

Senate Athletic Committee

Final Report

May, 2020

Charges for the Senate Athletic Committee for 2019-2020 were the following:

Approved by SenEx: May 28, 2019

Approved by University Senate: September 12, 2019

Members: Heather Abernathy, Shawn Alexander, Jordan Bass, Chris Brown, Jerry Crawford, II, Tiara Floyd, Michele Ginivan-Hayes, Ashley Herda, Elizabeth Phillips, Derek Reed, Danielle Wolff, and Susan Twombly (chair). Ex officio: Paul Buskirk, Susan Williams

FY2020 Standing charges:

1. Review KU and Kansas Athletics Inc. (KAI) efforts to promote and maintain academic excellence for the student athletes.
 - a. Identify potential academic barriers and recommend mechanisms to overcome such barriers including collaboration with the student athlete academic support services.
 - b. Review current-year data on missed class days due to competition and travel
 - c. Review the following KAI academic reports: Spring and Fall Student-Athlete Grade Summary, NCAA Academic Progress Rate Institutional Report, Graduation Rates and the KAI report on academic majors for student-athletes and non-athletes
 - d. Review the effects of university changes regarding core requirements, majors, minors, certificates or other curricular issues.
2. Review KU and KAI efforts to provide a premier student athlete experience.
 - . Review programs designed to ensure the personal development and personal welfare of student athletes including: nutrition and physical health, mental health, and safety.
 - a. Review reports from KAI exit-interviews and KAI survey questions regarding participation in the broader campus community.
 - b. Review Student Athlete Advisory Committee programs and recommend opportunities to improve student athlete involvement in extracurricular campus and community activities.
3. Help ensure KU maintains athletic compliance with University, Big XII and NCAA rules and Federal law.
 - . Review educational programs and communication strategies to ensure the KU community better understands the combined responsibility for compliance.
 - a. Review and summarize KAI reports identifying athletic compliance parameters including but not limited to recruiting practices and university admissions.
 - b. Review KU and KAI policies and procedures on drug testing, diversity and sexual harassment including Title IX compliance, and alcohol use in matters of sexual assault reporting.
4. Help ensure KU meets its strategic goals pertaining to athletics.
 - . Recommend educational programs and communication strategies to enhance the balance between academics and athletics, as well as to promote a broad understanding of the goals and priorities of each.
 - a. Recommend mechanisms for improved communication between KAI coaches and staff and KU faculty, staff and students
 - b. Maintain regular communications with the NCAA/Big XII Faculty Representative, the Athletics Advisory Committee (AAC), KAI and University Governance to ensure the needs of each are being served.

FY2020 Specific charges:

1. Prepare a budget analysis on the Kansas Athletics Inc. FY2020 budget.
2. Monitor, and react if necessary and within the scope of its responsibility, to current proposals by NCAA with respect to academic misconduct.

3. The number of transfer athletes, particularly into the football program. Many of these students struggle academically and require substantial academic support.
4. Increasing popularity among student athletes of the general degree in Liberal Arts and Science. For example, a total of 15 student athletes were identified as pursuing this degree in Fall 2013. This number had nearly tripled to 42 in Fall of 2017. Fully 40% of the total general LA&S degree seekers in Fall 2017 were athletes. Although this degree provides flexibility for student athletes, especially transfers, a concern was noted about whether this generic degree provides “career value” for athletes.
5. The experience of student athletes, KAI staff, and faculty with online courses and degrees.

Summary of Topics Discussed:

Meeting #1 September, 2019. Committee met, discussed specific charges, and agreed to begin with #4, the increase in number of athletes pursuing the general LAS degree.

Meeting #2, November 4, 2019. Dr. Holly Storkel, Associate Dean for Academic Innovation and Student Success in CLAS; and Samantha Montague, Associate Director of College Outreach & Online Programs presented data on the status of the BGS in LAS as it relates to athletes. Storkel’s data are available on the Athletic Committee Blackboard site. As reported in the November 4 minutes, several questions were raised. The degree appears to be a valuable one, especially for transfer students, including athletes. Generally, athletes pursuing this degree appear to be similar to non-athletes and to perform similarly to non-athletes.

Concerns were raised about the large concentration of athletes pursuing this one degree and whether this is a concern for the NCAA. Storkel responded that the nature of the degree, which requires courses from numerous different areas, likely prevents athletes from bunching up in particular courses. This bears monitoring by future Senate Athletic Committees.

The other concern about this particular degree option is that students who pursue it are not able to declare a minor which poses some difficulties for athletes pursuing a sports management concentration as the minor is not recognized on their transcripts. Storkel explained that it is a KBOR policy to not allow minors in programs for which there is no major. A discussion ensued about why LAS could not be considered a major thus allowing minors. Although not a particularly satisfactory solution, Dr. Storkel agreed that CLAS could allow students to remain in the minor for enrollment purposes until they graduate. At that time, reference to minor would be removed. This, too, may warrant monitoring by future committees.

Meeting #3, December 2, 2019 focused on the proposed class absence policy being considered by University Senate and student athlete mental health. The committee welcomed Jane Fulton, Senior Associate Athletic Director for Student Athlete Development; Kristie Baumchen, Student Athlete Wellness Coordinator; and Kylee Kopatich, KU Leads to address the question of what is being done to ensure student athlete mental health. Kansas Athletics has an impressive array of mental health awareness and intervention options for which it pays. Kristie Baumchen reported seeing 140 student athletes for mental health related issues. About 50% were referred out for short or long-term therapy. This, too, bears monitoring in future years.

The proposed class absence policy is of considerable importance to student athletes, as well as all other students who represent the university in official capacities. Future committees should keep their eyes on the status of this policy.

Meeting #4, February 7, 2020, featured Paul Buskirk, Associate Athletics Director Student Athlete Support Services', annual report on the academic progress of KU student athletes. Data are available on the Committee's Blackboard site. Paul noted several important points from the data

1. The general university retention and 6-year graduation rates are catching up to those of athletes. Historically, the rates for athletes have been higher than for the general university undergraduate population.
 2. Student athlete success rates (whether athletes start and finish at same institution) are on par with national averages.
 3. The incoming 2020 football recruiting class has zero transfer students.
 4. The new athletic administration holds coaches responsible for making sure that athletes attend tutoring.
 5. KU has not lost any scholarships due to low APR rates.
 6. When the FAR sees a high number of missed class days, she investigates further to see if the absences are related to individual athletes or to the team.
 7. The NCAA is planning to give financial awards to conferences based on measures of academic performance. Some discussion ensued about how this money would be spent and potential ramifications of such an "award." This is a topic that bears monitoring by future committees.
- Meeting #5 The committee met on April 8, 2020 via Zoom with Jeff Long, Director of Athletics; Pat Kaufman, Chief Financial Officer; and Sean Lester, Deputy Athletics Director-Administration. The purpose of this meeting was to address specific charge #1 regarding Kansas Athletic's budget. Long and Kaufman provided an overview of the department's budget and responded to committee members' questions. In response to a question about loss of student athletic fee revenues, Long noted that these fees were fairly low and had largely been used to pay student workers. They had been made up by reallocating funds from other areas. Long noted that there is nothing imminent on the conference realignment agenda and that the Big XII works well from a financial perspective. He did note that we may see more push for regionalization to minimize student athlete travel demands. Several items arose from this meeting that bear monitoring by future committees: the effects of COVID-19 on Kansas Athletics' budget and activities; and how Name, Image, and Likeness will affect KU moving forward. Long expressed a willingness to meet with the committee at any time and asked if he could come to the committee with issues/questions on matters related to how we could help KAI.

An important recommendation emerged from this meeting:

Susan Williams suggested that the following be built into the Senate Athletic Committee's Standing Charges:

- The first meeting of each year should be a joint meeting of KAI staff and the Athletic committee.
- KAI would outline the things that are on their agenda that the committee could work on to help KAI and student athletes.
- From this meeting, the agenda for the rest of the year could be built.

Recommendations for 2020-21 Athletic Committee:

1. As a new standing charge, the committee recommends that the first meeting of each year be a joint meeting of KAI staff and the Athletic committee.
 1. KAI would outline the things that are on their agenda that the committee could work on to help KAI and student athletes. The Senate Athletic Committee could do the same
 2. From this meeting, the agenda for the rest of the year could be built.

Rationale: The role of this committee¹ is somewhat ambiguous. Although it has an oversight role, Kansas Athletics as a separate corporation has its own governing structure in which the Senate Athletic Committee has no formal role. As a result, the committee can learn much from Kansas Athletics about topics such as student athlete wellbeing but has little leverage over its internal workings. University Senate, and the Senate Athletic Committee, do however develop, approve, and administer many policies affecting student athletes, and thus Kansas Athletics. The collaborative construction of an agenda might make for a more productive two-way effort to address concerns facing both Kansas Athletics and University Senate.

2. Specific issues from this year's meeting that merit follow up by next year's committee:
 1. The number of and concentration of student-athletes in the BGS in LAS degree.
 2. The status of the proposed class absence policy.
 3. The mental health and general well-being status of student-athletes.
 4. Follow up of the proposed NCAA financial awards to conferences based on measures of academic performance. Perhaps Kansas Athletics will have more details about how this money will be spent and potential ramifications of such an "award."

¹Official Committee Role: This committee serves as the link between governance and athletics programs at KU, and works with athletic corporation to promote the educational experience of student athletes, to support compliance with NCAA requirements, and to address other issues of interest to faculty, students, and staff in relation to athletic programs at KU. (University Senate Code)