

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE  
Athletic Board  
(Final; Information)

**AB.17.01** 2016-2017 Annual Report of the Athletic Board

History of the Academic Review System (ARS)

In April, 1992, the Athletic Board adopted the Academic Review System (ARS) to evaluate the academic progress and eligibility of the approximately 500 student-athletes at the University. The Urbana-Champaign Faculty-Student Senate established three criteria with which teams and individual student-athletes must comply:

1. Each team must have an average GPA of 2.25 each semester.
2. All grant-in-aid (scholarship) student-athletes on each team must earn at least an average 2.25 GPA each semester.
3. 80 percent of each team must earn at least a 2.0 GPA for each semester.

The Academic Progress and Evaluation Process

The Academic Progress and Eligibility Committee (APEC) of the Athletic Board evaluates three teams in depth each semester and reports to the full Athletic Board. The principal, but not only, evaluative tools are the three criteria noted above. As we shall see, there are additional criteria that APEC uses to see how student-athletes are doing academically.

The schedule by which these evaluations are conducted is laid out for years in advance. Because the University participates in 19 intercollegiate sports, that means that APEC evaluates each sport in depth once each six semesters by evaluating the academics of three sports each semester. At each of those meetings, the head coach, the Athletic Director, the two Faculty Representatives to the Big Ten Conference, the Associate Athletic Director who oversees that sport, the Chair of the Athletic Board, the Chair of APEC, and representatives from the Academic Services Office of the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics attend and participate in the evaluation meeting.

At each sport's evaluation meeting, it is the practice of the APEC Committee to go over the sport's performance with respect to the three criteria above for each of the past six semesters – that is, since the last evaluation of that sport. If the committee sees causes for concern – for example, if the team GPA fell in three semesters (even if it is above the minimum noted above), we ask for an explanation from the head coach. If there is non-compliance with any of the three criteria, we work out a corrective program with the coach and the representatives from Academic Services. APEC and Academic Services then meet every six months with the head coach to make certain that the corrective program is being followed and is working.

APEC also goes beyond the Senate criteria by looking at two different measures of academic progress toward graduation. First, we look at the "Official NCAA Graduation Rates Report." Roughly speaking, the NCAA report measures something called the GSR, how each freshman-class cohort in each sport is doing in progressing towards a degree. The report and the DIA compare the student-athlete cohort graduation rates in each sport with those at other Division I schools in that sport, with other Big Ten schools, with general undergraduate cohorts (non-student-athletes), and with other relevant categories.

Second, we look at the federal government's academic progress rate (APR) reports, which also measures how student-athletes are progressing toward graduation in many, but not all, sports at every Division I school.

We discuss these additional criteria with the head coach, the AD, and the other attendees, and they may figure in our corrective program for a sports team that is not doing well with regard to these criteria.

In addition to this sport-by-sport evaluation procedure, the Athletic Board also receives, at each of its quarterly meetings, a report from Academic Services about the academic performance of all 19 sports in the most recent semester.

### Recent Experience

#### *APEC*

Over the course of the last cycle of evaluation of all 19 intercollegiate sports, every team but one has been in compliance with all the Senate criteria. In almost every single instance, the teams were in compliance for all six semesters since their last evaluation.

The one team that was not in compliance explained to APEC's satisfaction why it was not meeting the standards. Additionally, the head coach proposed a corrective plan that APEC approved. That sport very quickly came back into compliance and has remained so.

We have also noted in recent years that programs that were once challenged in meeting the Senate criteria have all been doing better. Men's basketball and football, for example, now have team GPAs that are close to or above 3.0.

There are still some concerns for one or two sports, but overall there is continuing and complete compliance with the Senate criteria.

#### *Academic Services Report*

At each quarterly meeting of the Athletic Board, the Academic Services Office of the DIA, now very ably led by Marlon Dechausay, reports on the academic performance of our student-athletes.

Here are some highlights from the report of February 23, 2017:

1. The overall GPA for all 500+ student-athletes during the Fall Semester, 2016, was 3.16.
2. The overall GPA of our female student-athletes in that semester was 3.32.
3. The overall GPA of our male student-athletes in that semester was 3.018.
4. The highest GPA during Fall, 2016, for female student-athletes was Women's Golf – 3.68.
5. The highest GPA during Fall, 2016, for male student-athletes was Men's Tennis – 3.36.
6. 42 student-athletes had a perfect 4.0 for the Fall Semester, 2016.
7. 56 percent of student-athletes had a 3.0 or higher for the Fall Semester, 2016.
8. For the latest report our APR (federal graduation rate) for all sports is 990/1000, which is much higher than for the student body of the University of Illinois. Five sports have had a perfect 1000 (all students graduate) over the past five years. 14 of 19 sports had a perfect 1000 for the most recent report.

#### *Additional Actions of the Athletic Board*

The Executive Committee of the Athletic Board has tried to stay ahead of academic issues that might arise for our student-athletes. For example, we had learned that there was concern at some of our peer institutions that student-athletes were "clustering" in certain majors and classes. This is not necessarily a bad thing: If student-athletes are clustering in engineering or finance, that would be a sign of strength, not of concern; and if there were more student-athletes majoring in Recreation, Sport, and Tourism than in other departments, that could simply be because that is where their interests lie.

There is, of course, a potential downside to clustering. There were some concerns that clustering might indicate that student-athletes had found a soft spot in the curriculum and were seeking to minimize their academic efforts by going where the academic burden was lightest.

As it happens, these concerns were ... well ... academic. Our Academic Services Office has done an analysis of student-athlete majors and of student-athlete courses-attended each semester for the last

four or so years. In essence, there is no significant clustering. Student-athlete majors are distributed among all the undergraduate colleges at the University of Illinois. The distribution is not uniform, but it does not exhibit any clustering of note.

With respect to courses, those, too, show that our student-athletes are not taking classes together in any manner that causes us concern.

In light of the as-yet-unresolved academic scandal among student-athletes at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, we became worried that we did not know enough about how our student-athletes were treating independent study classes. So, with the help of then-Director of Academic Services Keiko Price, we asked for an account of how many student-athletes were taking independent study classes. Ms. Price told us that there were, on average, 11 such classes being taken by student-athletes, and more than half of those classes were required as a part of their major field of study.

Just to be safe, we then worked with Ms. Price to create a sign-up form that every student-athlete must submit to Academic Services when they propose to take an independent study. The form requires a statement of the topic, the requirements for the course, and the number of units of credit, and must be signed and dated by both the student and the instructor. Those forms are then kept on file at Academic Services.

We are also mindful that on-line courses may become an issue for student-athletes. It was said to be the case several years ago that almost none of the members of the University of Oregon football team were taking in-class courses. If that were to happen at the University of Illinois, that might be a cause for deep concern. We have asked Academic Services to monitor on-line class-taking and report to the Athletic Board periodically.

#### *Additional Comments*

We conclude with two important observations about academics and student-athletics. There is simply no question that our current Athletic Director and the other administrators at DIA share this great university's commitment to and pride in excellence in academics. They share the core values of our faculty colleagues.

Similarly, we have no doubt that our current head coaches understand the importance of excellence in academics and seek to foster it among their students.

As a result of these commitments and attitudes, we have complete cooperation with DIA in our academic evaluations and, just as importantly, in working through any other student-athlete welfare issues (such as complying with pending restrictions on practice hours and NCAA and Big Ten rules on missed class days for competition). For example, we are working with the Academic Services Office to explore how we can accommodate study abroad experiences for student-athletes.

Finally, we draw your attention to the remarkably rich extracurricular program of activities and community outreach that our student-athletes have. The Douglas C. Roberts Illini Life Skills programs bring noted national speakers to campus to address student-athlete issues, provides a leadership academy for student-athletes, sponsors career networking for a, and has a career readiness program for seniors to get them ready for their first jobs after graduation.

Submitted on behalf of the Athletic Board  
Thomas S. Ulen, Chair