

Summary of the activities of the Faculty Senate Athletics committee: 2011-2012 AY

Reports on the work of the Thornton Center and student-athlete academic achievement and challenges were addressed. Special admission outcomes were discussed comparing student-athlete admission with non-athlete students. Success rates of these students were reasonably comparable.

Wanda Costen represented the university at the national meeting of the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics and reported to the committee as well as to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee on the major topics under discussion by this group. The three major issues raised at the COIA meeting were discussed, including:

- a. "pay for play" and scholarship support that covers the cost of attending
- b. the collegiate model of athletics including
 - a. the possibility of four year scholarships rather than year to year
 - b. how infractions are dealt with the penalties imposed – penalties should be assigned to coaches
- c. changes in how progression and graduation rates are used.

A meeting was devoted 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. 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.

Working with the Academic Policy Committee of the Undergraduate Council and the full UG council the committee prepared a revision to the student class attendance policy and added an excused absence policy. This was an extension of the existing policy for military service. It retains faculty autonomy over their courses. It also strives to serve the interests of students who miss class because of extenuating circumstances, including "... military orders, court-imposed legal obligations, religious observances, and participation in university, college or unit sponsored activities that lead to clear experiential and educational outcomes".