Senate Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics

April 29, 2014

Minutes


Absent: Benjamin Hickerson, David Han

Guests: Preston Gall, Ray Williams,

1. The minutes for the January 28, 2013 meeting were approved by voice vote.
2. News items
   a. Update on NCAA governance changes – Athletics Director David Joyner discussed progress being made by the NCAA in its governance over Division I athletics. Overall, it is unclear as to the specific direction the NCAA is going. The Big 5 conferences have requested autonomy to decide issues for student-athletes’ well-being. He discussed the involvement of FARs in the decision making, in addition to the athletics directors. The role of student-athlete representation and how that would be integrated is under discussion. There was support for a strong role of student-athlete representation. A target date for new NCAA governance rules is the end of the summer, but there is much work to be done, and the timing may not be realistic.
   b. Update on the ethics module (Del Giorno) – Julie Del Giorno discussed the status of an athletics ethics modules which has been given to a few athletics teams. In the module, ethics scenarios are presented. The issues are discussed among their teammates. The goal of the module is more in terms of awareness of ethics issues and consideration of various approaches to these dilemmas, more so than defining a correct response. The feedback towards the goal of awareness in athletics has been good. The next module, which is under construction, will highlight tools to work through ethical dilemmas. There is interest in inviting the Faculty Partners to participate. This work has been done in collaboration with the Smeal College of Business.
3. Update from the Committee on Campus Athletics – Tramble Turner provided an update from the Committee on Campus Athletics. The 8 day rule and its impact on schedules in D3 were discussed through much of this year. After much consideration, the opinion of the committee is that the 8 Day Rule will function for D3 athletics, but the timing should be modified to better represent the goals, scheduling and challenges in campus athletics programs. Student athlete absences between noon and 5 PM would be counted as a half day absence, rather than between noon and 2:15 PM. The difference is largely based on the lesser demands of travel for campus athletics and the more limited choices in scheduling for those student athletes. 2. The process for travel notification for student athletes was improved in terms of the forms and
processes of having a sign-off from the faculty member which is forwarded to the AD and FAR.
3. The format and input for the annual FAR report was adjusted to include optional data on individuals with outstanding performance, and team to team averages along with several other changes. 4. The process for approving study time exceptions was refined. 5. Discussions of support for FAR have been engaged at several campuses. 6. The committee has worked on a common form for missed class time.

4. NCAA clarification on reporting and managing academic misconduct issues was reviewed by Russ Mushinsky. Clarification of what needs to be handled on campus versus reported to the NCAA has been provided by the NCAA. The Morgan Center and others are working towards wide distribution of this information.

5. Discuss recommendations from COIA survey on student-athlete concussion management – Penn State participated in a survey conducted by COIA which sampled university policies on student-athlete concussion management. The good news is that most universities which responded follow published guidelines on concussion management. Penn State has a leadership role in this field based on the work of several faculty members who conduct research in this field. Further, the policies already implemented at Penn State appear to be consistent with best practices. Sam Slobenov, Tim Breen and Wayne Sebastianelli have been working on a protocol for return to classroom. Concussions may impact intellectual functioning, placing the student-athlete who suffers a concussion at risk in terms of their academic performance. Further, clinical research in this field suggests that a period of intellectual rest may improve healing following the concussion. Progress is being made on the policy, and a presentation of these issues to the Senate would be appropriate once the policy is established, in order to raise awareness among faculty.

6. Review schedules - Cross Country, Field Hockey, Football, Golf, Hockey, Soccer, Tennis, Volleyball – Concern was raised regarding the 5 days missed mid-semester for Women’s Golf. During the discussion, it was pointed out that the GPA for team has been excellent, and tournaments which involve extended travel typically occur during the year. The timing of this travel is shortly before spring break. Following this discussion, along with review of all the schedules, a voice vote approved all the schedules for the listed teams. There was an additional request for a waiver of study day missed for non-conference athletic scheduling for the women’s’ basketball team. A waiver for a home athletic competition on a Sunday in December which is a study day was requested. In the request, the coach justified the dilemma in scheduling the game, and provided a mitigating study plan. The scheduling challenge was confirmed by Charmelle Greene, who also pointed out the challenge for the window of opportunity to get games scheduled. Russ Mushinsky discussed the process of providing necessary study time for individual student-athletes. A robust discussion was engendered. It was pointed out that 2-3 waivers are requested on an annual basis to cover all the 31 varsity division I athletics programs. Questions were raised as to how these demands impact student-athlete’s academic performance. Although evaluating data was considered, given a relatively small number of student-athletes impacted in a given year, it would be challenging to gain a sufficient sample for meaningful interpretation. Chair Boehmer suggested that the process needs to be defined to provide consistent council for the coaches, athletics directors and FAR.
This process should include a written request for waiver, an explanation of why the schedule must impact the study day and a study plan to mitigate the loss of study time. These have been the elements presented in successful waiver requests in the past. Following the discussion, a voice vote was taken and the waiver request for a missed study in the fall of 2014 for the women’s basketball team was approved.

7. Discussion of Big Ten and PSU stance on student athletes organizing – David Joyner led a discussion of the position of the Big Ten and Penn State in regard to student athletes organizing as exemplified by the actions of the Northwestern football team. While the Big Ten and Penn State support student-athletes’ freedom, they believe they are students and not employees. The student-athletes are free to explore their options, and neither the Big Ten nor Penn State wishes to apply undue pressure either way. A number of modifications of NCAA rules are under consideration, including increasing the stipend for attending college to better represent the full cost of attendance and providing medical costs including care post-graduation. Changes have already been made to items such as meals which are provided to student-athletes.

8. FAR annual report – Linda Caldwell led a discussion on proposed items for inclusion in the annual FAR report. The purpose is to communicate what we have done over the past year. The Faculty Partner Program will be highlighted again. A survey was taken of the coaches and faculty members participating in this program with a good response. Overall, the program is accomplishing its stated goals. There needs to be a little more structure to better define specific goals to get things going for some Partners. Thirteen of 31 varsity sports teams have faculty partners. The transition to the Committee on Campus Athletics will be discussed. Tram Turner will help to provide wording for the progress in this transition. The review of concussion management via COIA will be addressed, as will the self-study utilizing the Rawling’s Panel report. Chair Boehmer will provide wording to help with this item. The committee has requested a report on the academic performance of student-athletes who use reserved spaces. This report was given in web based form only last year. This year, the committee will request a brief presentation of highlights along with the written report with much more detail. The committee believes that presenting these data to the Senate every other year or when important issues are involved would be appropriate.

9. Set priorities for next year
   a. Concussion survey/procedures/return to class – to be developed as an informational report presented by one of our experts in the field. The timing should coincide with the release of the policy on return to class following a concussion.
   b. Self-study report (Rawling’s report recommendations review) – this is complete and will be submitted as an informational report in June for presentation in September. The recommendations will then be delegated to CC&R and back to IAC for implementation.
   c. Update the orientation and operations manual – The manual will be posted on the Faculty Senate website, and the staff will maintain a copy of the document, which will also be passed from chair to chair. The plan would be to update this document annually or as needed.
   d. Invite Faculty Partners faculty member, a coach and a student athlete for a discussion on their views of the challenges of the student-athlete.
e. Continue to monitor NCAA re-governance
f. Consider an update on the Committee on Campus Athletics
g. Review reserved space student-athlete academic performance
h. Graduation rate report is due next year.
i. Student athlete enrollment (every other year) by college and major is due next year.
j. Modification of Policy 67-00; the 8 Day Rule for campus athletics programs

Minutes submitted by John Boehmer, Committee Chair