Faculty Athletics Committee

Annual Report, 2012-2013

Submitted April 30, 2013

1. Chair: Katsiaryna Bardos (Fall 2012), Kris Sealey (Spring 2013)

2. Members
   - Colleen Arendt
   - Katsiaryna Salavei-Bardos
   - Christopher Huntley
   - Nicole O’Brien
   - Amalia Rusu
   - Kris Sealey
   - Tim Talty

3. Number of meetings attended by each committee member

   Arendt: Present for meeting E (only a member for Spring 2013)
   Salavei-Bardos: Present for meetings A, B, C, D (on leave Spring 2013)
   Huntley: Present for all five meetings
   O’Brien: Present for all five meetings
   Rusu: Present for meetings A, B, C, D
   Sealey: Present for all five meetings
   Tim Talty: Present for meetings A, B, C, D (no longer at Fairfield as of Spring 2013)

4. Meetings
   (a) September 12, 2012 (called by outgoing chair, Giovanni Ruffini)
   (b) October 24, 2012
   (c) November 11, 2012
   (d) December 12, 2012
   (e) March 27, 2013

5. List of principle topics covered by the committee
   (a) Review of triennial survey
   (b) Review of athletic practice and game schedules’ conflict with class times, and registration issues
(c) New mentoring program for athletes
(d) Student-athletes Dean’s List

6. List of the decisions taken by the committee
(a) The committee found no major red flags from the survey. It will be disseminated to students at the end of the 2012-2013 academic year.

(b) The committee discussed disseminating, for each team, athletic schedules with more details concerning games, travel, practice times, etc. This would serve to help faculty advisors to student-athletes. Subsequent to inquiries from faculty members concerning practices times (and the restrictions to possible class schedules), it was established that athletics do have a monitoring process in place, which makes sure that students do not go beyond the allowed 20 hours/week of practice time. It was also brought to the committee’s attention that coaches often allow students to skip some part of practice time to attend labs/classes. There were a few changes to the NCAA game schedules this year, which were out of the control of coaches. This information was made available to faculty concerned about students missing classes for games. There were specific inquiries concerning the practice schedule of the softball team’s restriction to classes before 12 pm. Eugene Doris (Director of Athletics) offered to the committee that the team must to work around practices that need fields in the afternoon. Mary Ann Palazzi (Coordinator of Programs for Athletes) emphasized that student-athletes should be meeting with the faculty advisor first, and only subsequently with her if there are scheduling conflicts.

(c) The committee has been working closely with Coach Sidney Johnson (Men’s Basketball coach) on implementing a Faculty Fellows program at Fairfield University. This program is run quite successfully at Princeton University, and involves a relationship among faculty fellows, student-athletes and coaches around increasing the academic success of student-athletes. Faculty fellows will volunteer for this program, and serve as an additional ‘welcome for student-athletes to the University. Together with coaches, they will mentor students on academic and career choices. Depending on coaches’ agreement, fellows can also attend practices, and travel with teams on away games. Fellows can also be invited to meet with prospective student-athletes and their families. The committee has spoken with Fr. Paul Fitzgerald, who has expressed keen interest in seeing this program piloted during AY 2013-2014.
(d) One hundred and twenty six student-athletes made the Dean’s List during this fall semester, which is approximately 25% of all student-athletes. Out of 436, 300 student-athletes achieved a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Seventy-two percent of this 3.0 Club achieved a GPA of 3.5 or more. Ten student athletes achieved a GPA of 4.0. The committee discussed ways to make these achievements more prominent among faculty. We identified one such way to be increasing faculty attendance at the Sunday brunch held to celebrate these students.

7. Anticipated effects of these decisions

With respect to item 6c, we anticipate that, in implementing the Faculty Fellows program, the kind of partnering/mentoring that some faculty already do can be officially recognized as service to the University. The program can also bring professors and administrators closer to the lives of student-athletes outside of the classroom. We also see this program working to elevate the quality of life for student-athletes in all athletic programs, insofar as partnership with faculty might provide access to academic and career opportunities, as well as student activities on campus. Ultimately, we anticipate that, through this program, coaches, faculty and students are tangibly linked. As such, all athletic programs at Fairfield can be explicitly identified by valuing the cohesion of academics and athletics.

8. Unfinished business

With regard to item 6c, the committee will put together a brown bag information session, for faculty interested in the Faculty Fellows Program. A call will go out to the faculty at the end of spring 2013/early summer. This will be in an attempt to pilot this program for the next academic year (AY 2013-2014)

9. Future agenda items

Our future agenda items include monitoring the pilot of the Faculty Athletics Program, with a view toward making it a permanent part of our University practice. We have also discussed how a portion of this program can specifically deal with student-athlete class registration. In the future, we would like to propose that departments prepare specific faculty members who would advise student-athletes only (given the challenges this group of students face when it comes to registering for classes each semester).