

Athletics Committee of UT Faculty Senate

Meeting Minutes from September 12, 2016

In attendance: Khalil Bostick, Don Bruce, Dawn Coe, Andrew Donovan, Sally Hunter, Chris Magra, Jow Scogin, Cary Staples, Donna Thomas, Brian Whitlock, James Williams.

Guest speaker: Sharon Couch-Fikes.

Meeting began at 3:00pm, and ended at 4:05pm.

Sharon Couch-Fikes spoke to us this month about her experiences during her 4 years as a student-athlete (track) at UNC, her 11 years as a professional athlete/ two-time Olympian, and what her life and career paths have been in the post-athlete years. Sharon is a dynamic speaker, and she shared several of the life-lessons she learned as a student-athlete. For example, she discussed the need for student-athletes to balance out their coursework over multiple semesters (“You can have it all, just not all at the same time”), the costs of being a student-athlete (“To whom much is given, much is required”), the cultural differences between student-athletes and ‘normal’ students, and her wish that she had spent more time on advising and career planning.

Sharon also graciously offered advice to faculty about how to interact with the current student-athletes here at the University of Tennessee. She spoke about the identity of student-athletes, specifically the need for them to be seen as whole people rather than ‘just’ athletes. Sharon mentioned how important it is that faculty members take the initiative to get to know the student-athletes in their classes...once the relationship has been formed, faculty have a great opportunity to “empower, not enable” student-athletes, helping them care more about their academic identity and helping them see past their athletic career and into “the after.”

Many committee members agreed with Sharon about the importance of student-athletes developing an identity beyond their athletic identity, and Joe Scogin mentioned a book that he has recently shared with the Thornton Center staff titled *The Strength of a Student Athlete: Who Before What* by Tim Elmore.

Upcoming Fall 2016 Meetings:

- **October 24** (Monday, 3:00-4:00pm at Thornton Center) = Speaker will be Benjamin Nam from KSPO Global Leadership Program.
- **November 14** (Monday, 2:00pm Meet at Pat Summit statue) = We will have a late-lunch together in the student-athlete dining facility, then a walking tour with Stephanie Horvath who is the UT Director of Sports Nutrition.

In the Spring 2017 Semester:

- February meeting = Date TBA, speakers will be
- March & April meetings = Dates & speakers TBA.