPA and SAT/ACT scores, and the University of Michigan should work to see that happen.

We believe the University of Michigan should be an outstanding institution for student-athletes, with academic programs in place that deliver exciting and useful academic options. We anticipate that new concentrations will be developed that are attractive to students in general and to athletes in particular. These are likely to reside in LSA but may also include joint programs with the Schools of Business, Education, Kinesiology, and Social Work.

Much of what we have learned is well known, but change is always difficult. Nevertheless, we believe that substantial improvements in what is already a good advising program are possible and desirable. In order to monitor progress and encourage transparency, our committee should come together every six months over the next two years of transition.

### Methods

The authors of this report brought perspectives but not preconceived ideas as to where our work would lead.

We spoke with the following people:

1. Shelly Kovacs, Director of Student Services and Alumni Relations, School of Kinesiology
2. Patricia VanVolkinburg, Clinical Associate Professor of Kinesiology, School of Kinesiology
3. Esrold A. Nurse, Assistant Dean for Student Academic Affairs, LSA
4. Keith Riles, Professor of Physics, College of LSA, Member of SACUA
5. Richard D. Friedman, Professor of Law, School of Law, Member of SACUA
6. Michael J. Stevenson, Executive Associate Director of Athletics and Interim Director of the Academic Success Program, Athletics
7. Shari B. Acho, Associate Athletic Director, Athletics
8. Sue C. Shand, Associate Athletic Director Academic Services, Athletics
9. Philip J. Hanlon, Vice Provost for Academic and Budgetary Affairs, Office of the Provost and Executive Vice-President for Academic Affairs
10. Theodore L. Spencer, Associate Vice Provost and Executive Director, Office of Undergraduate Admissions
11. Erica L. Sanders, Director of Recruitment and Operations, Undergraduate Admissions
12. Terrence J. McDonald, Dean, College of LSA
13. Deborah L. Ball, Dean, School of Education
14. William C. Martin, Director of Intercollegiate Athletics, Athletics

We also examined a variety of reports:

Academic Integrity Subcommittee Members. University of Michigan NCAA Self-Study Report. Rep. 1995-1996. 36-74.

Academic Success Program Task Force. Rep. 19 Oct. 2007. Academic Success Program for Student- Athletes.

Cain, Albert, Jacquelynne Eccles, Robert Lewis, Stephen Maren, Robert Sellers, and L. Monique Ward. Report by the Psychology Department Executive Committee on its Investigation of Potential Academic Misconduct Involving Professor John Hagen. Publication. Jan. 2008. The

University of Michigan.

(<http://blog.mlive.com/specialreports/2008/03/031608hagenfinalreport.pdf>).

Courant, Paul, Memorandum of Understanding, January 14, 2004.


Friedman, Rich, and Keith Riles. Report on an Investigation of the use of the Bachelor of General Studies degree by the Athletics Department. Rep. 28 July 2008. Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs.


Meggison, Robert E. Report by the College of LSA on Investigation of Allegations against Professor John Hagen. Publication. 12 Dec. 2007. The University of Michigan.  
([http://blog.mlive.com/wolverines\\_academics\\_impact/2008/03/johnhagenreport.pdf](http://blog.mlive.com/wolverines_academics_impact/2008/03/johnhagenreport.pdf)).


Senneff, Carol F., Sherry Cogswell, and Sundra Meads. University of Michigan University Audits: Intercollegiate Athletics Academic Support Services. Publication. 18 July 2007. The University of Michigan.  
([http://blog.mlive.com/wolverines\\_academics\\_impact/2008/03/ASP\\_audit.pdf](http://blog.mlive.com/wolverines_academics_impact/2008/03/ASP_audit.pdf)).

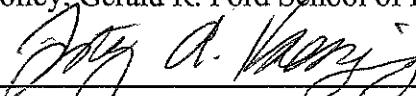
We sought data from Michael Stevenson, Philip Hanlon, and the University Registrar regarding graduation rates, transfer rates, enrollment numbers, and so forth, for intercollegiate student-athletes and for the subset of students at risk. We have not yet received the full set of data.


#### Committee Members

 Jan. 23, 2009  
Edward D. Rothman, Professor of Statistics, College of LSA, Chair

 Jan 23, 2009  
Deborah R. Berman, MD, House Officer, Obstetrics and Gynecology Fellowships, UM Hospitals

 Jan 23 2009  
Edie N. Goldenberg, Professor of Political Science, College of LSA, and Professor of Public Policy, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy

 Jan. 23 2009  
Fritz A. Kaenzig, Professor of Music (tuba/euphonium), School of Music, Theatre, and Dance

 Jan. 23, 2009  
Robert D. Wallin, Intermittent Lecturer in Classical Studies, and Deputy Assistant Dean, Student Academic Affairs, College of LSA