

**RECEIVED
BY SENATE
09/28/2026**

AB.26.01
September 28, 2026

Academic Progress and Eligibility Committee (APEC)
Annual Report 2025-2026
May 23, 2026
(Final; Information)

Dear University Senate Members,

I write to you as the Chair of the Academic Eligibility and Progress Committee, a subcommittee of the Athletic Board, to share my annual report for the Academic Year 2025-2026.

The Academic Progress and Eligibility Committee (APEC) had a busy year discussing numerous changes at the campus level all the way through the NCAA level. We successfully conducted 9 Sport Reviews with the respective Team Head Coaches.

APEC Official Sport Review Summary AY 25-26

The APEC is officially tasked with reviewing three key criteria for every team head coach on a 3-year cycle. Since there was one newly hired head coach, Women's Soccer Coach Katie Hultin, there was one off cycle review this May. Thus, reviews were 8 conducted at the AY245-26 September, February, and May meetings.

The APEC sport review criteria include ensuring that:

- (1) the Team GPA for the past 6 semesters is a 2.25 or higher
- (2) the Scholarship athletes earn a 2.25 GPA or higher for the past 6 semesters
- (3) 80% of the team earns a 2.0 or higher

APEC Sport Reviews Completed This Year:

- September 2025: MBB, WTE, MBA
- February 2026: WBB, WVB
- May 2026 MWTR, WSO

Regular APEC Sport Reviews were conducted this year for 7 teams including Men's Basketball, Women's Tennis, Men's Baseball, Women's Basketball, Women's Volleyball, Men's Track and Field, Women's Track and Field. One off cycle was conducted for Women's Soccer. All 8 teams met and far exceeded the 3 APEC criteria, including notable consistent increases in term GPA for the teams. The coaches consistently complimented Dr. Stephon Fuqua's academic counseling team at Irwin Student Services for their support in achieving consistent performance in terms of academic excellence. However, I noted that for such efforts to be effective, the coach must also be willing to hold high academic standards for their team.

In September, all three teams met and exceeded the criteria. Women's Tennis had a consistently strong academic trend over the past 6 semesters with Coach Evan Clark and support from

Director of Academic Services, Elizabeth Hamlet. The team consistently ranked as one of the top 3 teams in terms of academic performance. The average GPA for all university undergraduates has ranged between 3.34-3.45 over the past 6 semesters. Meanwhile, the WTE team average GPA has ranged between a 3.56 and 3.91, with all but one semester achieving an average of 3.7 or higher. Furthermore, Coach Clark's academic reputation remains strong across the Big Ten evidenced by his success in keeping his GSR and APR ranked first across the conference for all 6 semesters. One major aspect of this success has been Coach Clark's ability to retain students for their entire academic and athletic career. The APEC was sad to learn Coach Clark will retire this year and wish him well.

Men's Baseball had a consistently strong academic trend over the past 6 semesters with Coach Dan Hartleb and Senior Director of Academic Services Shari Clapp. The team met and far exceeded all 3 APEC criteria. The average GPA for all university undergraduates has ranged between 3.34-3.45 over the past 6 semesters. Men's Baseball has ranged between 3.22 and 3.59, with the most recent success in AY24-25.

Men's Basketball had a consistently acceptable academic trend over the past 6 semester. The team met and far exceeded all 3 APEC criteria. The average GPA for all university undergraduates has ranged between 3.34-3.45 over the past 6 semesters. Men's Baseball has ranged between 2.69 and 3.27, with the most recent success in AY24-25. Coach Underwood's staff, along with the DIA Student Academic Services staff under Dr. Stephon Fuqua, have continued to strategize ways to improve the GSR and APR rates that have been impacted by the recent changes to transfer portal rules. While those data points remain a requirement to report to the NCAA, they have been difficult to interpret under the new transfer landscape. Therefore, our conversations centered on what Illinois has done to support student athlete academic success while a student at Illinois. Currently, the average GPA by term appears to be the most relevant and is also one that consistently exceeds the institutionally set APEC criteria. Coach Underwood commented that he remains committed to recruiting students with strong academic backgrounds to increase the likelihood of academic success while they are a student here.

Similarly, in February both teams met and exceeded all 3 criteria. Women's Basketball and Women's Volleyball both met and exceeded all 3 APEC criteria. Both teams have strong academic records in comparison to the broader campus student population. Coach Green and Coach Tamas have consistently pushed their students to strong academic success in addition to athletic success. Both coaches noted the critical support provided by the academic services team directed by Dr. Stephon Fuqua.

In May, all three teams met and exceeded all 3 criteria. Men's Track and Field GPA ranged from 3.28 (SP25) to 3.48 (FA25) with Grant and Aid students ranging from 3.15 (FA24) to 3.48 (FA25). Throughout the past 6 semesters, between 90-100% of students had a GPA over 2.0. Compared to their non-athlete student peers, the Men's Track and Field team was between .08 points below to .08 points above the Campus Male Average GPA and between 0.12 below to .02 points above the overall Campus Average Undergraduate GPA. Coach Kyprianou's Academic Progress

Rate (APR) achieved a 1000 for the 2024-2025 Academic Year and remained above 980 in the previous years, well above the required 930 for championship eligibility.

Women's Track and Field GPA ranged from 3.23 (SP24) to 3.45 (SP25) across the 6 semesters, with Grant and Aid students ranging from 3.40 (SP25) to 3.67 (SP24). Throughout the review period, between 94-100% of students had over a 2.0 GPA. Compared to their campus peers, Women's Track and Field were between 0.13 and 0.03 points below the Campus Female Average GPA and between .14 and .01 points below the overall Campus Average Undergraduate GPA. Coach Kyprianou's APR was between a 992 and a 990 over the past 4 years and is currently a 990, well above the 930 required for championship eligibility.

Women's Soccer GPA ranged from 3.44 (FA25) to 3.66 (SP24) across the 6 semesters with Grant and Aid students ranging from 3.44 (FA25) to 3.66 (SP24). The team had a perfect 100% of students over a 2.0 GPA for the review period. Compared to their peers, the team was .04 points below and .20 points above the Campus Female Average GPA and between .26 points above to .01 point below the overall Campus Average Undergraduate GPA. Coach Hultin's APR was between a 988-1000 with the AY 24-25 APR being 1000, well above the required 930 for championships eligibility.

These APR numbers are publicly available again for all NCAA coaches starting last year.

General APEC Updates September 2025

Within the subcommittee meeting, Dr. Fuqua provided an update on AY 2024-2025 academic performance and graduates.

- 142 graduates across 10 colleges and 52 unique majors
 - 24 December 2024 graduates
 - 97 May 2025 graduates
 - 21 August 2025 graduates
 - The greatest representation of graduating student athletes remains in AHS and Gies

Spring 2025 Academic Data shared included:

- Average combined SP25 Term GPA for All Teams 3.54

Additional Notes included:

- 30 Consecutive Semesters Combined GPA above 3.0
- 18/19 Teams Earned over 3.0 SP25 Term GPA
- 87 Student-Athletes Earned a 4.0 SP25 Term GPA
- 72% of all student-athletes earned a 3.0 or better SP25 Term GPA

General APEC Updates December 2025/February 2026

We were pleased to celebrate 28 graduates for December 2025. These graduates represented ACES (5), AHS (8), LAS (7), Grainger (1), Education (1), and Gies (6), Grad College (13). This included 7 certificate programs and 6 master's degrees.

The 2024-2025 Graduation Success Rates, which was 91% cumulatively including 15 of 17 teams scoring at or above the D1 GSR average (90) for their respective sport. We also had 8 teams earn a perfect GSR: Men's Golf, Wrestling, Women's Golf, Women's Gymnastics, Soccer, Swimming, Women's Tennis, and Volleyball.

Overall, Fall 2025 athletics programs had great academic success.

- All 19 teams earned over a 3.0 term GPA
- 31 consecutive semester record of combined student athlete GPA above 3.0
- Average Term GPA was 3.50
- 71 student athletes who earned a 4.0 term GPA
- 82% of student athletes earned a 3.0 or better for the Fall 2025 term GPA

General APEC Updates May 2026

Spring/Summer 2026 athletics programs data will not be available until after May 22nd. We were pleased to celebrate 91 graduates for Spring/Summer across 10 colleges and 38 unique majors. This included 8 ACES, 22 AHS, 2 Media, 1 Education, 1 FAA, 3 Grainger, 31 Gies, 21 LAS, and 1 SOCW. There were also 26 graduate students from 11 different programs. That included 17 students who specifically chose to complete a master's degree, not just a graduate certificate. APEC noted this impressive detail for the level of rigor expected of graduate students while also pursuing an athletic career.

In addition to the GPA and graduation details, the Spring semester awards were announced. This year's Big Ten Medal of Honor was awarded to McKenna Schaeftbaur and Kenta Miyoshi. Beyond the individual teams, the women's golf (3.90 GPA) and men's gymnastics (3.73 GPA) teams were had the top team cumulative GPA for the year.

APEC subcommittee meeting summaries

1. Impact of Transfer Portal

Dr. Fuqua noted an ongoing conversation seeking feedback from relevant campus units to strategically navigate the impact of the transfer portal as it relates to admission cycles. Dr. Fuqua's team continues to adapt to the externally imposed changes while continuing to provide high quality academic support for student athletes striving to meet Illinois standards for academic excellence.

2. Degree Completion

We discussed the continued efforts within DIA to encourage degree completion for the students who previously moved on to professional competitive careers prior to degree completion. Those efforts remain consistent and effective.

3. Outside Competition

The Committee discussed the way that DIA is navigating student athlete requests for outside competition as it impacts class attendance and academic success. These are separate requests from the regular competition schedule set by the team well in advance of the competitive season. However, it can be challenging for faculty to understand the difference between an approved outside competition, which is something the student chooses to compete in but receives support from the FAR, and a team scheduled competition. Consequently, outside competition requests can create confusion around the missed days of class rule for student athletes at Illinois. The FAR are working with the relevant teams and coaches to ensure the difference is made clear to the respective faculty. The FAR also take into consideration requests for changes to the team assigned competitive schedule before approving outside competition requests.

4. General Conference and NCAA topics

The FAR reports this year continued to center around the Big 10 FAR meeting and conversations related to missed class days as the conference works on supporting student athletes academically despite major expansion to the conference. The Big 10 has worked hard to support member institutions in the logistics of scheduling competitions, such that there is not significant concern about scheduling impacts on student athlete missed days of class. As well, Illinois already provides 10 days with a process that allows for petitioning APEC for approval of additional days beyond 10. This process requires a written justification of why the team needs more than 10 days and what action was taken to ensure students remain in good standing.

5. Provost Office Updates

The committee continued to discuss provost office updates related to federal changes that could impact campus and athletics. The primary concern related to supporting international student athletes and an ability to continue to serve the wide range of student athlete unique needs.

6. Missed class days and APEC process

The subcommittee members also discussed missed class days for student athletes as it relates to competition scheduling and APEC approval processes. The subcommittee noted the updated language in the student code regarding competition scheduling during finals week. The subcommittee provided additional guidance to the chair regarding practical implementation of the updated language and general process for APEC approval. This included discussion of missed finals due to qualifying competitions working towards the respective championships, which affect spring sport athletes around finals week.

In sum, although the landscape of college athletics continues to evolve, the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics has successfully supported our students.

Respectfully submitted for your review,
Caitlin Vitosky Clarke
Teaching Associate Professor
Department of Health & Kinesiology