

Academic Integrity in Intercollegiate Athletics: Principles, Rules, and Best Practices

Adopted by the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics – 1 April 2005

Introduction

There are three primary rationales for intercollegiate athletics: 1) for the athlete, the discipline and values of sports can contribute to personal development reinforcing academic excellence; 2) for the campus, the ceremonies and competition of intercollegiate sports can contribute to community and institutional loyalty; 3) for the college and university community, college sports can broaden positive interest in and public support for higher education.

While the experience of the past century has frequently called into question whether these ideals have a close relationship to the practice of college sports, the Coalition for Intercollegiate Athletics has adopted these principles as goals in its advocacy of intercollegiate athletics reform. College sports should be pursued in a way that supports these claims for its value. If that has not generally been the case in the past, we need to change our practices.

None of the values ascribed to college sports can be realized if we abandon the principle that personal development through athletics participation and academic achievement are linked. Yet experience suggests that in many sports programs, academic goals are treated as subordinate, and in a variety of ways students are encouraged or enabled to let their athletics commitment undermine their academic work. To the degree that athletics undermines academic integrity, it reflects a cynical attitude towards the ideals of college sports and of higher education.

It is a norm of long standing in higher education governance that the faculty bears primary responsibility for maintaining the academic standards of institutions. For this reason, the COIA, as a faculty governance based coalition devoted to athletics reform, has developed the following set of proposals and guidelines to help faculty fulfill their responsibilities with regard to the impact of athletics on academic standards and integrity.

Although this document includes many proposals, only three are suggested as rules, or NCAA bylaws, that should apply to all schools. The great majority are intended as best practice guidelines – policies that have worked well in practice at some schools or, in some cases, new ideas that are shared because they promise to address difficult problems that have resisted solution. The object is not to prescribe what schools must do, but to suggest issues that schools need to consider and approaches that may with adaptation fit local needs and strengthen the way athletics supports the educational mission. Where other local practices already accomplish the goal of academic integrity, those may in fact constitute best practices for that institution.

The Coalition is an alliance of over forty-five NCAA Division IA faculty senates, and proposals and recommendations in this document are intended to apply only to Division IA schools, although in the case of proposed NCAA bylaw changes, the NCAA structure requires that proposals apply to all of Division I. It is our hope, however, that to the degree that these ideas articulate well founded principles, they will be of use to all schools that engage in intercollegiate sports.

The recommendations are in five sections:

- 1. Admissions**
- 2. Scholarships**
- 3. Curricular Integrity**

4. Time Commitment, Missed Class Time, and Scheduling of Competitions
5. Policies Concerning the Office of Academic Advising for Athletes

Proposals within each section are numbered. Boldface numbers indicate proposals for NCAA bylaw changes (there are three altogether: 2.1, 3.1, 4.3.2). Other proposals are best-practice guidelines for schools to consider and adapt according to local needs and judgments, or general calls for action on the part of Division IA schools.

1. Admissions

At many Division IA universities there are students admitted on athletics scholarships who do not meet normal minimal admissions criteria. The practical integrity of such admissions processes are difficult for faculty to evaluate in their role as stewards of academic integrity. At many institutions, faculty have not been responsible historically for setting minimum standards for admissions or in monitoring how these are administered in practice. However, because of a history of problems associated with college sports, the Coalition recommends that campuses consider developing policies and procedures that will clarify the principles for athlete admissions, and set parameters for them consistent with the institutional mission. Scholarship athletes who are admitted in this way may not be the only students who receive special consideration based on grounds other than academic qualifications, and the Coalition recommends as a best practice that campuses address policy development in this area broadly, so that values of providing educational access and maintaining academic integrity in special admissions are balanced for all groups. With specific regard to special admissions for scholarship athletes, the Coalition recommends for consideration the following guidelines, which may be adaptable in framing special admissions policies more broadly:

1.1 Campus administrations and Faculty Governance Bodies should develop policies setting criteria for admission of scholarship athletes. These criteria should be set with regard to both minimum standards for regular admissions and average qualifications of entering students. They can and generally should be above NCAA minimum limits.

1.2 Campus administrations and Faculty Governance Bodies should develop policies that set standard criteria for special admissions, consistent with maintaining academic integrity in special admissions balanced for all groups selected for admission, including special admissions for athletes, either for all sports programs taken together, or for individual programs. Efforts to obtain and maintain diversity in the campus population of athletes should not be compromised, so that athletes of all races, classes, and genders have access to the university.

1.3 The Campus Athletics Board should receive information on all scholarship athlete admits, and should annually certify to the campus Faculty Governance Body compliance with these policies.

1.4 Campuses should develop means to track and share with the Faculty Governance Body the academic performance of scholarship athletes who enroll through special admissions, to permit better understanding of how successfully the campus supports the academic needs of these students and what costs to the campus this may involve. Faculty Governance Bodies should also be provided with data concerning the academic progress of all athletes, allowing them to assess the range of admissions qualifications appropriate to athletes, adhering in all cases to the requirements of protections under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

1.5 Analogous policies and procedures should be developed to govern admission of transfer students who are scholarship athletes.

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Athletes who transfer to four-year institutions from two-year institutions face particular difficulties. The COIA is not aware of good data pertaining to the academic success of athletes who transfer from junior colleges. Because concerns about possible problems are of longstanding, the Coalition supports the following recommendation:

1.6 The NCAA is encouraged to compile data and undertake a systematic study of the success rate of athletes transferring from junior colleges and of problems particular to this transition, with the goal of providing information that can help guide schools in admissions decisions and effective advising. Such a study should include a survey of the impact of recent NCAA academic reforms on junior college transfer students.

2. Scholarships

The basis for the award of an athletics scholarship is generally excellence in athletics, but the purpose of the award is to provide access to higher education. From the school's standpoint, retention of any scholarship should be determined on the basis of academic criteria. The expectation should always be that a student receiving a scholarship will graduate.

Currently athletic scholarships at many Division IA schools are awarded on a one-year renewable basis, and an athlete's commitment to participation and success in athletics may determine scholarship renewal. Athletes may be placed in a position where continued academic opportunity requires prioritizing athletics participation and success over academics, in a manner inconsistent with the positive values of intercollegiate athletics. The Coalition recommends the following policies, to be implemented through NCAA bylaws:

2.1 Athletics scholarships shall be awarded on a year-by-year basis with the presumption that they will be renewed up to four times for a total award of five years, or until graduation, whichever comes first, for students who are in good academic standing, conform to campus codes for student behavior, conform to the athletics department's standards of conduct, and adhere to team rules. If a student graduates in fewer than five years an institution may renew the scholarship if the student has athletic eligibility remaining. Institutions shall establish criteria and a mechanism for revoking a scholarship. The final authority for revoking a scholarship shall rest with the chief academic officer. A student awarded an athletics scholarship who is no longer participating in athletics will be counted against the NCAA maximum number of awards for that sport, unless the scholarship is revoked or unless the student has exhausted athletic eligibility or unless the student has exhausted athletic eligibility.

Until this policy is adopted as an NCAA bylaw, the Coalition recommends it as a best practice, to be considered and adopted by local campus Faculty Governance Bodies.

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The Coalition believes that the number of athletics scholarships should be reduced, and will address this issue in future discussions concerning cost containment in college sports.

Need-based scholarships

Ultimately, the rationale for athletics scholarships is fundamentally weak. A scholarship award based solely on athletic ability and commitment to participate in varsity sports resembles in important respects payment for services, and such scholarships further encourage high-school athletes who are college aspirants to prioritize sports over academics. Moreover, on some campuses scholarships for athletes who have no financial need are partially supported, through tuition and fee payments, by other students who may have various levels of financial need, an outcome that is extremely difficult to justify. While the Coalition regards ending scholarships based on athletics skills as an ideal that fully reformed intercollegiate athletics would entail, it recognizes that it would be difficult to design a need-only basis that would not lead to negative consequences, including, among others, the following: opportunities for fraud in the awarding of aid, which the current system does not entail; severely unequal impact on high- and low-tuition schools, which may undermine competitiveness on the field.

In light of these and other difficulties in designing a need-only system that has integrity, is fair, and continues to provide access where it is needed, the Coalition cannot now propose the end of athletics scholarships. However, as noted earlier, the premises and impact of athletics scholarships conflict in significant ways with the principle of our academic mission, and the Coalition urges continued efforts to design a system that does not permit them on bases other than need.

We note also that to the degree that athletes are awarded generous scholarships on the basis of non-academic criteria other than need, the principle that athletes should be treated similarly to other students is deeply compromised.

Pay for play

The Coalition does not support proposals to compensate athletes through means other than scholarship support. Intercollegiate athletics on college campuses plays a constructive role when it is an amateur pursuit designed to enhance the academic experience. The athlete who represents an institution does so as a representative of the student body, engaging in an extracurricular activity designed to enhance his or her academic experience. If these activities were not of direct benefit to the student participant, there would be no rationale for supporting them.

We do not support “pay for play” because it does not conform to the principles underlying the Coalition’s support of college sports. To the degree that institutions abandon those principles, they strengthen support for professionalizing the revenue sports, and undermine the Coalition’s position. The Coalition anticipates further addressing this issue in the context of athletics finances and commercialization.

3. Curricular Integrity

The campus faculty bears primary responsibility for ensuring that academic programs conform to high standards of integrity in curriculum and student evaluation. On many campuses, this role is performed by faculty within individual schools or units. However, continuing reports of compromises in academic integrity related to athletics have been persistent over the past century, and are a matter of concern to campus faculties as a whole. The most common forms of reported abuse are courses or programs intentionally designed to attract athletes by being academically unchallenging either in content or in grading, or that provide preferential grading for athletes. The COIA makes no judgment about the validity of such reports; our concern is that campus faculties be provided the information necessary to determine whether there is evidence of abuse and authority to establish the policies and procedures necessary to investigate and remediate if they appear warranted.

Although the potential abuse in question primarily concerns behavior by faculty and advisors, the principal tool necessary to allow campus faculties to determine whether the possibility of abuse is occurring is data concerning enrollment and grading patterns of students in individual sports programs. Such data would 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. The presence of positive data in this regard is not necessarily an indication of compromised integrity, but compromised integrity would likely generate such indicators, and their presence should be a cause for concern and inquiry.

For this reason, the Coalition recommends that such data be collected and made available to campus faculty governance, which should also be empowered to report on it and investigate the significance of problematic features. In this regard, the Coalition recommends the adoption of an NCAA Division I bylaw, as follows:

3.1 Campuses shall collect data on athlete enrollments and grades by course section, including indication of course GPAs, and data on choice of majors, for each individual sport, and shall convey that information to the campus Faculty Governance Body, ensuring that the anonymity of individual students is protected to the degree provided by law. Where no campus Faculty Governance Body exists, the information shall be conveyed to the Campus Athletics Board.

Until this policy may be adopted as an NCAA bylaw, the COIA recommends it as a best practice, to be considered and adapted by local campus faculty governance.

In addition, the Coalition recommends the following best practices:

3.2 Campus administrators and Faculty Governance Bodies should develop policies and procedures specifying the format in which such data will be presented, and the degree to which the data shall be made public or restricted, adhering in all cases to the requirements of FERPA protections.

3.3 The Faculty Governance Body should create a committee on academic integrity, specifically assigned to review and interpret data collected concerning athlete enrollment and grade patterns, in order to determine whether data consistent with a failure of academic integrity exist. This committee may be organized as a subcommittee of a standing committee on educational policies or academic affairs, to which it would report.

3.4 Campus administrators and Faculty Governance Bodies should develop policies and procedures allowing for investigation of problematic data concerning athlete enrollment or GPA patterns, and for remediation, if deemed necessary. The goal of these policies should be to ensure that faculty and advisors associated with all campus programs are maintaining standards of academic integrity with regard to students participating in intercollegiate athletics programs. Policies should include guidelines that will help assure that data are interpreted in a manner that is well informed and sensitive to patterns of student enrollment and performance independent of athletics.

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It is equally a matter of concern that there is anecdotal evidence that instructors have been unwilling to afford to athletes the academic accommodations necessary for them to fulfill appropriate athletics commitments, for example, by refusing to provide make-up tests or otherwise penalizing athletes for missing classes during team travel periods, when campus regulations call for accommodations. Such actions or other forms of bias against athletes place these students in an untenable position and interfere

with their ability to succeed academically. Campuses typically provide for academic accommodations in cases where students fulfill commitments as representatives of the institution, and these apply to athletes as well. Therefore, the Coalition recommends as a best practice:

3.5 Faculty Governance Bodies should ensure that campus policies concerning accommodations to be granted students in the course of their representation of the institution be clearly codified and conveyed to all faculty. Procedures for reporting violations of these policies should be clearly stipulated and conveyed to all students, and mechanisms developed for mediation and adjudication.

On many campuses, team coaches have regular or adjunct academic appointments and offer courses for academic credit, generally related to athletics. While coaches may be well qualified to offer academic courses in some areas, the history of and potential for abuse are well known; in cases where an instructor-coach has grading authority over an athlete, conflict of interest is very clear. The Coalition offers the following proposals as best practices:

3.6 Campus administrations and Faculty Governance Bodies should develop policies regarding whether athletes can enroll in credit courses taught by a coach or other member of the athletics department staff. If permitted, campus administrations and Faculty Governance Bodies should develop procedures for monitoring enrollment, credit, and grades of athletes and non-athletes to minimize any appearance of or actual conflict of interest.

3.7 When an athlete is permitted to enroll in a course taught by his or her coach, that coach should not participate in any grade assignment for that athlete. Faculty Governance Bodies should consider whether such policies should be extended to cover assignment of grades by a coach to athletes in other varsity sports.

On some campuses, academic credit towards degrees is awarded for varsity participation. This practice has the potential to be in conflict with academic integrity, especially where the coaching staff is involved in assessing student performance. Therefore, the Coalition recommends the following policy:

3.8 Academic credit may be awarded for participation in varsity sports only if specifically approved by the campus faculty in its supervisory role over curriculum. Any such credit should not exceed a small number of total hours toward degree, such as 2-3 percent, and should be assigned only on a pass-fail basis. Faculty-approved procedures should be developed to monitor the awarding of such credit, and to address any cases of abuse that may arise.

4. Time Commitment, Missed Class Time, and Scheduling of Competitions

It is sometimes said that education is the only industry where the less one provides for the price the more pleased customers are – most of us, when we are students, welcome a day off from class or a homework-free weeknight. Athletes are no different, and the rewards of competition in an area of their special skills have the potential for many to weaken further the commitment to coursework and class attendance. Faculty work hard to engage students in learning, and perhaps in no other area does a university signal an inappropriate prioritization of athletics over academics than when, by policy or by administrative decisions, it sends the message that training or competitions take priority over class attendance and coursework. While travel time and the practicalities of tournament play may make some missed class days inevitable, it is the responsibility of faculty and administrators, at individual schools and in conferences, to ensure that missed time is kept to a carefully designed minimum.

4.1 Total time commitment

The NCAA has established detailed rules and monitoring procedures designed to limit to four hours per day and twenty hours per week the amount of training and competition time athletes are required to devote to their sports. This limit pertains only to required activities set by the coaching staff, not to personal decisions athletes may make to devote time to training, and for safety reasons, NCAA bylaws allow for coaching staff to provide general supervision for athletes undertaking personal training beyond the twenty-hour limit.

There is widespread belief that the twenty-hour rule is in many programs routinely violated, either purposefully, by coaching staffs, or because monitoring is not pursued with care or in good faith. Individual athletes must make their own choices about the amount of time they can devote to training, and the best choices will vary widely among athletes. But coaching staffs and others acting for the university are obligated to abide by the twenty-hour rule.

NCAA and conference groups continue to discuss how refinements in the twenty-hour rule can better accomplish its goals, and the COIA encourages these efforts. However, training-time issues involve an unusual number of ambiguous situations, and problems have less to do with inadequate rules than with a failure by coaching staffs to take seriously the academic priorities of the students who play for them. In the view of the COIA, to accomplish the goals of the twenty-hour rule, incentives must be created to help coaching staffs see their role as helping to foster the all-around student development that athletics has the potential to reinforce, rather than to maximize athletics excellence, even at the cost of academics.

For this reason, the COIA supports a proposal under discussion by the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletes (N4A):

4.1.1 Head coaches must share accountability for the academic achievement of the athletes they select for admissions consideration. Data on continuing eligibility and graduation rates of each recruiting class brought by individual head coaches to their institutions should be maintained, relevant to the period during which the coach was employed at that institution and according to uniform standards, to establish a public record of the academic success of each coach. This record should follow a coach from institution to institution.

Such a process will increase the likelihood that a coach's commitment to appropriate academic-athletics balance will have an impact on the assessment of his or her success and the shape of his or her careers. It will also help ensure that in seeking team success, coaches are less likely inappropriately to recruit students who are not likely to succeed academically at their institutions, a practice that damages schools, students, and intercollegiate sports.

In addition, the COIA recommends as best practices:

4.1.2 The campus administration and athletics department, in consultation with the Campus Athletics Board, should establish clear policies regarding how the academic success of athletes bears on coaches' job descriptions, and how academic performance will be weighed in reviews and personnel decisions regarding coaching staffs. Campus procedures should allow the Campus Athletics Board or its personnel subcommittee to review policy implementation, and to report annually to the campus administration and Faculty Governance Body its assessment of the integrity with which these policies are implemented.

4.1.3 Procedures for exit interviews with athletes should include a focus on issues pertaining to compliance with the twenty-hour rule, and these data should be considered by the Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) and Campus Athletics Board in assessments of program integrity.

4.2 Calendar approval procedures

Missed class days are a matter of academic integrity. It is essential that faculty recognize and respect the fact that classes missed because of competition are beyond the control of athletes, and make accommodations to allow athletes to complete course requirements without prejudice. But when athletes miss more than a minimal number of classes instructional goals are undermined and time and resources are increasingly diverted to help athletes compensate, at cost to faculty and other students. Accordingly, faculty have a deep interest in ensuring that athletics scheduling accords with NCAA principles for minimizing interference with academics, and competition schedules should be approved with meaningful faculty participation.

Schedules are developed at both institutional and conference levels, and procedures for approval at both levels should involve faculty. Many scheduling arrangements are made years in advance and others are determined in the context of complex contract negotiations on the conference level. Meaningful faculty participation means that approval of appropriate faculty, such as FARs and members of the Campus Athletics Board, is sought at points where changes in scheduling can realistically be made.

The COIA recommends the following best practices:

4.2.1 Each campus should develop a set of principles concerning norms and limits of missed class time that should guide annual approval decisions in each sport. These principles should be developed in consultation with the FAR, the Campus Athletics Board, and the Faculty Governance Body.

4.2.2 Each conference should develop a set of principles concerning norms and limits of missed class time that should guide annual approval decisions in each sport. These principles should be developed by conference FARs, in consultation with their Campus Athletics Boards and Faculty Governance Bodies, and should not be less restrictive than campus-based principles of conference members.

4.2.3 Annual conference competition schedules should be in accord with conference principles on missed class time and be adopted only with approval by conference FARs, who should be consulted on all conference scheduling plans and options at a point early enough that their views will affect the final plan offered for their approval.

4.2.4 Annual non-conference competition schedules should accord with individual campus principles on missed class time and be adopted only with approval by the Campus Athletics Board, which should be consulted on all conference scheduling plans and options at a point early enough that its views will affect the final plan offered for their approval.

4.3 Season length and scheduling

NCAA bylaws specify that member institutions shall limit season length and other scheduling elements to minimize interference with the academic programs of its athletes. However, it is clear that in certain sports, seasons are so long or scheduled in such a way as to interfere with coursework to an unacceptable degree. This is particularly true of some spring sports such as baseball, softball, and golf, where the high

number of competitions requires many missed class days, and of basketball, where the competitive season bridges two semester terms. In addition, the growth of post-season competition in some sports over the past few decades has resulted in a lengthening of the total season, and conference reorganizations that have broadened the geographical scope of many conferences have added travel time.

In addition, there is an increasing trend in televised sports for conferences to enter into contracts that require weekday or weeknight competitions. These add to the class days missed by athletes. Particularly problematic are cases where schools without facilities to accommodate the demands of weekday football nevertheless agree to television contracts that require them to do so, resulting in the canceling of a class day for an entire campus in order to stage a sports event.

Although schools theoretically control their scheduling choices, in fact, the dynamics of conference play and the role of conferences in media contracts make the conference a key player in determining schedules. In recent years, the proliferation of pre-season tournaments as well as post-season conference tournaments has contributed more than any other single factor to the lengthening of seasons.

Competitive seasons should be long enough to allow athletes to progress in skill development, coalesce in team sports, allow most or all team members chances to participate in a variety of competitive situations, and establish a basis for overall team competition based on total wins and losses. These criteria allow intercollegiate athletics to accomplish the positive effects that give it value to students and campuses. Seasons should not extend over more competitions or more calendar time than necessary to accomplish these goals, since further extension generates at best diminishing positive returns at direct cost to the academic progress of athletes. With regard to season length, COIA supports the following proposal:

4.3.1 The NCAA should continue to review the present limits on regular season length, in order to determine the number of competitions necessary to accomplish the basic goals of each sport. NCAA limits on regular season competitions should be adjusted to match these recommendations. Adjustments that are warranted on academic grounds must be made regardless of the financial implications; if it is found that the season schedule of a revenue sport, such as basketball, is creating challenges to academic success too demanding for athletes realistically to meet, its length must be reduced.

The NCAA permits schools to divide seasons into two distinct segments in sports other than football and basketball; this option may be restricted to a split of training seasons, but may also involve intercollegiate competitions. In some sports, this has led to the establishment of “non-traditional playing seasons.” Engagement in both traditional and non-traditional seasons means athletes may experience no school terms free of the pressures of intercollegiate competitions, and for students who need a “breather” to focus on academics, this can be a difficult problem that outweighs any possible benefits a split season may offer. Therefore:

4.3.2 NCAA bylaws should be amended so that divided competition seasons are not permitted.

4.3.3 In recent years athletics schedules have expanded in at least the following additional two ways, which impinge on the academic schedule: 1) seasons have been expanded at the beginning and at the end, particularly with regard to the proliferation of post-season conference tournaments, 2) athletic events have increasingly been scheduled on weekdays. The Coalition urges the NCAA and the conferences to begin reversing these trends. We recognize that for some universities and in some sports, this goal may remain elusive and that the process may require as long as a decade to accomplish.

4.3.4 Institutions should not permit cancellation of campuswide classes for an athletics event. We urge the NCAA Division IA membership to explore ways in which this can become a uniformly observed principle.

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It is travel to other schools for competitions that most often leads to missed class days for athletes.

4.3.5 The NCAA should collect data and develop norms governing maximum times before and after competitions that travel schedules may permit. Such policy should include guidelines for exceptional cases and a waiver procedure, but should establish uniformity in the priority given to minimizing missed class days.

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Academic calendars differ among schools and it is difficult to generalize about what periods of time may be more important academically than others. However, it is unquestionable that periods of final exams are critical and athletes should not be required to participate in competitions during final exam periods. Ultimately, competition calendars are primarily developed at the conference level and approved by institutions. The Coalition recommends that the following rule be adopted at the highest level of application possible: either at the institutional and conference levels, or as an NCAA bylaw:

4.3.6 An institution shall not schedule athletics competitions during final exam periods on that school's campus; conferences shall develop their schedules to accommodate the final exam calendars of all member institutions.

5. Policies Concerning the Office of Academic Advising for Athletes (OAAA)

NCAA legislation addresses only baseline programs and services to be provided by Division I schools, and there is wide variation in the quality and breadth of services provided to athletes. Academic advisors for athletes have become professionalized, with their own national organization; advisors on individual campuses receive guidance from their national association, and also respond to formal and informal requirements set for them by the institution and athletics department personnel.

The success of athlete advising is critical for the academic integrity of campus sports programs. Faculty have a responsibility to understand the role of the Office of Academic Advising for Athletes (OAAA), and to be assured that it is structured to operate with integrity. The participation of the director of the OAAA on the Campus Athletics Board has been recommended by the COIA as a best practice.

There is a natural tension between the academic goals of advising and goals of athletics success shared by athletes and coaches. Program integrity does not require eliminating this tension – it is an inevitable feature of college sports. Integrity is the product of managing this tension in such a way that the academic focus of the college experience is preserved. To the degree that coaches and Athletics Directors share this goal of integrity, the advisor's task is simplified. When this is not the case, advisors are the front line for preserving academic integrity.

The single most difficult issue that confronts the OAAA is to maintain a focus on maximizing the academic accomplishments of athletes, given their athletics commitments, rather than on maintaining their athletic eligibility. A focus on eligibility will lead athletes towards unchallenging courses and

majors, and overuse of academic support. Eligibility standards are the lowest levels of academic accomplishment that universities will tolerate, not goals for students to aim for. Historically, advisors have often encountered pressures from coaches and others to minimize the academic challenges athletes face in order to ensure continuing eligibility and meet graduation rate expectations. Athletes may adopt these minimal goals as well. The OAAA must be structured and led in ways that will help it resist these pressures and focus on motivating athletes to use their academic opportunities to maximize personal growth, intellectual skills, and career success.

The proposed guidelines are not meant to be comprehensive or exhaustive, and it is not expected that each guideline will be applicable to every institution. The guidelines are best used jointly by members of the OAAA, those involved in campus athletics governance, and faculty governance leaders to assess current programs and envision possible improvements.

Certain values or principles inform many of these guidelines. These principles provide a rationale for the recommendations of effective practices.

Academic integrity. The core mission of athletic academic support programs should be to help athletes maximize their academic performance, assume responsibility for their learning, reach attainable academic goals, and make progress toward degree completion. Because the focus of advising is academic achievement and personal growth, although the pressures and rewards of athletics participation are central issues for athletes and their advisors, the role of advisors must be to advocate for *academic* choices and efforts that are in the athletes' interest and have integrity.

Integration. Athletes should be integrated in the student body, culture, and community. The intercollegiate athletics program, including its academic support services, should be an integral part of the institution's educational system. While the OAAA provides specialized services to athletes, it should encourage and expect athletes to utilize the institution's regular academic services.

Scrutiny and support. Unique among campus advisors, academic advisors for athletes are at the interface of the often competing pressures that characterize all intercollegiate athletics: the dual imperatives to succeed academically and athletically. While many athletics departments, administrators, and coaches are committed to fostering academic excellence, history indicates that athletics advisors may sometimes feel strong pressures to prioritize the interests of teams over their judgments of the academic interests of individual students. For this reason, the academic advising office must receive strong institutional support and attention.

Personal adjustment. Programs and services should help athletes adjust effectively to the various developmental transitions they face in college. Skills needed to cope with changes from high school to college, and then to life after college, should be provided in a well-designed and integrated program. Successful programs will ensure that while the OAAA monitors athletes' academic accomplishment, athletes are led to take increasing responsibility for utilizing campus resources and pursuing academic goals.

Effectiveness. Programs should be held accountable for quality and impact on students' academic achievement. Assessments of programs and services, both internal and external, should be made on a regular schedule.

Campus comparability. The unit's mission and breadth of services should be conceived in terms of the norms of the campus. Because athletes require special skills in time management, must track eligibility issues in making academic choices, and miss classes because of competition schedules, there is reason to provide athletes with enhanced support services. However, athlete support must not reach levels that

eliminate academic challenges essential to intellectual growth or that create visible inequities on campus that suggest privileged status and undermine the mission of athletics to promote campus community and loyalty. Similarly, while campuses should ensure that Offices of Academic Advising for Athletes have staff, salary, and budget support commensurate with the challenges and responsibilities undertaken, qualified and well staffed undergraduate advising must be a campuswide priority, and support for athletics advising must not be at a level that creates campus resentment by indicating prioritization of athletics over other parts of the academic community.

Guidelines for the Office of Academic Advising for Athletes

[Drafting comments are added to this section for clarity.]

5.1. Organization

5.1.1 The OAAA should report directly to the campus office of academic affairs. Campuses may choose to have a secondary reporting line to the Director of Athletics, but primary control over academic advising must derive from the chief academic officer of the campus.

Advising is an academic function, and it belongs primarily to the academic side; the campus academic affairs office must be accountable for the quality and integrity of the advising provided all its students. For this reason, the OAAA should report to the office of the chief academic officer of the campus. The campus office of academic affairs should be responsible for and involved with OAAA personnel decisions, supervise policies and procedures for academic advising of athletes, and have authority in budget decisions concerning academic advising. However, it is essential that the OAAA operate with the strong support of the Director of Athletics, in order to combat potential pressures to substitute the goal of continued eligibility for academic accomplishment, and to motivate athletes to make the most of academic opportunities. In addition, it is common for the OAAA to provide athlete services beyond advising, and the design and operation of these services requires the involvement and support of the Athletics Department. Athletics Directors should be provided positive opportunities for engagement with the OAAA mission. Campuses should consider, in delineating OAAA reporting lines, whether this goal will best be met by means of a secondary reporting line or by other means through which the AD can become positively engaged in the mission of the OAAA. The structure that will best ensure support of the OAAA academic mission and best guard against efforts to focus on eligibility over accomplishment, in light of campus culture and organization, will represent the best practice for each campus. However, in all cases, ultimate accountability for the integrity of the OAAA must lie clearly with the chief academic officer.

5.1.2 The OAAA should work closely with the FAR.

The free flow of information between the OAAA and the FAR allows the FAR to support the academic mission of the OAAA, in accord with the role of faculty representative. The FAR should be fully apprised by the OAAA Director of all issues bearing on the integrity of the advising program.

5.1.3 The OAAA should be represented by its Director on a regularly convened committee that monitors the relationship between athletics programs and campus academic and support units, bringing together administrative officers and others responsible for key elements of athlete support and services, such as the Registrar, Bursar, Athletics Director, FAR, Compliance Officer, and a high academic administrator. The OAAA Director and FAR should have the prerogative to introduce agenda items.

5.1.4 The OAAA should collaborate closely with other campus advising units.

A full understanding of the goals, practices, and requirements of campuswide and departmental advising units is essential to ensuring that the OAAA meets the highest campus standards of academic advising, makes maximum use of campus resources, and enables athletes to be aware and make use of the resources available to other students.

5.1.5 The OAAA should collaborate closely with other campus student support units.

Close coordination with student service units on campus will help ensure that OAAA services conform to best campus practices, that athletes make the best use of these services, and that the OAAA does not inefficiently duplicate services already provided on campus.

5.1.6 The OAAA should have a clearly defined mission statement, consistent with that of the campus, which specifies the centrality of academic integrity to the unit mission.

5.1.7 The OAAA should develop regular and frequent internal self-assessment procedures for all its programs, and work with the campus to arrange periodic campus assessments of its academic advising and athlete services components, to ensure successful external NCAA certification reviews.

In order to create a continuing dynamic for improved OAAA services, the NCAA, perhaps in conjunction with the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletes, should devote resources to research on effective OAAA programs. Conferences are encouraged to support annual meetings of OAAA directors to discuss problems, opportunities, and best practices.

5.2. Personnel

A. Director

5.2.1 The Director should have a Master's or Doctoral degree in student counseling or a related field.

The increasing responsibilities of the OAAA on many campuses has led at some schools to a required or preferred qualification of a doctoral degree in a field of relevant expertise, and this is recommended as a best practice.

5.2.2 The Director should have prior experience in student counseling, personnel and budget management, and athletics, with a history of rules compliance and commitment to ethical practices.

5.2.3 The Director should have independence in developing and implementing policies related to academic advising, subject to the supervision of the campus office of academic affairs.

5.2.4 The Director should be directly responsible for the development of program budgets, allocation of unit resources, assignment of advisor case loads and other unit duties, and all unit personnel decisions.

5.2.5 The Director should be responsible for designing and supervising advisor training programs.

5.2.6 The Director should have final authority over advising staff, under the supervision of the campus chief academic officer, subject only to usual institutional rules governing the authority and responsibility of unit heads.

5.2.7 The Director should have appropriate and specified authority over support staff.

5.2.8 The Director should be responsible for designing and supervising tutor and mentor training programs.

5.2.9 The salary of the Director, and of all positions in the OAAA, should be determined by the office of academic affairs, with due regard for the specialized skills and work schedules of OAAA personnel, external market conditions, and issues of campus equity.

B. Academic Advisors

5.2.10 OAAA Advisors should preferably have a Master's degree in student counseling or a related field, and experience in student counseling.

5.2.11 Advisors should participate in professional development opportunities.

5.2.12 Advisors should participate in on-campus training provided by other campus academic or advising units.

5.2.13 Advisors should be assigned manageable case loads.

5.2.14 No advisor should report directly to a coach.

5.2.15 A single advisor should not serve as the sole advisor assigned to work with a specific team; multiple advisors should share team advising duties. There are many conveniences to assigning all members of a team to a single advisor; however, there is significant potential for the authority and independence of advisors to be undermined, and the assignment of multiple advisors to teams is a best practice designed to improve conditions for academic integrity.

Although many coaches are committed to the academic success of their athletes, the influence of coaches over academic advising should be strictly limited. There is a significant imbalance of power between coaches and advisors, and coaches' goals may differ significantly from those of academic advisors; these problems are reduced when advisors interact with a coach as a group. Schools that have adopted this model have reported success, but it has not been broadly tested. It is recommended that schools consider its advantages in seeking to improve academic integrity in advising, and that information on the comparative merits of the two systems be collected for ongoing assessment.

5.2.16 Advisors should communicate closely with advisors in athletes' major departments, in order to ensure that athletes receive consistent and accurate counseling.

5.2.17 Advisors should review and have the option to endorse petitions for NCAA academic waivers.

NCAA continuing eligibility requirements may sometimes conflict with legitimate academic goals, such as changes of major motivated by shifts in student interest or career goals. Judicious NCAA review of petitions will be more likely if reliable advisor assessments are included. Campuses should include advisors in such petition procedures, and should design procedures to ensure that advisor judgments about the academic integrity of petitions are not subject to distortion.

5.2.18 Academic advisors, not coaches, should be the contact point between the athletics department and instructors. Coaches should be forbidden from initiating contact with instructors regarding the academic progress or status of individual students.

5.2.19 Academic advisors, not coaches, should have the primary responsibility in the athlete's selection of major and specific courses.

C. Other Appointees

5.2.20 Learning specialists, life-skill coordinators, and other additional staff should be appointed to manage major OAAA program activities apart from academic advising, as necessary. These positions may be shared with other campus student services units to maximize efficient use of resources.

5.3. Programmatic Functions

A. Academic Advising

The OAAA should perform the following functions:

5.3.1 Re-assessment of newly enrolled athletes' abilities and skills.

Because the proportion of sponsored admits tends to be higher for athletes than for other student populations, the identification of at-risk students is particularly critical for the OAAA. Because of the potential for the time management problems associated with athletics to interfere with academic achievement, it is unusually important for advisors to athletes to be able to set baseline academic expectations for individual students.

5.3.2 Academic counseling for academic progress.

The central function of academic advisors for athletes is high quality counseling to optimize students' academic accomplishments, relative to their academic potential and their evolving long-term goals.

5.3.3 Monitoring and tracking academic progress during semesters and towards degree completion.

Because of the competing demands of athletics and academics, the OAAA is more proactive in monitoring and evaluating student progress than other campus advising units.

5.3.4 Assisting students in identifying career goals and choosing a major.

This function may require coordination with campus or other unit advisors. Advisors must help students focus on their long-range interests in choosing a major, rather than on the goal of minimizing potential time and effort conflicts between academics and athletics.

5.3.5 Offering assistance in course scheduling.

Once students choose a major, departmental advisors should be chiefly responsible for course scheduling advice, but the OAAA may continue involvement in order to review for issues of eligibility and time conflicts. The objective should be to resolve conflicts so as best to accommodate academic goals.

5.3.6 Monitoring issues of academic eligibility.

Advisors ensure that students are aware of institutional and departmental requirements to remain in good academic standing.

5.3.7 Monitoring issues of athletic eligibility.

The OAAA provides athletes with information concerning all policies related to eligibility, and assists the student in assessing how best to accomplish academic goals while maintaining eligibility. Advisors coordinate with certification specialists in order to ensure that students are able to make well-informed decisions.

B. Academic Support Services

The OAAA should provide the following academic support services:

5.3.8 Specialized programming and assistance for the freshman transition.

5.3.9 Assistance to students in developing academic planning and time management skills.

Time management is an unusually critical issue for athletes. The OAAA should have programs to help all athletes develop superior time management skills.

5.3.10 Mentoring for at-risk students.

While, in principle, schools assess athletics success as one predictor of college achievement, the OAAA must anticipate that a portion of athletes will be underprepared for college academically. Individualized mentoring programs, particularly for first- and second-year at risk students, must be a significant unit focus. However, it is equally critical that athletes in these programs realize that they are expected to develop the skills necessary for college success in a timely manner. Mentoring programs must be designed to foster student academic independence, and should limit interventions in such a way as to promote this goal.

5.3.11 Access to tutors and, when appropriate, mentors.

The OAAA guides athletes who need special academic help to student tutors and/or mentors. Historically, academic dishonesty associated with tutoring has been a problem with some athletics programs; therefore, the following item is an important facet of OAAA management.

5.3.12 Training and supervision for tutors and mentors.

Prospective tutors should be carefully vetted for academic qualifications and experience. The OAAA must provide significant training for tutors. This training must involve a review of ethical problems that have emerged in the past and detailed guidelines for ethical behavior. Programs are advised to develop “contracts” that specify the responsibilities of tutors. Tutoring should be restricted to on-site meetings, or reports of tutoring activities should be submitted by tutors for individual tutoring sessions. Although tutors and athletes bear responsibility for the integrity of the tutoring process, the OAAA is accountable for adhering proactively to best practice standards in the hiring, training, and supervision of tutors and mentors.

5.3.13 Other appropriate learning interventions.

These may include classroom checks, required study tables, surrogate class attendees when athletes are at off-campus competitions, and so forth. The principle governing such arrangements is that athletes should be responsible for the maximum effort of which they are academically capable, and the level of intervention should anticipate increasingly mature and responsible behavior. For example, while

classroom checks may be considered appropriate for first-year students, to enforce them for juniors or seniors is to perpetuate an expectation of irresponsibility. Increasing independence and responsibility is essential to the college experience. It is unacceptable for the OAAA to inhibit this process in order to minimize risks of academic problems for teams.

5.3.14 Study facilities available and accessible to athletes.

Because athletes spend a great deal of time on the athletics campus, which is frequently at some distance from other parts of the campus, athletics study facilities should be available. Such facilities also should allow the OAAA to monitor tutorials, required study tables, and so forth, which may be especially valuable in helping athletes make the transition to college. It should be emphasized that athletes are fully responsible for making use of other campus facilities, such as the Library.

5.3.15 Laptop computer loans for athletics travel.

5.3.16 Priority registration services.

New NCAA progress-towards-degree requirements make it increasingly necessary for athletes to have some level of priority in class choices, a service that has previously been justified principally on the basis of athletics practice scheduling conflicts. Registration is a campuswide issue, and campus faculty should develop policy governing registration privileges for student groups with special needs that gives due consideration to the increased scheduling pressures on athletes.

C. Athlete Support Services

By providing a range of the following support services to athletes the OAAA can reinforce its overall function in promoting academic strength:

5.3.17 Programs for or assistance concerning transition out of collegiate sports.

5.3.18 Information on campus programs and services relating to: life skills development, career exploration, career skills assessment, job search preparation, graduate school application, internships, and so forth. Where campus services may not exist, the OAAA may advocate for them, or provide independent services for athletes.

It is important for the integration of athletes in the campus student body that they be aware of and make use of the resources of the campus. Wherever possible, the OAAA should refrain from establishing independent programs, and instead coordinate with other campus units and proactively encourage athletes to visit them in order to make best use of the services the campus provides.

5.3.19 Support for the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC).

5.3.20 Organization of appropriate community service activities for athletes.

5.3.21 Academic awards ceremonies and other activities to recognize academic accomplishments and create additional incentives.

5.3.22 A substance abuse education program that addresses alcohol abuse, performance enhancing drug abuse, recreational drug abuse, and other forms of substance abuse, or participates in campuswide programs.

5.3.23 A media education program.

5.3.24 Internship or graduate assistantship programs related to athletics.

5.3.25 Programs to educate athletes concerning agents and NCAA and campus rules governing contact with them.

5.3.26 Programs in diversity awareness; the OAAA may participate in campuswide programs.

5.3.27 A gambling abuse education program.

5.3.28 Programs on sexual harassment and sexual misconduct awareness; the OAAA may participate in campuswide programs.