

Minutes of the November 28, 2011 meeting of the Faculty Senate Athletic Committee

The topic of the meeting was to discuss the policies and procedures of the Athletics Department with regards to university sponsored activities and events involving non-UT students. This might include activities like the summer athletics camps, etc. The genesis of this topic was the recent scandal in the Penn State Athletics department involving inappropriate staff involvement with underage youth.

Brad Bertani is one of the regular ex officio members of the committee. Brad is Director of compliance for athletics. He was contacted approximately ten days before the meeting to see if he could come prepared to discuss this topic. In addition, Robert Gibbs, Executive Director of the Conference Center, was invited upon a recommendation of the Provost, due to his extensive experience in running events that involving this population. Brad was unable to attend because of a health issue. Todd Dooley, associate director of compliance, was to serve in his place but Brad had to cancel at the last minute. Matt Hibbs, who works in compliance, came to represent Athletics.

Those in attendance were Matt Hibbs, Robert Gibbs, Dan Murphy (FAR), Donna Thomas, Director of the Thornton Center, and the following faculty members: Steve Waller, Wanda Costen, Hoan Bui, Matthew Theriot, Chris Clark, and John Koontz.

We learned that most of the summer athletics camps for sports such as football, basketball, tennis, etc. are primarily day camps whose attendees are from the surrounding east Tennessee region. This is thought to be due to the additional attendance fees that would be associated with a residential camp.

Based upon their own community experiences, two faculty members of the committee, Steve Waller and Wanda Costen, strongly indicated that the university legal council should be consulted in the planning of every aspect of these activities in order to insure minimal risk to the participants, the employees and the university .

Based on our discussion the conclusion is that the principal safeguard against the type of behavior alleged at Penn State is that all employees must undergo a background check as part of the hiring process. This check includes surveillance for criminal activity, sex offender and motor vehicle violations.

Other than this there appear to be no specific policies regarding appropriate behavior with underage youth. While everyone agree that the need for effective training of personnel working with these youth is essential there was no indication that this is an integral part of the policy of the department.

Finally a question was asked about athletics department policies regarding sexual harassment.