

COIA NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2008

Your faculty senate is a member of the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA), an alliance of faculty senates of NCAA Division IA schools that serves as a faculty voice in the national discussion on intercollegiate athletic reform. COIA believes that faculty governance plays an important role in controlling the problems that accompany the college athletic enterprise. COIA has established guidelines for best practices in athletics, focusing on the issues of admissions, athletic welfare and education, and fiscal responsibility. The situation on each campus is unique, yet these guidelines provide a means by which all institutions can examine their athletics' policies. COIA's guidelines and suggested best practices can be found in our papers posted on the COIA website (<http://www.uoneuro.uoregon.edu/~tublitz/COIA/index.html>).

2009 ANNUAL MEETING!

March 6-8, 2009

University of Arizona, Tucson

The 2009 COIA meeting will be held March 6-8 at the University of Arizona in Tucson. All member senates are warmly encouraged to send representatives. Please attend! COIA's success depends in large part on the active participation of its members.

How you can support COIA

By Gary Engstrand, COIA Steering Committee

I am tempted to urge all faculty leaders in institutions with major athletics programs to get their colleagues more interested in their intercollegiate athletics program and issues that affect all athletics programs across the country. I know, however, that to do so would be a waste of words. Most faculty, most of the time, don't pay attention to athletics, and neither do their senates or governing committees (except for the athletic committee and the faculty serving on it).

Making gains in the reform of college athletics is a long-term effort. College sports will not go away, despite repeated predictions over the last 75 years that they face a crisis. They face crises just about every year, so don't pin your hopes on the enterprise disappearing; college sports simply have far too much public support to disappear. What's needed is a group like COIA, which is composed of faculty leaders who may not be all that interested in athletics themselves but who are committed to doing whatever can be done to bring the athletics programs more in line with the academic goals and mission of the institutions. What you can do to help COIA is simply to continue to support it so that it can carry on its work with (mostly, but not always) the NCAA and other groups. Even more, you can ask your colleagues in peer institutions that don't belong to COIA to join. Each school makes its decision differently, some by senate action, some by executive committee vote, but the more schools with major programs lend their vote, the more effectively COIA can speak as the voice of the faculty on insisting on reforms in college athletics.

Upcoming vote on COIA by-laws

Through discussions held at the annual meeting, the COIA steering Committee has prepared by-laws that will be distributed to member senates for approval this fall.

Report of the 2008 annual meeting:

Professor Marie Hardin and COIA rep John Nichols of Penn State will be working with COIA on the preparation of a system that will rate schools on their athletic policies and procedures with respect to how well they are in accordance with the goals of the COIA white paper "Framing the Future". They will be working through the Curly Center for Sports Journalism at Penn State, which will handle data collection and analysis.

There were several guest speakers at the meeting. Britt Kirwan, Chair of the Knight Commission, and Chancellor of University of Maryland, spoke of his support for the COIA initiatives outlined in COIA's 2007 *Framing the Future* white paper. Myles Brand, President of the NCAA, discussed the importance of faculty support for the NCAA's APR (Academic Performance Ratings) that were due to be released in the spring, in light of possible resistance from coaches and athletic directors. Dutch Baughman, the Executive Director of the D1A Athletic Director's Association, discussed how his organization worked with the NCAA.

The speakers were followed by a panel discussion on the history and impact of the BCS. Panelists included Myles Brand, Dutch Baughman, and Malcom Moran, who holds the Knight Chair in Sports Journalism at Penn State University. The panel was moderated by Joe Kotarba, the COIA representative from the University of Houston.

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FAR meeting, Dallas, 2008

In its efforts to bring about change in intercollegiate athletics, COIA works with many other groups. In September, the COIA co-chairs attended a meeting of the D1A Faculty Athletic Representatives (FARs), which included a joint session with the D1A Athletic Directors (ADs). We spoke to the D1A FARs on the history and mission of COIA, and described our current initiatives. We also met outside the official meeting with a variety of leaders from other groups. This included Jo Potuto, president of the D1A FARs, Dutch Baughman, Executive Director of the D1A ADs, Alan Houser and Roger Caves, the current and future presidents of the FARA Faculty representatives Association, Joe Bruno, the Ohio State FAR and member of the NCAA Cabinet on Academic Performance (CAP), and Myles Brand and Wally Renfro, President and Senior Advisor to the President of the NCAA. In each of these meetings we stressed the common goals we all share, and our hope that we can continue to work together to achieve our goals.

Press Release

April, 2008

In a series of four reports beginning on March 16, 2008 the Ann Arbor News contended that the University of Michigan clusters athletes in programs that would put them on the easiest path to a degree and allows them to enroll in independent study courses that enabled them to pad their grade point averages. The University has denied any impropriety.

The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) has not investigated the charges; it is not our role to do so and thus we take no position on the merits and specifics of the allegations. We point out, however, that we have previously taken note of similar accusations at other universities and have warned of the potential for such abusive practices in the absence of explicit policies and controls to prevent them. Specifically, the COIA has called for universities to collect data on enrollment and grading patterns of students in individual sports programs. Such data should 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. Faculty and administrators should be charged with the responsibility for reviewing the data and ensuring that academic integrity is not being compromised. We now reiterate our appeal for universities to adopt our proposals.

The COIA has, in the past, supported the NCAA's efforts to enhance the academic experience of student-athletes. Notably, the NCAA has established a program that requires member schools to measure the academic progress of athletes and imposes penalties on both teams and individual athletes who fail to meet specified standards. We are apprehensive, however, that some athletic departments and their academic counselors may be concerned more with the athletic eligibility of students than with their education. Schools may be enhancing the academic progress ratings of their athletes by steering them to courses that are not necessarily in their best academic and vocational interests, encouraging them to enroll in independent study courses that are not, in fact, consistent with the spirit and rationale for individualized research and scholarship, and by directing them to majors and programs that are designed mainly for athletes. The current controversy involving the University of Michigan once again underscores the importance of faculty and administrative vigilance over academic practices as they pertain to athletes. It points to the urgency of the reforms proposed by the COIA.

Press Release

July, 2008

In the fall of 2003, The NCAA instituted the Academic Progress Rate (APR) as a measure of the academic success of an institution's division IA athletic teams. The APR takes into account two factors: eligibility and retention. An APR score of 925 out of 1000 corresponds roughly to a 50% graduation rate. The purpose of the APR is to

provide an incentive for division IA schools to focus on the student-athlete's education, and not just his or her athletic performance. Teams failing to reach 925 are subject to NCAA sanctions, including loss of scholarships and restrictions on practice time for short term violations and banishment from post-season competition for repeat violators.

This spring the NCAA released the first four-year APR scores for all Division I teams. Substantial progress has clearly been made. The number of teams with failing APR scores has declined since the NCAA began collecting data four years ago.

The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA), an alliance of faculty governance bodies from 56 Division IA schools, strongly supports the efforts of the NCAA to promote student-athlete academic welfare through the APR, and applauds the progress that has been made.

We strongly believe, however, that in order for the APR to continue to function as intended, penalties must be imposed on those teams failing to meet the 925 minimum standard. Only 107 or 30% of the division I football, basketball and baseball teams with APR scores below 925 received penalties. That means that 70% of teams with failing APR scores avoided penalties. The mere threat of penalties is not sufficient to produce the desired increase in student-athlete academic performance. The threatened penalties must be consistently imposed on teams not meeting the APR minimum. Questions of fairness are appropriately raised when some teams are penalized, but not others.

Since its inception in 2002, COIA has been a faculty voice promoting the integration of athletics into the academic values and goals of higher education. Faculty support is critical for the NCAA as it receives pressure to lighten or eliminate sanctions for underperforming schools. At the same time, it is imperative that the NCAA support faculty efforts to maintain the academic integrity of intercollegiate athletics.

Edited by Carole Browne, COIA Co-Chair