

Academic Integrity in Intercollegiate Athletics: Principles, Rules, and Best Practices

Introduction

There are three primary rationales for intercollegiate athletics: 1) for the athlete, the discipline and values of sports can contribute to personal development reinforcing academic excellence; 2) for the campus, the ceremonies and competition of intercollegiate sports can contribute to community and institutional loyalty; 3) for the college and university community, college sports can broaden positive interest in and public support for higher education.

While the experience of the past century has frequently called into question whether these ideas have a close relationship to the practice of college sports, the Coalition for Intercollegiate Athletics has adopted these principles as goals in its advocacy of intercollegiate athletics reform. College sports should be pursued in a way that bears out these claims for its value. If that has not generally been the case in the past, we need to change our practices.

None of the values ascribed to college sports can be realized if we abandon the principle that personal development through athletics participation and academic achievement are linked. Yet experience suggests that in many sports programs, academic goals are treated as subordinate, and in a variety of ways students are encouraged or enabled to let their athletics commitment undermine their academic work. To the degree that athletics undermines academic integrity, it reflects a cynical attitude towards the ideals of college sports and of higher education.

It is a norm of long standing in higher education governance that the faculty bears primary responsibility for maintaining the academic standards of institutions. For this reason, the COIA, as a faculty-governance based coalition devoted to athletics reform, has developed the following set of proposals and guidelines to help faculty fulfill their responsibilities with regard to the impact of athletics on academic standards and integrity.

The Coalition is an alliance of NCAA Division IA faculty senates, and proposals and recommendations in this document are intended to apply only to Division IA schools, although in the case of proposed NCAA bylaw changes, the NCAA structure requires that proposals apply to all of Division I. It is our hope, however, that to the degree that these ideas articulate well founded principles, they will be of use to all schools that engage in intercollegiate sports.

The recommendations are in five sections: *

- 1. Admissions**
- 2. Scholarships**
- 3. Curricular Integrity**
- 4. Time Commitment, Missed Class Time, and Scheduling of Competitions**
- 5. Policies Concerning the Office of Academic Advising for Athletes**

*Proposals within each section are numbered. Boldface numbers indicate proposals for NCAA bylaw changes (there are seven altogether: 2.1, 3.1-2, 4.2.3, 4.2.5-7). Other proposals are best-practice guidelines for schools to consider and adapt according to local needs and judgments, or general calls for action on the part of Division IA schools.

1. Admissions

It is well documented that at most Division IA universities a substantial number of students admitted on athletics scholarships do not meet normal minimal admissions criteria. This is often rationalized on the grounds that athletics accomplishments reflect character strengths that raise predicted likelihood of academic success. Whatever the validity of such arguments, there is widespread suspicion that they are misapplied to cases where admissions is based solely on the interest of athletics programs to recruit winning teams, without regard for the academic integrity of the admissions process.

The practical integrity of admissions processes and the applicability to individual cases of arguments concerning the value of athletics accomplishments are difficult for faculty to evaluate in their role as stewards of academic integrity. At many institutions, faculty have not historically been responsible for setting minimum standards for admissions, or in monitoring how these are administered in practice. However, because of a history of problems associated with college sports, the Coalition recommends the following policy statements as a recommendation for individual campus faculties to consider:

1.1 Campus administrations and Faculty Governance Bodies should develop policies setting criteria for special admission of scholarship athletes. These criteria should be set with regard to both minimum standards for regular admissions and average qualifications of entering students, and should exceed the NCAA thresholds for initial eligibility, which envision the least challenging academic environments of Division I schools, to the degree that institutions consider their academic environments to create challenges beyond those minimal levels.

1.2 Campus administrations and faculty governance bodies should develop policies setting a maximum annual number of such special admissions for athletes, either for all sports programs taken together, or for individual programs.

1.3 The Campus Athletics Board shall receive information on all scholarship athlete special admits, and shall annually certify to the campus Faculty Governance Body compliance with these policies.

1.4 Analogous policies and procedures should be developed to govern admission of transfer students who are scholarship athletes.

It is sometimes objected that because other candidates for admissions may be advantaged on grounds other than merit related to academic promise, such as so-called “legacy” students, it would be unfair to address the issue as it may pertain to athletes. Because the Coalition’s charge is restricted to intercollegiate athletics reform it is not in a position to recommend policy on admission for non-athletes, though members may share concern in that area, and see it as a viable subject for faculty to address. The Coalition, however, does take the position that if a practice related to athletics undermines the educational mission of a university, the existence of other practices that may undermine the mission is no grounds to continue it.

There is anecdotal information indicating the particular difficulty faced by athletes who transfer to four-year institutions from two-year institutions. The COIA is not aware of good data pertaining to the success of athletes who transfer from junior colleges. Because concerns about possible problems are of longstanding, the Coalition supports the following recommendation:

1.5 The NCAA is encouraged to compile data and undertake a systematic study of the success rate of athletes transferring from junior colleges and of problems particular to this transition, with the goal of providing information that can help guide schools in admissions decisions and effective counseling. Such a study should include a survey of the impact of recent NCAA academic reforms on junior college transfer students.

2. Scholarships

The basis for the award of athletics scholarships is generally athletics excellence, but the purpose of the award is to provide access to higher education. While coaches may recommend a scholarship offer in the hope of recruiting a skilled athlete, the school's rationale must be academic, based either on an athlete's fine academic record, or on the premise that past athletic accomplishment is a predictor of future academic success. From the school's standpoint, retention of any scholarship should be determined on the basis of academic criteria.

Currently athletic scholarships at many Division IA schools are awarded on a one-year renewable basis, and an athlete's commitment to participation and success in athletics may determine scholarship renewal. Athletes may be placed in a position where continued academic opportunity requires prioritizing athletics participation and success over academics, in a manner inconsistent with the positive values of intercollegiate athletics. The Coalition recommends the following policies, to be implemented through NCAA bylaws:

2.1 Athletics scholarships for entering first-year students shall be awarded for a term of up to five years, subject to students' maintenance of good academic standing and conformity with campus codes for student behavior. Athletics scholarships for transfer students should be awarded on the same basis, with the term adjusted on the basis of graduation by the fifth year of college enrollment. Athletics scholarships entail an expectation of at least two years full participation in intercollegiate sports and conformity with athletic department standards of conduct; this expectation may be waived for cause at the discretion of the chief campus academic officer.

2.2 Continued funding for scholarships of students who have withdrawn from participation in intercollegiate athletics may be charged to the athletics department if the student's withdrawal from athletics is determined by the campus to have been caused by misconduct on the part of members of the athletics department. In other cases, primary funding responsibility should belong to the campus; specific policies for division of responsibility should be developed by each institution.

Until these policies may be adopted as NCAA bylaws, the COIA recommends them as best practices, to be considered and adapted by local campus faculty governance.

While these policies will strengthen the integrity of the role of athletics on campus, ultimately the rationale for athletics scholarships is fundamentally weak. A scholarship award based solely on athletic ability and commitment to participate in varsity sports is not defensibly distinguished from payment for services, and such scholarships further encourage high-school athletes who are college aspirants to prioritize sports over academics. To accomplish an intercollegiate athletics framework that furthers the social function and reflects the values of higher education, scholarship support should be based solely on need or academic merit. This was the position of the NCAA a half-century ago, and it was right.

The Coalition is aware that proposals to convert scholarships to a need basis have been considered and rejected in the past, and recognizes that there are several reasons why it is difficult to convert to a need-based system. Such a change would have a direct financial effect on athletes and their families, who could legitimately object to such a “change in the rules” after their expectations had been formed. Moreover, it would be very difficult to design a system in which the result of the change did not significantly alter the competitive balance of schools, since differentials in school cost of attendance would work in favor of schools with lower costs – the Coalition recognizes as a practical matter that reforms that affect competitive balance may meet with resistance, and supports looking for solutions that can minimize this effect while achieving the objective sought.

Nevertheless, the Coalition urges that the NCAA organize and all schools support a commission to devise a process to convert athletics scholarship to a need basis. Such a process could entail features such as the following:

- an NCAA function as clearinghouse of scholarship awards, to ensure that need is assessed and addressed comparably by all schools;
- a determination of need that may differ reasonably from federal and state standards, which may diminish the potential impact of the change on high-cost schools;
- a determination of cost of attendance or of anticipated family contribution that may differ from federal and state standards in order to ensure that there is no diminution in access to higher education for athletes with financial need;
- a schedule of implementation that would ensure that varsity athletes, as well as aspirants who would soon seek admissions and scholarships, will not be affected;
- phased implementation over four years, to minimize differential effects on members of a single team.

The Coalition will support all reasonable efforts to diminish the impact of such a change on the expectations of athletes and their families, and the effects of such a change on competitive balance. This will be a difficult objective to accomplish. However, we believe that the beneficial effects of such a change on institutional integrity and on the role of college sports nationally, particularly if coupled with reforms in admissions processes, will be deeply significant.

3. Curricular Integrity

The campus faculty bears primary responsibility for ensuring that academic programs conform to high standards of integrity in curriculum and student evaluation. On many campuses, this role is performed by faculty within individual schools or units. However, continuing reports of compromises in academic integrity related to athletics have been persistent over the past century, and are a matter of concern to campus faculty as a whole. The most common forms of reported abuse are courses or programs intentionally designed to attract athletes by being academically unchallenging, either in content or in grading, preferential grading for athletes, and compromised class enrollments for individual athletes that permit them to complete unusually large numbers of credit hours without facing normal academic challenges. The COIA makes no judgment about the validity of such reports; our concern is that campus faculties be provided the information necessary to determine whether there is evidence of abuse, and authority to establish the policies and procedures necessary to investigate and remediate if they appear warranted.

The principal tool necessary to allow campus faculties to determine whether the possibility of abuse is occurring is data concerning enrollment and grading patterns of students in individual sports programs. Such data would be designed to reveal whether there are clusters of athletes enrolled in identical courses or in courses with identical instructors, unusually high class GPAs in such courses or from such instructors, or grades significantly higher than predicted for athletes as compared to others in such courses or from such instructors. The presence of positive data in this regard is not necessarily an indication of compromised integrity, but compromised integrity would likely generate such indicators, and their presence should be a cause for concern and inquiry.

For this reason, the Coalition recommends that such data be collected and made available to campus faculty governance, which should also be empowered to report on it and investigate the significance of problematic features. In this regard, the Coalition recommends the adoption of an NCAA Division I bylaw, as follows:

3.1 Campuses shall collect data on athlete enrollments and grades by course and by instructor, including indication of course GPAs, for each individual sport, and shall convey that information to the campus Faculty Governance Body, to the degree that the anonymity of individual students is protected in accordance with law. Where no campus Faculty Governance Body exists, the information shall be conveyed to the Campus Athletics Board.

In addition, to prevent evasion of the educational purposes of progress-towards-degree requirements, the Coalition recommends the adoption of an NCAA bylaw, as follows:

3.2 The number of credit hours acquired in a single term that may be applied to progress towards degree criteria shall be limited by institutions according to norms of student enrollments, and shall in any event not exceed seventeen.

Until these policies may be adopted as NCAA bylaws, the COIA recommends them as best practices, to be considered and adapted by local campus faculty governance.

In addition, the Coalition recommends the following best practices:

3.3 Campus administrators and Faculty Governance Bodies should develop policies and procedures specifying the format in which such data will be presented, the degree to which the data shall be made public or restricted, and the degree of FERPA protections required accordingly.

3.4 The Faculty Governance Body should create a committee on academic integrity, specifically assigned to review and interpret data collected concerning athlete enrollment and grade point patterns, in order to determine whether data consistent with a failure of academic integrity exist. This committee may be organized as a subcommittee of a standing committee on educational policies or academic affairs, to which it would report.

3.5 Campus administrators and Faculty Governance Bodies should develop policies and procedures allowing for investigation of problematic data concerning athlete enrollment or GPA patterns, and for remediation, if deemed necessary.

On many campuses, team coaches have regular or adjunct academic appointments and offer courses for academic credit, generally related to athletics. While coaches may be well qualified to offer academic courses in some areas, the history of and potential for abuse are well known; in cases where an instructor-coach has grading authority over an athlete, conflict of interest is very clear. The Coalition offers the following proposals as best practices:

3.6 No athlete should be permitted to take for credit a course instructed by any varsity coach or assistant coach, unless granted an exception under policies and controls developed by the campus faculty governance body.

3.7 No coach or assistant coach shall participate in any grade assignment in an academic course for an athlete participating in a sport for which he or she serves as a coach. Faculty governance bodies should consider whether such policies should be extended to cover assignment of grades to athletes in other varsity sports.

On some campuses, academic credit towards degrees is awarded for varsity participation. This practice is clearly in conflict with academic integrity, especially where the coaching staff is involved in assessing student performance. An argument may be made that this is little worse than offering credit towards degrees for physical education classes, which is a widespread practice. Because the Coalition's charge is restricted to intercollegiate athletics reform, it is not in a position to recommend policy on such courses, though members may agree that their status is a viable subject for faculty to address. However, the fact that some may deem physical education classes unfit for academic credit cannot serve as a rationale to award academic credit for varsity sports. Therefore, the Coalition recommends the following policy:

3.8 No academic credit shall be awarded for participation in varsity sports, and no course shall be open only to varsity athletes.

4. Time Commitment, Missed Class Time, and Scheduling of Competitions

It is sometimes said that education is the only industry where the less one provides for the price the more pleased customers are – most of us, when we are students, welcome a day off from class or a homework-free weeknight. Athletes are no different, and the rewards of competition in an area of their special skills has the potential for many to weaken further the commitment to coursework and class attendance. Faculty work hard to engage students in learning, and perhaps in no other area does a university signal an inappropriate prioritization of athletics over academics than when, by policy or by administrative decisions it sends the message that training or competitions take priority over class attendance and coursework. While travel time and the practicalities of tournament play may make some missed class days inevitable, it is the responsibility of faculty and administrators, at individual schools and in conferences, to ensure that missed time is kept to a carefully designed minimum.

4.1 Total time commitment

The NCAA has established detailed rules and monitoring procedures designed to limit to four hours per day and twenty hours per week the amount of training and competition time athletes are required to devote to their sports. This limit pertains only to required activities set by the coaching staff, not to personal decisions athletes may make to devote time to training; and for safety reasons, NCAA bylaws allow for coaching staff to provide general supervision for athletes undertaking personal training beyond the twenty-hour limit.

There is widespread belief that the twenty-hour rule is in many programs routinely violated, either purposefully, by coaching staffs, or because monitoring is not pursued with care or in good faith. Individual athletes must make their own choices about the amount of time they can devote to training, and the best choices will vary widely among athletes. But coaching staffs and others acting for the university are obligated to abide by the twenty-hour rule.

NCAA and conference groups continue to discuss how refinements in the twenty-hour rule can better accomplish its goals, and the COIA encourages these efforts. However, training-time issues involve an unusual number of ambiguous situations, and problems have less to do with inadequate rules than with a failure by coaching staffs to take seriously the academic priorities of the students who play for them. In the view of the COIA, to accomplish the goals of the twenty-hour rule, incentives must be created to help coaching staffs see their role as helping foster the all-around student development that athletics has the potential to reinforce, rather than as maximizing athletics excellence, even at the cost of academics.

For this reason, the COIA supports a proposal under discussion by the N4A:

4.1.1 Coaches must share accountability for the academic achievement of the athletes they select for admissions consideration. Data on continuing eligibility and graduation rates of each recruiting class brought by individual head coaches to their institutions should be maintained, according to uniform standards, to establish a public record of

coaches' academic success, and follow that coach from institution to institution, including a record of historical disincentive penalties.

Such a process will increase the likelihood that coaches' commitment to appropriate academic-athletics balance will have an impact on the assessment of their success and the shape of their careers. It will also help ensure that in seeking team success, coaches are less likely inappropriately to recruit students who are unlikely to succeed academically at their institutions, a practice that damages schools, students, and intercollegiate sports.

In addition, the COIA recommends as best practices:

4.1.2 The campus administration and athletics department, in consultation with the Campus Athletics Board, establishes clear policies regarding how the academic success of athletes bears on coaches' job descriptions, and how academic performance will be weighed in reviews and personnel decisions regarding coaching staffs. Campus procedures allow the CAB or its personnel subcommittee to review policy implementation, and to report annually to the campus administration and Faculty Governance Body its assessment of the integrity with which these policies are implemented.

4.1.3 Procedures for exit interviews with athletes should include a focus on issues pertaining to compliance with the twenty-hour rule, and these data should be considered by the FAR and CAB in assessments of program integrity.

4.2 Season length and scheduling

NCAA bylaws specify that member institutions shall limit season length and other scheduling elements to minimize interference with the academic programs of its athletes. However, it is clear that in certain sports, seasons are so long or scheduled in such a way as to interfere with coursework to an unacceptable degree. This is particularly true of some spring sports such as baseball, softball, and golf, where the high number of competitions requires many missed class days, and of basketball, where the competitive season bridges two semester terms. In addition, the growth of post-season competition in some sports over the past few decades has resulted in a lengthening of the total season, and conference reorganizations broadening the geographical scope of many conferences have added travel time.

In addition, there is an increasing trend in televised sports for conferences to enter into contracts that require weekday or weeknight competitions. These add to the class days missed by athletes. Particularly problematic are cases where schools without facilities to accommodate the demands of weekday football nevertheless agree to television contracts that require them, resulting in the canceling of a class day for an entire campus in order to stage a sports event.

Although schools theoretically control their scheduling choices, in fact, the dynamics of conference play and the role of conferences in media contracts make the conference a key player in determining schedules.

Competitive seasons should be long enough to allow athletes to progress in skill development, coalesce in team sports, allow most or all team members chances to participate in a variety of competitive situations, and establish a basis for overall team competition based on total wins and losses. These criteria allow intercollegiate athletics to accomplish the positive effects that give it value to students and campuses. Seasons should not extend over more competitions or more calendar time than necessary to accomplish these goals, since further extension generates at best diminishing positive returns at direct cost to the academic progress of athletes. With regard to season length, COIA supports the following proposal:

4.2.1 The NCAA should commission FAR-led groups to review the present NCAA limits on regular season length, in order to determine the number of competitions necessary to accomplish the basic goals of each sport. NCAA limits on regular season competitions should be adjusted to match these recommendations. Adjustments that are warranted on academic grounds must be made regardless of the financial implications; if it is found that the season schedule of a revenue sport, such as basketball, is creating challenges to academic success too demanding for athletes realistically to meet, its length must be reduced.

4.2.2 The NCAA, conferences, and other consortia should avoid any further extension of post-season competitions unless corresponding reductions are made in regular season schedules.

The NCAA permits schools to divide seasons into two distinct segments in sports other than football and basketball; this option may be restricted to a split of training seasons, but may also involve intercollegiate competitions. In some sports, this has led to the establishment of “non-traditional playing seasons.” Engagement in both traditional and non-traditional seasons means athletes may experience no school terms free of the pressures of intercollegiate competitions, and for students who need a “breather” to focus on academics, this can be a difficult problem that outweighs any possible benefits a split season may offer. Therefore:

4.2.3 NCAA bylaw 17.1.2, permitting divided seasons, should be amended to specify that it does not apply to intercollegiate competitions.

As noted earlier, basketball season scheduling presents a particular problem, since the traditional season bridges two semesters. The NCAA is currently considering the feasibility of shifting the start of the basketball season to a point after Fall final exams. There is a need to determine whether data suggests that the current schedule or one that extends throughout the Spring term would place greater academic burdens on basketball players. The COIA will support a national basketball schedule set to best accommodate the academic needs of athletes.

With regard to the issue of weekday competitions, it is very difficult to justify such scheduling, but there may be cases where reaching minimum season length or avoiding multiple team trips to a single region necessarily involves clustering competitions in a Friday-Sunday format. In the case of televised football and basketball games, the rationale is frequently that lesser known schools are only able to get valuable televised coverage on weekdays. While the lure of the revenue and publicity these contests may

generate is certainly understandable, this appears to be a clear example of overcommercialization: that is, a damaging compromise of values central to the university mission in order to secure commercial support. For this reason, COIA supports the following proposals:

4.2.4 Conferences and institutions should develop plans to convert regular season schedules over time so that all competitions will be scheduled for weekend or Friday night dates, with exceptions for a limited number of Friday daytime competitions, justified by logistics of travel and approved by conferences and institutions on a case-by-case basis. In sports where the obstacles to this change are greatest because of established traditions or scheduling challenges, such as basketball and golf, considerable lead time may be necessary and steps may have to be introduced gradually. But the goal of removing from scheduling direct challenges to students' classroom success should guide future decisions.

4.2.5 NCAA rules should not permit cancellation of campus classes for an athletics event.

It is competition travel to other schools that most often leads to missed class days for athletes. The NCAA addresses total travel time issues in terms of allowable reimbursements to athletes under bylaw 16.8.1.2.1, and imposes certain limits. These limits are generous, envisioning departure up to 48 hours before competition and return 36 hours after. The COIA supports a reduction of these limits (certain exceptions, as detailed within the current bylaw, could still apply):

4.2.6 During periods of regular academic year classes, scheduled arrival time for team travel to competitions shall not be more than 24 hours prior to competition, with total travel to the event not to exceed 36 hours; scheduled return departure time shall be no later than 18 hours after scheduled completion of competition, with total return travel time not to exceed 30 hours.

Academic calendars differ among schools and it is difficult to generalize about what periods of time may be more important academically than others. However, it is unquestionable that periods of final exams are critical and athletes should not be required to participate in competitions during final exam periods. Ultimately, competition calendars are primarily developed at the conference level and approved by institutions. The NCAA should adopt the following rule, to protect institutions from conference or other pressures to compromise the principle that during final exam week, athletes should be permitted to be full-time students:

4.2.7 No institution shall be permitted to schedule athletics competitions during final exam periods on that school's campus.

4.3 Calendar approval procedures

Missed class days are a matter of academic integrity. It is essential that faculty recognize and respect the fact that classes missed because of competition are beyond the control of athletes, and make accommodations to allow athletes to complete course requirements without prejudice. But when athletes miss more than a minimal number of classes instructional goals are undermined and time and resources are increasingly diverted to

help athletes compensate, at cost to faculty and other students. Accordingly, faculty have a deep interest in ensuring that athletics scheduling accords with NCAA principles for minimizing interference with academics, and competition schedules should be approved with meaningful faculty participation.

Schedules are developed at both institutional and conference levels, procedures for approval at both levels should involve faculty. Many scheduling arrangements are made many years in advance and others are determined in the context of complex contract negotiations on the conference level. Meaningful faculty participation means that approval of appropriate faculty, such as FARs and members of the Campus Athletics Board, is sought at points where changes in scheduling can realistically be made.

The COIA recommends the following best practices:

4.3.1 Each campus should develop a set of principles concerning norms and limits of missed class time that should guide annual approval decisions in each sport. These principles should be developed in consultation with the FAR, the Campus Athletics Board, and the Faculty Governance Body.

4.3.2 Each conference should develop a set of principles concerning norms and limits of missed class time that should guide annual approval decisions in each sport. These principles should be developed by conference FARs, in consultation with their Campus Athletics Boards and Faculty Governance Bodies, and should not be less restrictive than campus-based principles of conference members.

4.3.3 Annual conference competition schedules should accord with conference principles on missed class time and be adopted only with approval by conference FARs, who should be consulted on all conference scheduling plans and options at a point early enough that their views will affect the final plan offered for their approval.

4.3.4 Annual non-conference competition schedules should accord with individual campus principles on missed class time and be adopted only with approval by the Campus Athletics Board, which should be consulted on all conference scheduling plans and options at a point early enough that its views will affect the final plan offered for their approval.

5. Policies Concerning the Office of Academic Advising for Athletes (OAAA)

NCAA legislation addresses only baseline programs and services to be provided by Division I schools, and there is wide variation in the quality and breadth of services provided to athletes. Academic advisors for athletes have become professionalized, with their own national organization; advisors on individual campuses receive guidance from their national association, and also respond to formal and informal requirements set for them by the institution and athletics department personnel.

The success of athlete advising is critical for the academic integrity of campus sports programs. Faculty have a responsibility to understand the role of the OAAA, and to be assured that the office of academic advising for athletes is structured to operate with

integrity. The participation of the director of that office on the Campus Athletics Board has been recommended by the COIA as a best practice.

There is a natural tension between the academic goals of advising and goals of athletics success shared by athletes and coaches. Program integrity does not require eliminating this tension – it is an inevitable feature of college sports. Integrity is the product of managing this tension in such a way that the academic focus of the college experience is preserved. To the degree that coaches and Athletics Directors share this goal of integrity, the advisor’s task is simplified. When this is not the case, advisors are the front line for preserving academic integrity.

The single most difficult issue that confronts the OAAA is to maintain a focus on maximizing the academic accomplishments of athletes, given their athletics commitments, rather than on maintaining their athletic eligibility. A focus on eligibility will lead athletes towards unchallenging courses and majors, and overuse of academic support. Eligibility standards are the lowest levels of academic accomplishment that universities will tolerate, not goals for students to aim for. Historically, advisors have often encountered pressures from coaches and others to minimize the academic challenges athletes face in order to ensure continuing eligibility and meet graduation rate expectations. Athletes may adopt these minimal goals as well. The OAAA must be structured and led in ways that will help it resist these pressures and focus on motivating athletes to use their academic opportunities to maximize personal growth, intellectual skills, and career success.

The proposed guidelines are not meant to be comprehensive or exhaustive, and it is not expected that each guideline will be applicable to every institution. The guidelines are best used jointly by members of the office of academic advising for athletes, those involved in campus athletics governance, and faculty governance leaders to assess current programs and envision possible improvements.

Certain values or principles inform many of these guidelines. These principles provide a rationale for the recommendations of effective practices.

Academic integrity. The core mission of athletic academic support programs should be to help athletes maximize their academic performance, assume responsibility for their learning, reach attainable academic goals, and make progress toward degree completion. Because the focus of advising is academic achievement and personal growth, although the pressures and rewards of athletics participation are central issues for athletes and their advisors, the role of advisors must be to advocate for *academic* choices and efforts that are in the athletes’ interest and have integrity.

Integration. Athletes should be integrated in the student body. The intercollegiate athletics program, including its academic support services, should be an integral part of the institution’s educational system. While the OAAA provides specialized services to athletes, it should encourage and expect athletes to utilize the institution’s regular academic services.

Scrutiny and support. Unique among campus advisors, academic advisors for athletes are at the interface of the often competing pressures that characterize all intercollegiate

athletics: the dual imperatives to succeed academically and athletically. While many athletics departments, administrators, and coaches are committed to fostering academic excellence, history indicates that athletics advisors may sometimes feel strong pressures to prioritize the interests of teams over their judgments of the academic interests of individual students. For this reason, the academic advising office must receive strong institutional support and attention.

Personal adjustment. Programs and services should help athletes adjust effectively to the various developmental transitions they face in college. Skills needed to cope with changes from high school to college, and then to life after college, should be provided in a well-designed and integrated program. Successful programs will ensure that while the OAAA monitors athletes' academic accomplishment, athletes are led to take increasing responsibility for utilizing campus resources and pursuing academic goals.

Effectiveness. Programs should be held accountable for quality and impact on students' academic achievement. Assessments of programs and services, both internal and external, should be made on a regular schedule.

Campus comparability. The unit's mission and breadth of services should be conceived in terms of the norms of the campus. Because athletes require special skills in time management, must track eligibility issues in making academic choices, and miss classes because of competition schedules, there is reason to provide athletes with enhanced support services. However, athlete support must not reach levels that eliminate academic challenges essential to intellectual growth or that create visible inequities on campus that suggest privileged status and undermine the mission of athletics to promote campus community and loyalty. Similarly, while campuses should ensure that Offices of Academic Advising for Athletes have staff, salary, and budget support commensurate with the challenges and responsibilities undertaken, qualified and well staffed undergraduate advising must be a campuswide priority, and support for athletics advising must not be at a level that creates campus resentment by indicating prioritization of athletics over other parts of the academic community.

Guidelines for the Office of Academic Advising for Athletes

[Drafting comments are added to this section for clarity.]

5.1. Organization.

5.1.1 The OAAA reports directly to the campus office of academic affairs. Campuses may choose to have a secondary reporting line to the Director of Athletics, but primary control over academic advising must derive from the chief academic officer of the campus.

Advising is an academic function, and it belongs primarily to the academic side; the campus academic affairs office must be accountable for the quality and integrity of the advising provided all its students. For this reason, the OAAA should report to the office of the chief academic officer of the campus. The campus office of academic affairs should be responsible for and involved with OAAA personnel decisions, supervise policies and procedures for academic advising of athletes, and have authority in budget

decisions concerning academic advising. However, it is essential that the OAAA operate with the strong support of the Director of Athletics, in order to combat potential pressures to substitute the goal of continued eligibility for academic accomplishment, and to motivate athletes to make the most of academic opportunities. In addition, it is common for the OAAA to provide athlete services beyond advising, and the design and operation of these services requires the involvement and support of the Athletics Department. ADs should be provided positive opportunities for engagement with the OAAA mission. Campuses should consider, in delineating OAAA reporting lines, whether this goal will best be met by means of a secondary reporting line or by other means through which the AD can become positively engaged in the mission of the OAAA. The structure that will best ensure support of the OAAA academic mission and best guard against efforts to focus on eligibility over accomplishment, in light of campus culture and organization, will represent best practice for campuses. However, in all cases, ultimate accountability for the integrity of the OAAA must lie clearly with the chief academic officer.

5.1.2 The OAAA works closely with the FAR.

The free flow of information between the OAAA and the FAR allows the FAR to support the academic mission of the OAAA, in accord with the role of faculty representative. The FAR should be fully apprised by the OAAA Director of all issues bearing on the integrity of the advising program.

5.1.3 The OAAA is represented by its Director on a regularly convened committee that monitors the relationship between athletics programs and campus academic and support units, bringing together administrative officers and others responsible for key elements of athlete support and services, such as the Registrar, Bursar, Athletics Director, FAR, Compliance Officer, and a high academic administrator. The OAAA Director and FAR should have the prerogative to introduce agenda items.

5.1.4 The OAAA collaborates closely with other campus advising units.

A full understanding of the goals, practices, and requirements of campuswide and departmental advising units is essential to ensuring that the OAAA meets the highest campus standards of academic advising, makes maximum use of campus resources, and enables athletes to be aware and make use of the resources available to other students.

5.1.5 The OAAA collaborates closely with other campus student support units.

Close coordination with student service units on campus will help ensure that OAAA services conform to best campus practices, that athletes make the best use of these services, and that the OAAA does not inefficiently duplicate services already provided on campus.

5.1.6 The OAAA has a clearly defined mission statement, consistent with that of the campus, that specifies the centrality of academic integrity to the unit mission.

5.1.7 The OAAA develops regular and frequent internal self-assessment procedures for all its programs, and works with the campus to arrange periodic campus assessments of

its academic advising and athlete services components, to ensure successful external NCAA certification reviews.

In order to create a continuing dynamic for improved OAAA services, the NCAA, perhaps in conjunction with the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletes, should devote resources to research on effective OAAA programs. Conferences are encouraged to support annual meetings of OAAA directors to discuss problems, opportunities, and best practices.

5.2. Personnel.

A. Director.

5.2.1 The Director should have a Master's or Doctoral degree in student counseling or a related field.

The increasing responsibilities of the OAAA on many campuses has led at some schools to a required or preferred qualification of a doctoral degree in a field of relevant expertise, and this is recommended as a best practice.

5.2.2 The Director should have prior experience in student counseling, personnel and budget management, and athletics, with a history of rules compliance and commitment to ethical practices.

5.2.3 The Director should have independence in developing and implementing policies related to academic advising, subject to the supervision of the campus office of academic affairs.

5.2.4 The Director should be directly responsible for the development of program budgets, allocation of unit resources, assignment of advisor case loads and other unit duties, and all unit personnel decisions.

5.2.5 The Director should be responsible for designing and supervising advisor training programs.

5.2.6 The Director should have final authority over advising staff, under the supervision of the campus academic officer, subject only to usual institutional rules governing the authority and responsibility of unit heads.

5.2.7 The Director should have appropriate and specified authority over support staff.

5.2.8 The Director should be responsible for designing and supervising tutor and mentor training programs.

5.2.9 The salary of the Director, and of all positions in the OAAA, should be determined by the office of academic affairs, with due regard for the specialized skills and work schedules of OAAA personnel, external market conditions, and issues of campus equity.

B. Academic Advisors.

5.2.10 Advisors should preferably have a Master's degree in student counseling or a related field, and experience in student counseling.

5.2.11 Advisors should participate in professional development opportunities.

5.2.12 Advisors should participate in on-campus training provided by other campus academic or advising units.

5.2.13 Advisors should be assigned manageable case loads.

5.2.14 No advisor should report directly to a coach.

5.2.15 Advisors should be trained to operate as a team, and should not be individually assigned to advise certain teams; all advisors should share advising of athletes on all teams, and should meet together regularly with the coaches of every team.

Although many coaches are committed to the academic success of their athletes, the influence of coaches over academic advising should be strictly limited. There is a significant imbalance of power between coaches and advisors, and coaches' goals may differ significantly from those of academic advisors. Although there are many conveniences to assigning individual advisors to each team, the potential for the authority and independence of advisors to be undermined is far too great, and the elimination of team-coaching duties for individual advisors is a best practice designed to improve conditions for academic integrity. Schools that have adopted this model have reported success, but it has not been broadly tested; it is recommended that schools consider its advantages in seeking to improve academic integrity in advising, and that information on the comparative merits of the two systems be collected for ongoing assessment.

5.2.16 Advisors communicate closely with advisors in athletes' major department, in order to ensure that athletes receive consistent and accurate counseling.

5.2.17 Advisors review and have the option to endorse petitions for NCAA academic waivers.

NCAA continuing eligibility requirements may sometimes conflict with legitimate academic goals, such as changes of major motivated by shifts in student interest or career goals. Judicious NCAA review of petitions will be more likely if reliable advisor assessments are included. Campuses should include advisors in such petition procedures, and should design procedures to ensure that advisor judgments about the academic integrity of petitions are not subject to distortion.

C. Other Appointees.

5.2.18 Learning specialists, life-skill coordinators, and other additional staff should be appointed to manage major OAAA program activities apart from academic advising, as necessary. These positions may be shared with other campus student services units to maximize efficient use of resources.

5.3. Programmatic Functions

A. Academic Advising.

The OAAA:

5.3.1 Provides re-assessment of newly enrolled athletes' abilities and skills.

Because the proportion of sponsored admits tends to be higher for athletes than for other student populations, the identification of at-risk students is particularly critical for the OAAA. Because of the potential for the time management problems associated with athletics to interfere with academic achievement, it is unusually important for advisors to athletes to be able to set baseline academic expectations for individual students.

5.3.2 Provides academic counseling for academic progress.

The central function of academic advisors for athletes is high quality counseling to optimize students' academic accomplishments, relative to their academic potential and their evolving long-term goals.

5.3.3 Monitors and tracks academic progress during semester and towards degree completion.

Because of the competing demands of athletics and academics, the OAAA is more proactive in monitoring and evaluating student progress than other campus advising units.

5.3.4 Assists students in identifying career goals and choosing a major.

This function may require coordination with campus or other unit advisors. Advisors must help students focus on their long-range interests in choosing a major, rather than on the goal of minimizing potential time and effort conflicts between academics and athletics.

5.3.5 Offers assistance in course scheduling.

Once students choose a major, departmental advisors should be chiefly responsible for course scheduling advice, but the OAAA may continue involvement in order to review for issues of eligibility and time conflicts. The objective should be to resolve conflicts so as best to accommodate academic goals.

5.3.6 Monitors issues of academic eligibility.

Advisors ensure that students are aware of institutional and departmental requirements to remain in good academic standing.

5.3.7 Monitors issues of athletic eligibility.

The OAAA provides athletes with information concerning all policies related to eligibility, and assists the student in assessing how best to accomplish academic goals while maintaining eligibility. Advisors coordinate with certification specialists in order to ensure that students are able to make well-informed decisions.

B. Academic Support Services

5.3.8 Provides specialized programming and assistance for the freshman transition.

5.3.9 Assists students in developing academic planning and time management skills.

Time management is an unusually critical issue for athletes. The OAAA should have programs to help all athletes develop superior time management skills.

5.3.10 Provides mentoring for at-risk students.

While, in principle, schools assess athletics success as one predictor of college achievement, the OAAA must anticipate that a portion of athletes will be underprepared for college academically. Individualized mentoring programs, particularly for first- and second-year at risk students, must be a significant unit focus. However, it is equally critical that athletes in these programs realize that they are expected to develop the skills necessary for college success in a timely manner. Mentoring programs must be designed to foster student academic independence, and should limit interventions in such a way as to promote this goal.

5.3.11 Provides access to tutors and, when appropriate, mentors.

The OAAA guides athletes who need special academic help to student tutors and/or mentors. Historically, academic dishonesty associated with tutoring has been a problem with some athletics programs; therefore, the following item is an important facet of OAAA management.

5.3.12 Provides training and supervision for tutors and mentors.

Prospective tutors should be carefully vetted for academic qualifications and experience. The OAAA must provide significant training for tutors. This training must involve a review of ethical problems that have emerged in the past, and detailed guidelines for ethical behavior. Programs are advised to develop “contracts” that specify the responsibilities of tutors. Tutoring should be restricted to on-site meetings, or reports of tutoring activities should be submitted by tutors for individual tutoring sessions. Although tutors and athletes bear responsibility for the integrity of the tutoring process, the OAAA is accountable for adhering proactively to best practice standards in the hiring, training, and supervision of tutors and mentors.

5.3.13 Provides other appropriate learning interventions.

These may include classroom checks, required study tables, surrogate class attendees when athletes are at off-campus competitions, and so forth. The principle governing such arrangements is that athletes should be responsible for the maximum effort of which they

are academically capable, and the level of intervention should anticipate increasingly mature and responsible behavior. For example, while classroom checks may be considered appropriate for first-year students, to enforce them for juniors or seniors is to perpetuate an expectation of irresponsibility. Increasing independence and responsibility is essential to the college experience. It is unacceptable for the OAAA to inhibit this process in order to minimize risks of academic problems for teams.

5.3.14 Provides study facilities available and accessible to athletes.

Because athletes spend a great deal of time on the athletics campus, which is frequently at some distance from other parts of the campus, athletics study facilities should be available. Such facilities also should allow the OAAA to monitor tutorials, required study tables, and so forth, which may be especially valuable in helping athletes make the transition to college. It should be emphasized that athletes are fully responsible for making use of other campus facilities, such as the Library.

5.3.15 Provides laptop computer loans for athletics travel.

5.3.16 Provides priority registration services.

New NCAA progress-towards-degree requirements make it increasingly necessary for athletes to have some level of priority in class choices, a service that has previously been justified principally on the basis of athletics practice scheduling conflicts. Registration is a campuswide issue, and campus faculty should develop policy governing registration privileges for student groups with special needs that gives due consideration to the increased scheduling pressures on athletes.

C. Athlete Support Services

5.3.17 Provides assistance or program for transition out of collegiate sports.

5.3.18 Advises athletes of campus programs and services relating to: life skills development, career exploration, career skills assessment, job search preparation, graduate school application, internships, and so forth. Where campus services may not exist, the OAAA may advocate for them, or provide independent services for athletes.

It is important for the integration of athletes in the campus student body that they be aware of and make use of the resources of the campus. Wherever possible, the OAAA should refrain from establishing independent programs, and instead coordinate with other campus units and proactively encourage athletes to visit them in order to make best use of the services the campus provides.

5.3.19 Supports the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC)

5.3.20 Organizes appropriate community service activities for athletes.

5.3.21 Organizes academic awards ceremonies and other activities to recognize academic accomplishments and create additional incentives.

5.3.22 Provides a substance abuse education program.

5.3.23 Provides a media education program.

5.3.24 Provides internship or graduate assistantship programs related to athletics.

5.3.25 Provides a program to educate athletes concerning agents and NCAA and campus rules governing contact with them.

5.3.26 Provides programs in diversity awareness, or participates in campuswide programs.

– submitted by the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics Steering Committee to the COIA membership for consideration, September 15, 2004