

Review of the Office of Athletics Student Services

The University of Texas at Austin

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I. Introduction

In June 2015, Gregory L. Fenves, President of The University of Texas at Austin (“the University” or “UT”), commissioned a complete and independent review of the University’s Office of Athletics Student Services, which provides all student-athletes with academic guidance and resources. The charge was to conduct a thorough examination of all policies and procedures that impact the academic experience of student-athletes, starting at the time they are recruited.

Specific areas examined include:

- the evaluation of the academic status of prospects during the recruiting process;
- the process for evaluating initial eligibility under NCAA rules;
- admissions;
- continuing eligibility;
- academic advising, tutorial assistance, and mentoring;
- choice of majors and course selection;
- interactions with athletics employees, university faculty members, and officials in such areas as admissions, the registrar’s office, financial aid, student affairs, and various academic divisions;
- the history of the Office of Athletics Student Services;
- any specific incidents of concern that arise; and
- consistency with national best practices and NCAA requirements.

This report is the result of that program review, which started in June 2015 and ended in December 2015. Included are a description of the methodology, findings, recommendations, and general feedback and proposals for further consideration.

In an examination of academic integrity and the academic experience of student-athletes, there are certain baselines. These may come from the NCAA, Conference and University bylaws, rules, and policies, as well as national best practices discussed by

organizations such as the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics. However, this process was not designed to be an NCAA rules compliance or any other type of audit. It has a different and broader purpose, which was to study the academic experience of student-athletes and to look for areas that might be strengthened. But beyond the baselines, no outside entity should attempt to impose a specific model on this or any institution. To the extent areas have been identified for possible improvement and change, the resolution must come from within.

It is clear from the study of the voluminous record of self-studies, manuals, and reports detailed below, UT has frequently engaged in critical self-studies that are participatory and include faculty involvement. Consistent with that approach, the commissioning of this review is another indication that UT is not afraid to evaluate the academic experience of its student-athletes, report findings to the academic community and other interested parties, and affect positive change where it is warranted.

II. Methodology of the Review

We worked closely with the Office of the Vice President for Legal Affairs to make requests for information and to arrange interviews. We studied data, committee reports, self-study reports, manuals, meeting minutes, protocols, catalogs, and handbooks. The University responded to all requests, and the Vice President for Legal Affairs provided many additional and helpful suggestions for information to be reviewed and individuals to be interviewed.

Interviews were scheduled and conducted in several places on campus, based on availability of space and convenience to interviewees. These were arranged through the Office of the Vice President for Legal Affairs. In only a few cases, individuals were interviewed by telephone.

A. Material Reviewed

In order to make the most of the time spent in personal interviews and to gain an understanding of the history of the University relevant to the academic experience of student-athletes, we made an extensive request for documents and data before coming to campus. These

were provided expeditiously. Our task was made easier by the Vice President for Legal Affairs who provided important information broader than the scope of our initial requests. We made additional requests for data and reports as interviews progressed.

Appendix A details the material reviewed during the course of the review. Although we did not engage in a page count, the record produced and studied was extensive and includes material from all parts of campus including the athletic department, faculty, the Faculty Council, the athletic councils, academic divisions, including deans' offices, and various academic administrative offices such as admissions, student affairs, the registrar's office and financial aid.

B. Personal Interviews

We learned the most from the interviews. We interviewed student-athletes, coaches, athletic administrators at all levels, faculty, deans, chairpersons of the athletic councils and the Faculty Council, the current and a former Faculty Athletic Representative, student affairs administrators, and representatives from a number of academic administrative offices. In some cases the early interviews led to requests to interview individuals beyond those initially identified. In some cases we interviewed individuals more than once. A total of 83 individuals were interviewed. *Appendix B* provides a list of the individuals interviewed and their positions on campus.

Individuals were encouraged to speak freely. A number of lively discussions took place. In some cases individuals contacted us after an initial interview in order to provide additional information and perspectives.

There are often contentious issues in play where athletics and academics meet, but we generally found people of good will who are dedicated to UT and love the University and were receptive to the views of others. A few people were locked in to the idea that something was right "because we've always done it that way," but most demonstrated an openness and flexibility in their thinking that was helpful.

In February 1999, Professor Charles Alan Wright of UT submitted a report to then President Larry Faulkner that came from the Ad Hoc Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics (see Appendix A, Item 31). At page 25 of that report, Professor Wright noted, “There are serious philosophical differences about the place of intercollegiate athletics at the University of Texas at Austin among the faculty – and, we would surmise, among the students and faculty as well.” What is true then is true now – at UT and across the country. Many of the interviews conducted in this review process allowed people to express their views and raise questions on how things were being done where academics and athletics intersect. Interactive and productive discussions are expected in a review process where the focus is on a better understanding of the academic experience of student-athletes.

During the period of this review there was a change in the leadership in the men’s athletic director position, with Mike Perrin being named as the interim and then permanent men’s athletic director, replacing Steve Patterson.

C. Format of the Report

President Fenves requested a review that would help him understand all aspects of the academic experience of the student-athlete. This report largely tracks the academic experience of student-athletes from the time they are recruited through the time they leave the University. A special focus was to review all of the elements of the Office of Athletics Student Services, which provides all student-athletes with academic guidance, services, and other resources beyond those provided by the traditional academic divisions on campus.

III. The Student-Athlete Experience

A. NCAA Initial Eligibility

Pursuant to NCAA bylaws, in order to participate in Division I athletics or receive an athletics scholarship during the first year of college, a student-athlete must complete a 16 core-course requirement, meet a minimum required grade-point average in core courses, and earn a

combined SAT or ACT sum score that matches the core course grade-point average and test-score sliding scale. All college-bound student-athletes must have an academic and amateur certification from the NCAA Eligibility Center.

At UT, the Office of Admissions has a position in which 20 hours per week are dedicated to athletics. The primary job duties in the position concern eligibility assessments, signee updates to sports staffs, admissions-related analysis on transfer evaluations, and processing of prospective student-athlete admissions files to the Director of Admissions. The Office of Athletics Student Services works with the UT admissions process, while the Office of Risk Management and Athletic Compliance Services (“Athletic Compliance Office”) assists with the NCAA initial eligibility matters. Select staff members from admissions, student services, and compliance meet monthly.

Coaches and athletic department staff forward academic records directly to the Athletic Compliance Office, where they are scanned into a shared folder. A notification is distributed via email, and this triggers the Office of Admissions to complete a breakdown based on NCAA initial eligibility and UT admissions requirements. The analysis is sent directly to coaches and staff via email. From there, NCAA initial eligibility questions are directed to the Athletic Compliance Office, and admissions questions are directed to the Office of Athletics Student Services. The Office of Admissions works with the Office of Athletics Student Services in coordinating and monitoring the application and admissions process for prospective student-athletes (or “prospects”). Prospective student-athletes submit the same application materials as do all other applicants to UT.

According to the Athletics Academics Policy Manual (Appendix A, Item 3, Tab 35), coaches are not permitted to contact any member of the faculty or staff (including college deans and advisers) for the purpose of discussing the academic performance of a student-athlete or to contact the staff in the Registrar’s Office, Admissions Office, or specific colleges regarding registration, admission, or major/degree selection, respectively. The Executive Senior Associate

Athletics Director or the student's academic counselor initiates such contact. Interviews conducted with coaches and other athletic department staff confirm that they are aware of and follow this no-contact policy.

In cases where there needs to be follow-up with prospects based on NCAA initial eligibility or UT admissions deficiencies, the coaches are generally on point. The Athletic Compliance Office and the Office of Athletics Student Services may get involved as needed in complex cases. Once prospects sign financial aid agreements or a National Letter of Intent, the Office of Admissions adds the prospect to the tracking list and sends each sport weekly updates on their NCAA eligibility or UT admission files. When the signee has either been deemed a qualifier by the NCAA or the Admissions Office is comfortable referring the decisions to the Director of Admissions based on a combination of the signee's academic record and course enrollment for the remaining terms and the signee becomes a qualifier upon high school graduation, the signee's admissions file is processed and Office of Athletics Student Services is notified of the decision. The Office of Athletics Student Services then notifies the sports staff.

B. Acquainting Prospects with the Academic Services and Programs at Texas

The Office of Athletics Student Services meets with prospective student-athletes on official and unofficial visits to the University to acquaint them with the academic facilities as well as the academic services and opportunities the University and the Office of Athletics Student Services provide. The Office of Athletics Student Services staff may meet with the prospective student-athletes both individually or in a group setting. The nature of the education provided to prospects regarding academics at UT is described in a document provided to us by the Office of Athletics Student Services (Appendix A, Item 3, Tab 32). Prospects receive a thorough education on academic resources and programs at UT.

During a recruiting appointment, an academic counselor from the Office of Athletics Student Services leads the recruit (and any accompanying individuals) on a tour of the academic

facilities. Academic counselors are provided with a checklist, which reviews the details of the recruit's appointments and the information to discuss during the meeting with prospective student-athletes and their parents or guardians. The academic counselor discusses the services and opportunities that the Office of Athletics Student Services provides, such as advising, tutoring, study hall, career development, and community service involvement. The academic counselor also gives an overview of the University's various colleges/schools and majors as well as a typical day in the life of a student-athlete.

Student-athletes advised in interviews that they find this process extremely helpful and informative. Furthermore, several student-athletes indicated that their parents or guardians were appreciative of this process because it alleviated concerns related to the importance placed on academics and the amount of time required.

However, some of the student-athletes interviewed indicated that the amount of information they received was "overwhelming" and that they could not fully appreciate all of the information offered by the Office of Athletics Student Services until they actually set foot on campus as a student-athlete. One student-athlete also indicated that she believed the Office of Athletics Student Services should be more forthcoming in relation to the demands and expectations that student-athletes face. The reality is the day-to-day time restraints that student-athletes face due to their class and practice schedule leave little free time for student-athletes to actually focus on studying. The Office of Athletics Student Services offers several tools to help student-athletes succeed in their academics, however, student-athletes need time to take advantage of these services, and available time is not always something that the student-athletes have, particularly while in season.

Despite this, the overwhelming majority of student-athletes leave their visits knowing that the Office of Athletics Student Services is there to provide assistance to them in their academics. As one student-athlete described, the takeaway from the visit is that the Office of

Athletics Student Services, in addition to the lecture halls, is one place where it is truly “all about academics.”

C. The Admissions Process and Standards

In order to understand the admissions process for student-athletes at the University, we interviewed the Director of Admissions and several other individuals who are involved in the process and in administering admission policies. Some additional requests for information were made after initial interviews occurred.

The Office of Admissions reviews complete freshman applications to determine which students will be offered admission, either through automatic admission based on Texas law or through holistic review, and to make decisions about majors for all admitted students. Section 51.803 of the Texas Education Code defines the rules that govern automatic admission to Texas universities. Under these rules, the University is required to use automatic admission to fill at least 75 percent of the spaces available in each entering freshman class with Texas residents.

Each September, the University informs school districts of the rank that will be required to earn automatic admission to the University in the next application cycle. For example, on September 15, 2014, the University notified school districts that it will automatically admit students in the top 8 percent of their high school classes to Summer/Fall 2016 and to Spring 2017.

Although Texas law offers automatic admissions to the University for eligible undergraduate applicants, it does not guarantee admission to the applicant’s requested major. All undergraduate applicants are considered on a competitive basis for admission to the majors they request. To be considered for admission to the Cockrell School of Engineering, the Jackson School of Geosciences, and the Environmental Science major in the College of Liberal Arts and the College of Natural Sciences, applicants who are otherwise eligible for automatic admission to the University must meet the calculus-readiness requirement. To be considered for admission to other math-intensive majors (mathematics, business, physics, or computer science), an

applicant who is otherwise eligible for automatic admission to the University, but does not meet the calculus-readiness requirement, is offered admission to another major at the University. Applicants who are eligible for consideration under the provisions of section 51.803 of the Texas Education Code must normally have graduated, or be on track to graduate, from high school and have met the high school preparation requirements. As a state-assisted institution, the University reserves 90 percent of its spaces for Texas residents per Texas law, and the remaining 10 percent of the spaces are reserved for out-of-state and international students.

The University Catalog (Appendix A, Item 40) notes that the Director of Admission may admit recipients of bona fide scholarships designated by the President of the University. As noted previously in this report at Section III A., above (NCAA Initial Eligibility), the NCAA requirements on high school preparation (a combination of core-course requirements, minimum grade-point average, and test scores) are designed to provide basic preparation for college success. At the University, student-athletes who are certified as eligible by the NCAA and who receive an athletic scholarship are admissible. This is consistent with University policy regarding the admission of scholarship recipients.

Prospective student-athletes submit the same application materials as do all University applicants. In any year, only 120 to 150 scholarship student-athletes are admitted and enroll. This is a small fraction of an entering class size of approximately 7600.

The University has a very clear protocol for the mechanical process of admission of student-athletes, which was shared with us by the Office of Admissions and athletic department personnel. The policies and approach at UT regarding the mechanics of admission are consistent with those at major public institutions across the country.

D. The Profile of Admitted Student-Athletes

We studied the admissions profile of student-athletes and non-athletes, focusing on test scores (SAT and/or ACT) and high school GPA percentile. We interviewed faculty, admissions officers, former and current athletic administrators and coaches, other academic officers, and

the Office of Athletics Student Services staff to get an understanding of the approach taken in the consideration of admission of what people described in one form or another as an academically “at risk” prospect. It is news to no one that simply meeting the NCAA initial eligibility requirements does not guarantee that a student-athlete will be able to succeed at a rigorous academic institution such as UT. And among NCAA infractions cases involving academic misconduct, there is an overrepresentation of cases where the cause can be attributed to the admissions decision. People at the institutions in those cases often knew on the front end that the student-athlete should not have been admitted to the school – not only in hindsight.

We had positive and frank discussions where it was clear that in some cases, athletic scholarship offers were not made because the odds of failure were too high and the risks were too great. In other cases, we were not sure that kind of deliberation and analysis occurred before a scholarship offer was made.

No one is saying academically high-risk students do not belong at UT. Totally unrelated to athletics, UT evaluates the academic strengths and weaknesses of incoming students and effectively uses certain programs and courses to improve the odds of success for the at-risk students. At-risk students can be successful and achieve considerable academic success, especially given the professional assistance they receive from the Office of Athletics Student Services and other offices on campus.

But in order to ensure that there is some kind of system in place to evaluate the likelihood of academic success for very high-risk applicants who have surpassed the NCAA initial eligibility threshold, we recommend that the leadership at UT consider some mechanism to make that analysis more systematic and formal, and not just a function of who happens to be in the conversation involving a particular sport and prospect. Among the possibilities are a small review committee, with a majority of members coming from academic administrators and faculty, who would review admissions files and essays where the prospect presents a considerable risk. The scrutiny for having identified a prospect for further review should not fall

on individuals in the Office of Athletics Student Services. This kind of analysis has occurred in some cases in the past in some sports, but it appears it has not occurred in others. There have been situations at UT where the need to add a talented athlete to a team overrode some stated concerns of people on the academic side.

In part, the idea here is to take some of the pressure off of the Office of Athletics Student Services and to reduce the risk that follows the admission of the occasional prospect who really should not be a student at UT. A more compelling reason is to focus on the welfare of the student. One individual we interviewed noted that this really becomes a moral issue. He observed that the institution should make sure that it is enrolling people who have a good chance of being successful, recognizing that you can have a healthy debate on what you consider a success. The people in the Office of Athletics Student Services at UT are a dedicated group of professionals who do extraordinary work. Their success is obvious through the strong academic performance of the teams. But the most effective way to help these people do their good work is to make the right decision on whether to offer a scholarship and admit an athlete.

E. NCAA Continuing Eligibility

The Progress-Toward-Degree requirements for enrolled student-athletes are explained on the NCAA website, including an explanation of the rationale and a brief overview of the relevant NCAA legislation. Enrolled student-athletes must meet certain standards to be eligible for competition. The standards outlined in the legislation include maintaining a minimum grade point average term-by-term, annual credit hour requirements, and percentage of degree requirements during the time the student-athlete is enrolled.

The Office of the Registrar has three full-time positions dedicated to athletics certification (progress-towards-degree) and serves as the institution's certifying officer. The Office of Athletics Student Services proactively tracks the status of individual student-athletes and handles all communication with sports staff directly regarding current student-athlete

deficiencies and potential eligibility concerns. The Athletic Compliance Office serves as a check and balance in the process and handles any interpretive issues with NCAA rules.

Contacts within each college complete percentage of degree forms for their respective student-athletes. Those forms are checked for accuracy separately by the Office of Athletics Student Services and the Office of the Registrar. The forms are then used to assist with certification and percentage of degree requirements. The Office of the Registrar, Office of Athletics Student Services and the Athletic Compliance Office conduct bi-annual meetings with the college contacts to review the process and NCAA rules in general.

F. Structure of the Office of Athletics Student Services

The Office of Athletics Student Services is led by the Executive Senior Associate Athletics Director for Student Services. According to the department's policy manual (Appendix A, Item 3, Tab 45), this individual is responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies, managing the operation of the Moncrief-Bible and the Moncrief-Neuhaus Academic Centers, and serving as the liaison between the Office of Athletics Student Services and the Athletics Directors and between the athletics department and faculty.

Athletics academic counselors are assigned in groups in a team-based manner, referred to as pods, rather than a one counselor per athletics team approach. Specifically, athletics counselors are divided into two types of pods. Team pods are comprised of counselors who are assigned to at least one student-athlete on the team. Sports teams are assigned two to five counselors depending on roster size. One of the counselors is designated as the captain and is responsible for communicating with the Executive Senior Associate Athletics Director and the head coach regarding academically-related team matters (e.g., missed classes). Responsibility pods are comprised of counselors who are charged with performing a specific set of tasks and responsibilities (e.g., eligibility, monitoring of missed classes, community service, SAAC).

The Office of Athletics Student Services staff members also participate in weekly staff meetings in order to review the past week's activities, to preview the upcoming week, and to

receive reports and updates from the various pods. In addition, each staff member is required to email the Executive Senior Associate Athletics Director a week-in-review update pertaining to their specific responsibilities. The Executive Senior Associate Athletics Director provides a written response to each of these updates.

The Office of Athletics Student Services Department also employs academic mentors who are paired with student-athletes and assist with study skills and time management. They are responsible for overseeing their student-athletes' daily academic preparation and for monitoring their progress. Academic tutors with subject matter expertise are also assigned to assist student-athletes by the Academic Tutor Supervisor. Student-athletes are not permitted to schedule tutor appointments on their own. In addition, all freshman and transfer student-athletes are required to participate in the Study Skills program (aka study hall). These student-athletes attend approximately four to five study hall sessions per week. After the first year of enrollment, student-athletes' academic plans are more individualized and study hall times vary. When attending a study hall session, student-athletes are required to check in and out with the front desk monitor.

G. Academic Advising

The approach to academic advising, as stated in the Undergraduate Catalog, is as follows:

The University of Texas at Austin views sound academic advising as a significant responsibility in educating students. Academic advisers assist students in developing intellectual potential and exploring educational opportunities and life goals. Many people in the campus community contribute to the advising process, including faculty, staff, students, and professional advisers. Through the relationship established between adviser and student within a friendly, helpful, and professional atmosphere, a student has the opportunity to learn about educational options, degree requirements, and academic policies and procedures; clarify educational objectives; plan and pursue programs consistent with abilities, interests, and life goals; and use all resources of the University to his or her best advantage.

Ultimately, the student is responsible for seeking adequate academic advice, for knowing and meeting degree requirements, and for enrolling in appropriate courses to ensure orderly

and timely progress toward a degree. Frequent adviser contact provides students with current academic information and promotes progress toward educational goals. The University supports that progress and encourages effective academic advising campus-wide.

The Office of Athletics Student Services endorses and supports the principle that the student-athlete is chiefly responsible for seeking academic advice and counseling in the selection of courses and majors. However, both across campus and in the Office of Athletics Student Services, many resources are made available in selecting an undergraduate degree and in selecting the courses needed for graduation. Career counseling is also available through several avenues.

Every student-athlete can connect with an adviser in his or her respective college to assist with academic issues. Additionally, every student-athlete is assigned an Athletics Academics Counselor from the Office of Athletics Student Services upon admission to the University. Athletics Academic Counselors serve in a supplementary role to campus advisers from the student-athlete's declared major. Considering the dual role as a student and an athlete who faces continuing NCAA eligibility requirements, the Athletics Academic Counselor helps establish academic objectives and develop a plan for degree completion. They help student-athletes navigate the intersection of institutional, academic departmental, and NCAA requirements.

Beyond University publications and printed material provided to us by individual academic departments and the athletics department, we interviewed a number of people to better understand the process and philosophy of academic advising for student-athletes. We talked to deans, faculty, the Faculty Athletic Representative, athletics administrators, Athletics Academic Counselors, student-athletes, and coaches. We also reviewed the notes taken in advising sessions (Toolkit Notes) for 175 student-athletes, degree audit protocols, registration advising forms used in athletics, and the resources made available to student-athletes in what are called "Advising Nights," where detailed presentations are made to UT students to help them

understand the process of selecting a major and all the resources available to make that process easier to navigate.

People come at academic advising for student-athletes from a number of different perspectives, and we encountered some differences of opinion regarding the process and philosophy at UT. Among all the people we interviewed, a common belief was that the best academic advice should and does come from the student-athlete's academic home when a major has been declared, rather than from athletics. No one we talked to differed with that view. In fact, several student-athletes indicated that they preferred to discuss actual classes with advisers from their academic homes as opposed to the Athletics Academic Counselors. But this is not a subject without complexities, because freshman and sophomores may not be in a declared major. They might be (as some student-athletes are) enrolled in the School of Undergraduate Studies, where students explore options before declaring a major. In the School of Undergraduate Studies, with the help of academic advisers and career counselors, students explore interests while completing core coursework applicable toward all degrees.

The mechanical process for the necessary advising that must occur before student-athletes may register for classes is described in campus literature in several places and will not be examined here. Stated simply, athletics operates on the principle that every student-athlete must communicate and interact with the major college adviser once a degree track is chosen. And no one interviewed differed with the idea that student-athletes would be best served by receiving academic advice in the "academic home" before registration, even if they are undeclared as freshmen or sophomores and enrolled in a place such as the School of Undergraduate Studies. Student-athletes confirmed that they do, in fact, meet with their major college adviser.

Having said that, several people in athletics and in academics noted there "has been some slippage here" where a few student-athletes have registered for classes having received advising only from their Athletics Academic Counselor. The bars to registration have been lifted

by individuals in athletics, without academic advice coming from the school or college. Although this has been described as “isolated” by one administrator and “not systematic” by a dean, it should be corrected to be consistent with the views of all the people we interviewed. It should be noted that no student-athlete interviewed indicated that they had registered without speaking with their college adviser first. In fact, all of the student-athletes interviewed described the registration process as a dual-approach: meeting with their college adviser as well as their Athletics Academic Counselor. Further, as stated previously, several of the student-athletes interviewed added that they prefer to seek advice from their major college adviser.

Athletics Academic Counselors interact regularly with academic advisers from the various academic divisions and more formally through the UT Academic Counselors Association (ACA). All Athletics Academic Counselors are members of ACA. Athletics hosts the ACA monthly meeting once a year and networks with the academic advisers in the academic divisions. Athletics Academic Counselors have a representative at each ACA monthly meeting to stay connected on changes in programs on campus.

Among the NCAA membership and in higher education generally, there is an ongoing focus on whether student-athletes are in the majors of their choosing, whether they are in majors that lack sufficient rigor, and whether course selection is based on a path of least resistance. Some use the word “steering” to suggest that some programs in athletics have their eye on maintaining the student-athlete’s eligibility term-to-term, rather than focusing on the long-term educational interest and career goals of the student-athletes. We encountered some of those concerns in our interviews of faculty, coaches, and administrators at UT.

Some coaches and faculty who have more than a distant knowledge of the academic experience of student-athletes at UT expressed several important concerns, with varying degrees of intensity. One concern was that there was too much focus on publicizing and promoting higher team GPAs, rather than encouraging student-athletes to stay in more rigorous courses and majors that matched the stated interests of the student-athletes when they were recruited

and came to campus. Another somewhat related view was that student-athletes are encouraged to drop courses too quickly when they encounter difficulties, rather than hanging tough and staying with the challenge offered by the course. One coach said he would happily trade a lower team GPA for the operating principle that student-athletes should be in a full course load, staying on track to graduate on time and in a major that the coach has discussed with the student-athlete as being the student-athlete's first choice, and what the coach perceived as being well within the academic strengths of the student-athlete. Some coaches and faculty expressed the concern that the Office of Athletics Student Services exerts too much control over the student-athletes in their selection of courses and majors. These are not opinions that came from only one or two people.

Two coaches noted that pointing to the academic opportunities at UT was a big part of their discussion with student-athletes and parents in the recruiting process, yet they sometimes feel too walled off from the academic experience of student-athletes and the choices made by them once they are enrolled.

We are all familiar with the problems and NCAA infractions cases that sometimes follow when coaches intervene with faculty and others in trying to fix an academic and eligibility problem for student-athletes. That type of improper intervention and involvement is **not** what is being described here. The views expressed to us were by several coaches who are committed to the academic success of student-athletes, who themselves chose challenging academic paths when they were students, and who promote the academic strengths and programs at UT in the recruiting process. They do not want to step away from being involved in the academic lives and choices made by their student-athletes once they are enrolled. Again, the bottom line for these several coaches is that they would much rather have a team GPA of 2.75 where the student-athletes are on track to graduate in the time period that was discussed by the coach in meetings with prospects and parents, rather than have a team GPA of 3.2 with players enrolled in less challenging courses and majors and not taking 12 hours. Among the many opinions we

encountered in this process, the view of these coaches and some faculty were stated with special intensity and energy.

The subject of course and major selection by student-athletes is complex and is sometimes oversimplified. One of the academic deans we interviewed provided good insight into what might be called the “endgame” in advising. He said that in his college, his advisers understand the importance of allowing students to explore their interests and pursue their passions, even though they may face disappointment in their initial classroom performance. Some have to face the fact that they do not have the skills or academic firepower to succeed in their major of first choice. Paraphrasing, this dean said that in academic advising, you need to open the eyes of the students and explore the possibility of pursuing other majors where they might find success if the student has not been able to have success initially. We expect this philosophy would be embraced by most students, parents, and educators. And yet no one would call that (outside of caustic commentators) as a dumbing down or steering. It is simply trying to find a match, weighing academic preparation, skills, interests, and long-term goals of the student. It should be possible to have all of those goals and interests in mind, without being branded as someone who is more focused on maintaining NCAA eligibility term-to-term, rather than having the long-term educational success of the student in mind. Again, you have to get beyond stereotypes and generalities to have some thoughtful analysis here. Some direct and thoughtful discussion between certain UT coaches and individuals involved in the Office of Athletics Student Services could clear the air and help create a better understanding among the UT staff – all for the greater good of the student-athletes. Some better communication and flexibility here would go a long way toward making things better for the student-athletes.

Student-athletes’ beliefs, and concerns, mirror those detailed above. All of the student-athletes interviewed, including those who hoped to play their sport at the professional level, noted the importance of academics and the need to prepare themselves for life after sports. All also expressed their gratitude for their Athletics Academic Counselors’ assistance and guidance.

The overwhelming view of the student-athletes is that the Athletics Academic Counselors are extremely helpful and involved in doing what is best, academically, for the student-athlete. Although it appears that the standard for checking in with one's Athletics Academic Counselors is every two weeks, the vast majority of student-athletes "check-in" on a far more regular basis. One student-athlete indicated that he checks in almost daily, even if it is just to say hi when he is walking into the study center.

Regarding major selection, while some entered college knowing their career choice, several picked their major with the help of their Athletics Academic Counselor. The process, as explained by the student-athletes who had assistance, matches that as explained by the aforementioned academic dean. The student-athlete meets with his/her Athletics Academic Counselor and has a general discussion relating to his/her interests. Based on this information, the Athletics Academic Counselor then suggests that the student-athlete take classes in several areas that match those interests. This essentially operates as a "process of elimination." If the student-athlete likes a specific class, then the student-athlete would take other classes in that area to further explore the interest. If the student-athlete disliked a certain class, then that area might be eliminated. This process allows student-athletes to keep control over their major selection and truly develop their interests and passion into a career.

Of course, the process does not always go smoothly. Again, as explained by the aforementioned academic dean, there are some student-athletes who might not have the skill set or ability to major in a certain area. The student-athletes who discussed this issue did not, however, view this as "steering." Rather, the student-athletes viewed it as the Athletics Academic Counselor doing the same thing that an academic adviser in a college or major should do – lay out the true expectations of a certain area, including the expected GPA and course requirements. The student-athletes who discussed this issue indicated that they appreciated the honesty of Athletics Academic Counselors who gave a "full picture" of, and refused to sugar coat,

the curriculum of a certain major, particularly in light of the time demands associated with being a student-athlete.

The impact of a student-athlete's schedule is not just limited, however, to potential difficulties with finding time to devote to a challenging major. There were two serious issues relating to major selection as expressed by student-athletes: 1) their schedule essentially preventing them from majoring in the major of their choice and 2) a student-athlete being precluded from a certain major because the student-athlete's first year schedule did not include the appropriate, transferable core courses.

An illustration best summarizes the first issue: one student-athlete indicated that she entered college wanting to major in athletic training. However, the sheer fact that she *is* a student-athlete prevented her from majoring in athletic training. The required observation and training time is the time that she would otherwise be practicing, studying, or even herself be receiving the treatment from the student athletic trainers. This, of course, is an extreme example, but several student-athletes expressed facing similar choices: choose to major in what they want and not be a student-athlete or choose another, similar major with the hopes of attending graduate school and continue playing sports.

Unfortunately, we did have a few student-athletes who expressed the view that student-athletes are free to major in the major of their choice, provided it did not conflict with the practice schedule. Again, this was a minority view. Nonetheless, this report is to paint a full picture of the academic experience of a student-athlete, and we would be remiss not to include this particular experience. One student-athlete interviewed indicated that she was discouraged from majoring in her first choice of major upon discovering that classes interfered with practice time. Still another student-athlete indicated that the coaches are not happy when there are a lot of class conflicts and that she is under the impression that "you come here to participate in sports, too." To be clear, again, these 1) are issues with coaches and 2) represent the minority view. In fact, several of the student-athletes indicated that most coaches are very supportive of

their academic endeavors and are understanding when academic conflicts arise. Of course, as with anything, there must be a balance. To participate in athletics, student-athletes do need to be able to practice, and, therefore, if a class can be avoided, or taken in the summer so to not interfere with practice time, then requesting that the student-athlete take the class at another time is not an unreasonable expectation.

This is where student-athletes very much rely on their Athletics Academic Counselor. As explained previously, student-athletes do use both their Athletics Academic Counselor as well as an adviser in their respective college/major to prepare their course schedule before registration. The majority of student-athletes stated that the Athletics Academic Counselor is particularly useful in the registration process because the Athletics Academic Counselor knows the athletic teams' practice schedules. Therefore, they can assist student-athletes in developing a class schedule that 1) meets their degree progress requirements and 2) does not interfere too much with practice time.

The second issue expressed by several student-athletes relates to being foreclosed from certain majors based on early coursework selection. Several student-athletes indicated that they arrived on campus without having a pre-determined major. In these situations, the student-athletes are essentially handed a pre-selected class schedule for the first full academic year, if not the first two full academic years. Unfortunately, by the time that the student-athlete decides on a major, the student-athlete has not taken the required classes to even apply for that particular major and is left cherry-picking from a handful of majors for which the prior coursework can be used. In essence, these student-athletes are being handed both courses and a major without any effective discussion relating to their personal preferences. This, of course, can be alleviated by having a discussion with a student-athlete about the student-athlete's particular interests upon his/her arrival on campus.

In order to verify whether any issues exist with regard to student-athletes being clustered in certain degree programs, we obtained data from the UT registrar's office to compare with

enrollment data for the entire UT undergraduate student body. Generally speaking, this data did not provide evidence that student-athletes are being directed to certain colleges or degree programs. The one area, however, that merits additional discussion and evaluation is the enrollment in the College of Education of certain student-athlete subgroups. During our interviews on campus, several individuals, both inside and outside of athletics, shared their opinion that too many student-athletes were enrolled in the College of Education, and more specifically, as Applied Learning and Development: Youth and Community Studies or Physical Culture and Sports majors. Based on the 2015 data available from the UT Institutional Reporting, Research, and Information Systems (publically available data from UT's website), five percent of the UT undergraduate student body is enrolled in the College of Education. By contrast, 62% (71/115) of the football team is identified as enrolled in the College of Education. Of the 71, 38 (33%) of those student-athletes are identified as undeclared; however 15 (13%) are Applied Learning and Development: Youth and Community Studies majors and 16 (14%) are Physical Culture and Sports majors.

Similarly, 28 of 36 (78%) baseball student-athletes are enrolled in the College of Education. Of the 28, 19 (53%) of those student-athletes are undeclared, 2 (6%) are majoring in Applied Learning and Development: Youth and Community Studies, and 5 (14%) are Physical Culture and Sports majors. In men's basketball, 11 of 15 (73%) student-athletes are enrolled in the College of Education. Of the 11, 4 (27%) of those student-athletes are undeclared, 4 (27%) are Applied Learning and Development: Youth and Community Studies majors and 3 (20%) are Physical Culture and Sports majors. In women's basketball, 13 of 16 (81%) student-athletes are enrolled in the College of Education. Of the 13, 7 (44%) of those student-athletes are undeclared, 1 (6%) is an Applied Learning and Development: Youth and Community Studies major, and 2 (13%) are Physical Culture and Sports majors.

In reviewing the 2015 student-athlete data sorted by ethnicity, 91 of the 128 (71%) student-athletes who identified themselves as Black or African American are enrolled in the

College of Education. In comparison, only 94 of the 327 (29%) student-athletes who identify as White are enrolled in the College of Education. Of the 91, 18 (20%) are Applied Learning and Development: Youth and Community Studies majors and another 18 (20%) are Physical Culture and Sports majors.

Based on this data, there appears to be an overconcentration of student-athletes in the subgroups noted above enrolled in the College of Education. One explanation for this data could be the fact that other colleges at UT maintain more rigorous academic requirements for admission. Additionally, Athletics Academic Counselors also indicated during interviews that teammates often learn about majors from each other, which could potentially explain, at least in part, the enrollment data for football, men's and women's basketball, and baseball. These conclusions are largely speculative, however. To the extent that campus leadership at UT views this data as problematic, further research and discussion among appropriate campus personnel is necessary.

It is our view that the Athletics Academic Counselors are a highly dedicated group of people. The job responsibilities and expectations for the Athletics Academic Counselors are described in the resources provided to us for this review (Appendix A, Item 3, Tab 5). One of the things we found to be extremely helpful in conducting this review are the extensive files the Athletics Academic Counselors maintain on each student-athlete which include admissions documents, correspondence related to the academic experience of the student-athletes, the reports provided to coaches, testing documentation, and the complete University academic record. This thorough and exhaustive documentation is also extremely helpful should there ever be a need to respond to NCAA inquiries or internal inquiries relating to academic integrity and student-athletes. In our many years of work with numerous institutions on matters relating to the NCAA and the academic experience of student-athletes, we have never encountered any record keeping system as comprehensive as that at the University of Texas. UT documents the academic experience of student-athletes like no other college or university. This documentation

was also invaluable in responding to issues raised by the media and in conversations with the NCAA which preceded this program review. The Athletic Compliance Office also has an extraordinary system of record keeping and documentation, which was a great help in our work for UT.

H. Academic Tutoring, Mentoring, and Related Issues

The Office of Athletics Student Services offers several resources to student-athletes, including tutors and mentors. Tutors and mentors are typically upper-level undergraduate students or graduate students. Academic mentors work closely with student-athletes to help them learn and incorporate learning strategies. Among other assigned tasks, mentors assist with study skills and time management. While mentors and tutors share many common job elements, tutors are expected to be proficient in course material. Mentors are primarily responsible for teaching organization and effective study skills.

We reviewed the comprehensive training material for tutors and mentors, including the reporting requirements for tutors and mentors and the written evaluation of tutors and mentors by the student-athletes. The training material includes detailed information on academic integrity, with the focus on compliance with University and NCAA rules. The written material outlining permissible versus impermissible academic assistance is thorough and consistent with best practices for providing academic assistance to student-athletes.

In several interviews of individuals in the athletic department and across campus, we heard concerns that in some cases, student-athletes have received too much help, not in the context of violations of institutional or NCAA rules, but variously described as “too much babying.” These concerns included an inclination to have the student-athletes drop courses too quickly when they encounter difficulties, steering freshmen and sophomores into less challenging electives, and too much insulation from the bumps and bruises that come with a student’s first encounter with the rigors of higher education and the freedom that comes with college life. In fairness, it is important to note that when we reflected these concerns back to

other individuals, they sometimes disagreed with these comments. For example, in interviews with faculty members of the Men's and Women's Athletic Councils (the role and work of these Councils is discussed in a section below), they noted they have tracked the data on course enrollment and the selection of majors and have not found any evidence of steering or clustering. These faculty acknowledged they would not be in a position to know of the day-to-day interactions between student-athletes and athletic department counselors, tutors, and mentors.

Interestingly, the view of student-athletes is split, at least with respect to mentors. There are some who agreed with the sentiment that student-athletes are babied. As discussed above, one student-athlete indicated that she believed that the picture painted of the daily life of a student-athlete is not accurate and that the true demands and expectations are a lot harder than what is relayed during recruitment. Still another, building upon this sentiment, believed that that is why there are so many services offered to student-athletes. For some student-athletes, though, the added support services are more of a nuisance. In fact, some called mentors "glorified babysitters" and indicated that they are really needed only for those student-athletes who could not handle the rigorous schedule. Others expressed the opposite view, indicating that mentors are needed to help keep student-athletes in line. Noting the rigors of a student-athlete's schedule, the student-athletes who spoke favorably of mentors noted that student-athletes have so many responsibilities that it is comforting to have someone else making sure that the student-athlete is on top of his/her game academically.

The views with respect to tutors were much more uniform among the student-athletes. All appreciated having tutors offered and noted that in some cases they are a necessity. Although no student-athlete expressed a concern that tutors are offered too freely, or too early in a semester, it is this review team's belief that such might be the case in some instances. While there is no formal process for requesting a tutor, aside from scheduling through the student-athlete's Athletics Academic Counselor, based on the interviews of student-athletes it appears

that there are several instances where the prospect of having a tutor assigned is more than an idea but is, in actuality, a certainty. Student-athletes may be better served being able to request a tutor after being given the opportunity to attend classes for a few weeks. That is not to say that tutors are suggested at the outset in every instance, but based on the interviews of student-athletes, it appears that there is a suggestion to schedule tutors for student-athletes at the time classes are selected, as opposed to letting the student-athlete have some freedom in deciding whether a tutor is needed after actually beginning the course work.

The spirit of some of the stated concerns is captured in the notes written by one of the athletic department mentors after a student-athlete (who is no longer at UT) had just completed an advising or mentoring session. The mentor wrote, “My opinion is that because of the heavy help he has been receiving he didn’t feel confident in his abilities to make an attempt on his own.” This is a brief but cogent summary of some of the concerns stated to us by some faculty and staff at UT, both inside and outside the athletics department. Notice these are neither concerns regarding NCAA rules violations nor violations of the rules of academic integrity in place at UT. These are issues of what is the right philosophy and approach to take in student-athlete academic support. And it is right to note these differences of opinion and approach are ongoing and common in debates within higher education literature and on many campuses across the country.

People who work in academic support for student-athletes are often put in an impossibly difficult position and face conflicting agendas. Simply meeting the NCAA initial eligibility requirements in no way is a guarantee that a student-athlete will be able to succeed at a powerful academic institution, such as UT. Most student-athletes at UT come to the institution well over the NCAA initial eligibility bar, but a few others are barely over. If a coach recruits and awards a scholarship to a prospect who clearly poses a high academic risk, he or she will have handed the Office of Athletics Student Services a terrific challenge, to put it mildly. And as was

made clear to us in some interviews, too much focus on and pressure to attain a high team GPA may lead to problems in how you get there.

UT is no different than any other major university with very strong academics and athletics. One of the members of the review team spent 28 years as a faculty member, seven years as a Faculty Athletic Representative, and nine years on the NCAA Division I Committee on Infractions. It is his view (one that is widely held) that many of the problems related to institutional academic integrity and related NCAA violations come from poor decisions on the front end – in recruiting and, in some cases, admissions. Adding to the complexity is the fact that coaches' contracts often include financial incentives based on academic performance and graduation rates of teams. Some coaches want tough love and academic rigor, while others less so.

In our discussions with members of the faculty, the Faculty Council, Men's and Women's Athletics Councils, the Faculty Athletic Representative, and others, it is clear that these issues are on the minds of more than a few people at UT due in part to recent stories in the media related to athletics and academics at the University. These are discussions that should continue. But these issues have been on the minds of faculty at UT for a long time. As noted in Section II, B above, a 1999 report from Professor Charles Alan Wright was the product of an ad hoc committee on intercollegiate athletics (see Appendix A, Item 31). Professor Wright's group noted the important need for improved communications on matters related to athletics. He stressed that every effort be made to keep the faculty and other University communities fully informed about athletic programs. Professor Wright's committee was created following a resolution by the Faculty Council adopted on September 15, 1997. One of the more interesting conclusions, stated as an Underlying Principle (p. 24 of the Ad Hoc Committee's Report) is that "All aspects of athletic programs should be administered by the central administration with direct oversight by the faculty." Whether faculty involvement in athletics should be viewed as an oversight versus advisory role was also raised by some of the people we interviewed, but it is

clear that it is on the minds of more than a few people at UT, as it is at other institutions we work with.

One final note with respect to tutors. Several student-athletes expressed frustrations with tutors as well as the process for scheduling tutors. First, several expressed frustrations with the quality of tutors. Although there are more than enough qualified tutors for the basic, core level classes, several upper classmen indicated that there are no tutors for upper-level classes. This frustration was further expressed by student-athletes in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields. Even for the qualified tutors, however, some student-athletes expressed that there are definitely some tutors who are better than others. A few student-athletes we interviewed believed the “good” tutors are monopolized by either football or men’s basketball student-athletes. In fact, some of the student-athletes expressed frustration with an inability to access certain tutors who worked almost exclusively in the Moncrief Center. These student-athletes believe that the Moncrief Center, although advertised as a facility for all student-athletes, is, in actuality, a facility for the football student-athletes. Thus, certain tutors are off-limits.

Second, several student-athletes expressed frustration with the scheduling of tutors. While the actual process for scheduling a tutor, contacting the student-athlete’s Athletics Academic Counselor to request a tutor, was not challenged, there were several who indicated that they often have to work around the tutor’s schedule, as opposed to the tutor working around the student-athlete’s schedule. This frustration is of particular importance because of the ever-present time demands that a student-athlete faces.

I. Other Services Offered by the Office of Athletics Student Services

As discussed throughout the entirety of this report, student-athletes view the Office of Athletics Student Services as a genuine and valuable resource. In fact, many student-athletes interviewed indicated that it is “impossible” to fail because the support offered to student-athletes by the Athletics Academic Counselors. Overwhelmingly, the feedback with respect to

the staff in general is that everyone in the office is helpful, cares, and wants what is best for the student-athlete academically.

Despite the positive feedback of the office in general, several student-athletes expressed issues with the study-center. Several indicated that there is not enough room in the study center, particularly in the afternoon. One student-athlete who has a learning disability indicated that she cannot be there in the afternoon because the study center is too loud and crowded. Still others indicated that the study center had turned into a place to meet with tutors, which further impacts the noise level. These same student-athletes indicated that further adding to the problem is that there are too few small study rooms in the study center. They also noted that they do not feel comfortable studying in the Moncrief Center either because, again, they believe that it is a facility primarily for the use of the football team.

Along these same lines, several student-athletes expressed frustration with the study hours schedule. They understand the requirement for study hours. However, they believe that student-athletes should have more freedom in setting their schedule. Rather than setting a schedule for study hours that is mandatory to follow, student-athletes suggest that they be permitted to come and go as they please, provided that, at the end of the week, they meet the required number of hours. More than one student-athlete indicated that there were several instances in which he/she simply did not have enough work to do on a given day to fill the required two hours of study time. Yet the next day, the student-athlete could have five hours' worth of studying to do. Allowing student-athletes the ability to set their own schedules would allow the student-athlete to be more efficient with their time and also allow student-athletes to feel more in control of their schedule.

J. Support Services Programming

The Office of Athletics Student Services offers several programs for student-athletes, including career fairs, a student-athlete orientation, and the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee ("SAAC"). Student-athletes are very appreciative of these programs offered by the

University. Of the student-athletes who participate in SAAC, all find it to be helpful in discussing the issues that impact student-athletes. The student-athletes recognize that several of the issues cannot be resolved by them acting alone. Nonetheless, they view this as a useful tool in discussing possible resolutions to the everyday challenges that all student-athletes face.

Student-athletes also find the “After Texas” events (i.e., career fairs) to be beneficial. Several of the student-athletes interviewed appreciated the opportunity to be able to meet separately with prospective employers, again simply because their schedule as a student-athlete does not always allow for them to attend career fairs conducted by the University.

It is worth noting, however, that several of the student-athletes interviewed indicated that they preferred to attend the career fairs of their respective major/college. They found that those career fairs were more narrowly focused and tailored to their degree. This was particularly the case for business and STEM majors.

Finally with respect to programming, there were conflicting views on the effectiveness of the student-athlete orientation. Some believed that the separate student-athlete orientation was effective and beneficial, particularly in light of the fact that the majority of the information with respect to the University was communicated during the recruitment process. However, there were other student-athletes who believed that the orientation focused too much on the athletic side and did not give enough information relative to the University in general. Student-athletes who expressed this view indicated that they learned at a later date about study centers and other academic services on campus, which would have been helpful to have known about at an earlier date, particularly on those occasions when the study center was too crowded.

Although there appears to be no directive one way or the other, some student-athletes decided on their own to attend the orientation for all incoming students to the University. These student-athletes had a unique perspective because they were able to compare the two orientations. Without fail, these student-athletes indicated that had they not attended the general University orientation, they would have missed out on receiving important information

on being a new student at a large institution and would not have learned about certain opportunities to bond with the rest of the student body. Both of these points were stressed repeatedly. Being a student-athlete is hard enough, let alone adjusting to life as a college student. The general University orientation gave information relative to professors, the differences between a high school classroom setting versus a college lecture setting, as well as what to expect as a college student. Further, some expressed the view that being a student-athlete, although a privilege, can result in being secluded from the rest of the student body. Attending the general University orientation gave information about other University activities. It was stressed that while their time is limited, it was helpful to learn about other activities on and around campus to allow student-athletes to feel more like a general student.

K. UT Performance, Health and Welfare

As part of this review, we also interviewed the Senior Associate Athletics Director for Sports Medicine, Nutrition and Performance. The Athletics Sports Medicine Program services the medical and training needs for all UT student-athletes and is located in the north end of the football stadium. The sports medicine staff provides student-athletes a wide range of services, including, but not limited to, orthopedics, women's health, psychology and psychiatry, optometry and ophthalmology, dental care, nutritional counseling, chiropractic care, sports massage, and acupuncture. UT has recently opened a new dining facility in the north end of the endzone that provides enhanced meal offerings consistent with recent NCAA rules deregulation in this area. Like many other Division I institutions, UT has placed an increased focus on sports nutrition. In addition to the new dining facility, various "fuel" stations are located throughout the athletics complex and student-athletes can take advantage of services such as cooking demonstrations and in-person food coaching. During interviews, several individuals cited the benefit to student-athletes, in terms of efficiency, of having the dining facility, sports medicine facilities and academic center all located in the north end of the endzone. Based on feedback received during the interviews we conducted, as well as our tour of the facilities, it appears that

UT is committing appropriate resources and attention to the areas of sports medicine, nutrition and performance and no administrators or student-athletes raised any concerns during this review process.

L. The Role of the Faculty

1. Faculty Advisory Role in Athletics

In order to understand the role of the faculty in the lives of student-athletes and in the institutional control relating to athletics and academics, we interviewed a number of faculty members. We met with them individually, as well as in small groups who serve on the Men's and Women's Athletic Councils, the Chair and Chair-Elect of the University's Faculty Council, the Executive Committee of the Faculty Council, academic deans, and the current and a former Faculty Athletic Representative. We also reviewed several self-study reports and a review of the Office of Athletics Student Services program conducted by faculty members. Additionally, we reviewed reports that are made each semester from the Office of Athletics Student Services to the Men's and Women's Athletic Councils, and annually from the Athletics Councils to the University's Faculty Council. Of course, the most important relationship between the faculty and student-athletes is through the day-to-day experiences they have in the classroom and through other educational experiences involving faculty and students.

The two Athletics Councils are the principal means by which faculty have a voice in the governance of intercollegiate athletics. These Councils are in a position to advise the President on matters relating to intercollegiate athletics. The President is responsible for the conduct of intercollegiate athletics at UT, and all recommendations of these two Councils are advisory to the President. The majority of the voting members of each Council are members of the faculty. This approach is consistent with provision 6.01.1 of the NCAA Constitution, which notes: "Administrative control or faculty control, or a combination of the two, shall constitute institutional control." (NCAA 2015-16 Division I Manual.)

In 2015 a General Faculty Standing Committee was created that will further the faculty's advisory role. The purpose of the Student Athletes and Activities Committee is to maintain a formal communication channel between the faculty and student-athletes and to advise the President on matters pertaining to student-athletes. Nine faculty members and two student-athletes comprise the membership of this committee which became operational in September 2015.

It was not our charge, nor is it our place, to examine the workings of faculty governance at UT. In the interview process, we encountered some spirited opinions where more than a few faculty stated that there needs to be a transformation from what was described as a "superficial" advisory status to one of more substantive involvement in athletics. Some even went so far as to say that there needs to be a movement to enhance the role of the faculty in the governance of athletics at UT. This same discussion is occurring on other campuses as well.

It seems to us that most faculty members at UT and elsewhere are not interested in "governing" athletics, but they are committed to the idea that the dealings in the academic world of the student-athletes should be consistent with the academic mission of the institution and the NCAA, and that the welfare of the student-athletes can be greatly enhanced by faculty members who have real and meaningful involvement in the academic experience of student-athletes. One faculty member who served on the Women's Athletic Councils over time, noted that coaches, administrators, and faculty members have a serious concern for the female student-athlete's meaningful education, intensive mentoring, and professional training and preparation. And so it would be for the male student-athletes and all students at UT. It is our view that an enhanced role for the faculty in athletics at UT should be an agenda item in the Men's and Women's Athletic Councils and the Faculty Council. In consultation with the administrative leadership at UT, the concerns of these faculty members should be aired. And, although the Men's and Women's Councils are only in an advisory role, the majority of the voting members are faculty.

These provide ideal venues, along with the Faculty Council, to work through these issues and provide a good place for a discussion of academic issues relating to athletics.

For most faculty members, this is not a matter of looking to expand jurisdiction, get involved in governance of athletics, or find a local stage for what is a national debate. Most of the faculty we met with had a genuine concern for student-athletes, their academic experience at UT, and the broader issue of “student-athlete welfare” on issues unrelated to academics. With a few exceptions, they were not looking to become some sort of athletic administrator. People in athletics and academics at UT are devoted to student-athlete welfare, and they stand on common ground most of the time. But there are some strong opinions and concerns that could be addressed, and the relationship with the faculty could be aided with improved communication and better access to information. The end game here is what is in the best interest of student-athletes and how that might be improved with more effective faculty involvement.

2. Exit Interviews

One concern we heard from the Faculty Athletic Representative, individual faculty, and some of the faculty on the various councils was that there should be more faculty involvement in the student-athlete exit interview process, or more access to the information flowing from those interviews, or some combination of both.

The provision describing exit interviews in the 2015-16 NCAA Division I Manual is as follows:

6.3. Exit Interviews

The institution’s director of athletics, senior woman administrator or designated representatives (excluding coaching staff members) shall conduct exit interviews in each sport with a sample of student-athletes (as determined by the institution) whose eligibility has expired. Interviews shall include questions regarding the value of the students’ athletics experiences, the extent of the athletics time demands encountered by the student-athletes, proposed changes in intercollegiate athletics and concerns related to the administration of the student-athletes’ specific sports.

Note that the provision establishes that the institution shall conduct these interviews, but no one model for conducting the interviews is imposed. We are aware of a number of different models utilized on other campuses, including cases where the Faculty Athletics Representative conducts the interviews individually. This is a matter of institutional autonomy. But the Faculty Athletics Representative at UT has asked to be more involved. Faculty Athletic Representative involvement in exit interviews is clearly supported by the Faculty Athletic Representative Association. Furthermore, this issue was raised with us without prompting by other faculty members at UT. To date, athletic department personnel have conducted the interviews without the involvement of faculty. Note the NCAA bylaw provision requires that the exit interviews be conducted of student-athletes whose eligibility has expired. Part of the idea here is that student-athletes can speak freely because they no longer have such issues as scholarship renewal, playing time, or other treatment by the head coach looming. Some faculty at UT noted that if student-athletes had a concern or complaint about some part of athletic administration they would not likely feel free to report such concerns to an athletic administrator, including people in the Office of Athletics Academic Services where the interviews are now being conducted.

In any case, it is our recommendation that this issue be resolved by further discussion at UT involving the President, athletic directors, the Faculty Athletic Representative, and the leadership of the Men's and Women's Athletic Councils. The Office of the Vice President for Legal Affairs should also be involved in order to address any issues relating to student-athlete confidentiality. This is an important issue for UT to resolve because it clearly was a discussion point in several interviews.

3. Academic Integrity Violations

The NCAA membership has placed a renewed emphasis on monitoring and in some cases policing academic integrity violations involving student-athletes. There have also been

several recent high profile cases where serious sanctions have been imposed in the NCAA enforcement process, with the resulting reputational damage to the school.

UT has a very detailed policy outlining the discipline process for dealing with academic integrity violations which applies to all students. Of course, there is no special process for situations involving a student-athlete.

The way the NCAA examines academic integrity violations involving student-athletes is complicated, and it is a work-in-progress with draft legislation that is in the legislative cycle and may go into effect in 2016. But without regard to the disposition of these matters by the NCAA membership, it is important that all faculty and instructors be familiar with the UT policies that are spelled out in the UT catalog. Reminding the faculty and instructors from time to time what these procedures are and where they can be found is important, particularly in light of the NCAA's renewed emphasis on examining whether student-athletes are treated differently than other students in the disciplinary process.

Faculty members who have had the good fortune of not having to deal with academic misconduct matters in recent years may have lost their familiarity with established discipline and policy procedures for handling academic misconduct. In the world of the NCAA, handling an academic misconduct matter outside of the established written institutional policy may itself be a violation or at least draw scrutiny. The information for the process at UT is available through Student Judicial Services in the Office of the Dean of Students (deanofstudents.utexas.edu/SJS). Faculty members should be reminded of it in a regular cycle of education on the subject.

4. Faculty, Coaches, and Student-Athletes

Student-athletes believe that the majority of their professors are supportive of their athletic schedules. They also believe that the majority of their coaches are fully aware of and invested in their academic progress. However, several student-athletes expressed frustration with the lack of cooperation in some instances. A recurring theme with the student-athletes is

time management. Although several student-athletes expressed the belief that participating in college sports actually helps them with perfecting their time management skills and helps to keep them focused and efficient, even these student-athletes recognized how tiring the schedule can be during the season between practice time and finding time to keep up with the demands of a college academic schedule.

Student-athletes believe that communication between coaches and faculty about expectations and demands is critical to the success of the student-athlete in both areas. Again, the issue is not one that was expressed by a majority of student-athletes. Nonetheless, it is important for the lines of communication to remain open so that all parties are fully aware and can work together to serve the needs, academically and athletically, of the student-athlete. A key issue for faculty is acknowledging that being a student-athlete comes with other obligations – including practice time, travel time, and games. Unfortunately, more than one student-athlete indicated that some professors did not understand the concept of missing class to participate in an athletic competition. Equally unfortunate, some student-athletes indicated that their coach expressed frustration with the student-athlete needing to miss practice for a class or performing poorly at practice because the student-athlete was up too late studying for a test.

M. The Academic Performance of Student-Athletes

We were provided with reports on the academic performance of teams dating back to 1980 through the spring semester of 2015. We reviewed team grade point average (GPA) reports, the analysis of academic performance that was included in various self-studies conducted over time, and other quantitative measures of academic success that weigh factors beyond individual and team GPA. We also reviewed many of the reports on academic performance that are made to the Men's and Women's Athletic Councils. Members of the Men's and Women's Athletic Councils meet and review the academic progress of each individual student-athlete. These reviews were described to us as providing both a review of the academic

performance in the previous semester and an opportunity to consider any potential improvements in the delivery of support services to student-athletes.

As noted elsewhere in this report, more than a few coaches, athletic department staff members, and faculty expressed a concern that there was too much focus on team GPA as the measure of the academic success of athletes and teams. But it is certainly one measure of academic success and “the higher the better” is probably not a bad default position, all other issues aside. Stronger rather than weaker GPAs are recognized at graduation and in qualifiers on degrees that are awarded. Higher GPAs are heavily weighted in admission to graduate programs (holding other variables constant), and higher GPAs tend to open more doors in the employment market, when the other qualifications of candidates are close to equal. Even car insurance companies provide discounts based on higher GPAs. So strong GPAs matter, and we do not look past them as one good measure of success.

Detailed information on UT team GPAs over time is available in many places. We do not want to engage in overkill analysis on GPAs and trends here. Overall the performance is very impressive and has improved over time. In the 2014-15 academic year, the GPA for all sports combined was 3.07. Men student-athletes had a 2.91 GPA and women student-athletes posted a 3.27. The cumulative GPA for all active student-athletes entering Fall 2015 was 3.08. Importantly, no student-athletes were on academic probation entering this academic year. Seventeen teams posted a 3.0 GPA or higher for the 2014-15 academic year. A great deal of information on GPAs has been regularly available over time and scrutinized by the Athletic Councils.

A more complex analysis of tracking classroom performance of athletes is through a measure created by the NCAA membership called the Academic Progress Rate (APR). The APR provides a real-time look at a team’s academic success by tracking the academic progress of each student-athlete on scholarship. Institutional reports on team GPAs include walk-on (non-scholarship) athletes, so the APR provides a more accurate measure of the academic

performance of the athletes who are more likely competing, although in some cases walk-ons achieve considerable success and make a pivotal contribution to team success. The APR also accounts for eligibility, retention, and graduation in the calculation. Low performing teams under the APR system are subject to post-season ineligibility.

The performance of athletic teams at the University under the APR standard has been generally strong. In May 2015, seven athletic teams at UT earned Public Recognition Awards for their latest multi-year NCAA Division I Academic Progress Rate. These teams include men's basketball, baseball, men's tennis, women's basketball, women's cross country, women's swimming and diving, and volleyball. The awards are given each year to teams scoring in the top 10 percent of all squads in their respective sport, based on their most recent multi-year Academic Progress Rates. UT led all Big 12 Conference institutions in most teams recognized for these awards. For the most recent reporting year (2013-14), the football team had an APR score of 967 and a multiyear APR of 958. These numbers place the football team in the 50-60th percentile among Division I football programs.

So beyond GPA and in analyzing a more complex measure of academic success and retention over time, the student-athletes at UT have excelled. And this success is even more notable given the extraordinary time demands required to compete at the highest level in college athletics, while enrolled in the academically competitive environment at UT. Credit goes first to the students for this level of success on and off the field. But as the student-athletes note in their interviews, they get considerable support from the Office of Athletics Student Services and elsewhere on campus.

IV. Proposals for Consideration

We noted in the introduction to this report that no outside entity should attempt to impose a specific model on any institution. To the extent areas have been identified for possible improvement and change, the resolution must come from within. Our recommendations come partially from our familiarity with best practices and with some effective models we have

observed at other institutions, but virtually all of the ideas on the list below were brought to us in the interview process and were not included unless they reflected the opinions of a cross section of the student-athletes, academic and athletic staff, and the faculty we interviewed. Some background on these proposals is included in the report.

1. Examine whether reporting lines for the Office of Athletics Student Services should include an academic campus unit (e.g., Office of the Provost) in addition to the Directors of Athletics. Currently, the Athletics Councils only serve athletics in an advisory capacity, which has resulted in some belief that their involvement has no meaningful impact. A reporting line to an academic department may yield more collaboration with faculty and better policies for student-athlete academic success.
2. Establish a working group to study whether additional examination of the most academically at-risk prospective student-athletes in the admissions process is warranted. Currently, scrutiny over the most at-risk applicants is done on an ad hoc basis by the Office of Athletics Student Services and the involved coaching staff. Formalizing a process whereby the most at-risk prospects are examined by a committee that includes faculty members would result in a more consistent and transparent process.
3. Continue to be vigilant that academic advising be conducted by both Athletics Academic Counselors and the appropriate college advisors for every student-athlete without exception. Any registration bar placed on a student-athlete's account should not be lifted without proof of advising from the college advisor.
4. The Office of Athletics Student Services, Directors of Athletics, and coaches should engage in a frank discussion regarding the need for a true partnership between coaches and athletics academic administrators with regard to the academic lives of their student-athletes.
5. Further examination should be conducted regarding the overrepresentation of student-athletes in the College of Education and certain majors within that College. Ultimately, appropriate University personnel must determine the limits of student-athlete enrollment in a particular area of study, however, the current enrollment data related to certain teams merits further scrutiny and analysis.
6. Consideration should be given to delegating some of the current responsibilities and tasks performed by the Executive Senior Associate Athletics Director to other academic support services personnel. Currently, this position is responsible for overseeing the entire Office of Athletics Student Services staff, policy development and serving as liaison to the Directors of Athletics and between the athletics department and faculty. This represents an incredibly challenging work

plate and some division of those responsibilities will enhance professional development and morale among the Office of Athletics Student Services staff.

7. Encourage more incoming student-athletes to participate in a University-wide orientation session and not limit their involvement to only student-athlete orientation sessions. Such involvement will not only lead to greater awareness and understanding of campus-wide offerings and resources, but also will help reinforce the reality that student-athletes are an integral part of the general student body population.
8. Create a mechanism whereby faculty members are reminded on an annual basis of University policies and procedures related to handling academic misconduct matters.
9. The Faculty Athletics Representative (“FAR”) and athletics personnel should collaborate and create a new student-athlete exit interview process that includes meaningful faculty involvement.
10. The Office of Athletics Student Services should evaluate the academic tutors to ensure that all student-athletes, including those majoring in the STEM fields and those taking upper-level courses, have access to reliable tutors and have access in accordance with their schedules, as opposed to in accordance with the tutors’ availability. Having a sufficient number of qualified tutors may also address the belief among some student-athletes that football and men’s basketball student-athletes monopolize the “better” tutors.
11. Examine the availability and use of study centers, including the Moncrief Center, to ensure they are comfortable and available for all student-athletes. This would alleviate some of the issues raised by student-athletes regarding too few study rooms, overcrowding, and an inability to study due to the noise level.
12. Examine whether student-athletes should be able to determine their own study hours, depending on their schedule and study needs. The University may set the requirements (i.e., the number of hours needed per week), but allowing student-athletes to set their study times would prove to be more efficient for student-athletes.
13. Coaches and academic staff, including faculty members and deans, should discuss the issue of student-athletes being foreclosed from selecting certain majors due to their athletics participation. While student-athletes understand that they have athletic obligations in order to continue participating in athletics, there must be an appropriate balance so that student-athletes are not precluded from selecting their first choice major simply because they also choose to participate in athletics.
14. Conduct meaningful discussions with incoming freshman student-athletes about their academic and future plans as soon as they arrive on campus. This will prevent student-athletes from being foreclosed from certain majors because they did not take the right classes at the outset of their enrollment on campus.

APPENDIX A: MATERIAL REVIEWED

1. Two articles written by Brad Wolverton in The Chronicle of Higher Education – 12/30/14 and 6/10/15.
2. Files from the Offices of Athletic Compliance, Athletics Student Services, Admissions, and Registrar on numerous student-athletes.
3. Athletics Academic Services Policy Manual (2015 Edition).
4. Athletics Compliance Policies and Procedures Manual (2014-2015).
5. Athletic Department Staff Directory (June 2015).
6. Organizational chart of the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.
7. Staff listing for the Office of the Dean of Students (June 2015).
8. Varied email exchanges relevant to this review.
9. Three resources on The University of Texas Academic Misconduct Policies.
10. University of Texas at Austin Statistical Handbook (2015).
11. National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics resource materials.
12. *Ensuring Academic Integrity in Athletic Programs* report, presented at the 2014 National Association of College and University Attorneys Annual Meeting – authored by Gene Marsh of Jackson Lewis and Kathy Sulentic at the NCAA.
13. Fall 2014 Academic Report, which includes grade analysis, grade review and history, summaries by sport, APR, federal graduation rates, missed class reports by sport and miscellaneous relevant data.
14. The Student-Athletic Academic Success Model.
15. Missed class time policies.
16. The Performance Team Protocol Manual, University of Texas at Austin Athletics for Women.
17. Orientation Team Training Blocks.
18. Copies of The Academic Score Newsletter from 2014 and 2015.
19. Syllabus for A Gameplan for Winning in Life (Summer 2015).
20. Athletic Department Organizational Chart (June 2015).

21. Self-Study Report (2004).
22. *2008 Compliance Program Review Report*.
23. Numerous annual reports to the Faculty Council and meeting agendas for the Intercollegiate Athletics Councils for men and women, ranging from 1991 to the present.
24. Miscellaneous reports on book and course materials costs and Student-Athlete Opportunity Fund expenditures.
25. *Academic Services Review Report (August-October 2007)*.
26. Spring 2015 Academic Report.
27. Summaries on former student-athletes who returned to make progress toward their degrees since 2005.
28. Miscellaneous resource materials on student-athlete success, leadership, and team relationships.
29. *2011 Preparing the Next Generation of Texas' Leaders to Ensure the State's Economic Vitality Report*.
30. Staff meeting minutes and all related handouts and materials from the Office of Athletics Student Services.
31. Report from Charles Alan Wright to President Larry Faulkner – February 22, 1999 – *Ad Hoc Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics*.
32. Report from the Subcommittee on Academic Integrity, *2006-2007, NCAA Division I Athletics Certification*.
33. July 28, 2015 Correspondence from the Office of Risk Management and Compliance Services describing the process for oversight of initial and continuing eligibility.
34. Weekly email updates sent to the Office of Athletic Student Services staff and executive staff from Randa Ryan, Executive Senior Associate Athletics Director.
35. Intercollegiate Athletics Financial Aid Operations Manual (2015).
36. Internal audit of student services spring 2015 book pages.
37. Academic Adviser notes (Toolkit Notes) for 175 student-athletes.
38. Overview of the academic advising and course registration process for student-athletes (updated August 2015).
39. Report on academic majors in men's basketball since 2007.
40. The University Catalog

41. 2015-16 Student-Athlete Manual
42. 2015-16 Mentor and Tutor Handbook
43. Degree requirements for Youth and Community Studies
44. Degree requirements for Physical Culture and Sports
45. Data on enrollment of athletes in the College of Education
46. October 13, 2015 *Memorandum on 2014-15 Student-Athlete Highlights: Academic Success*
47. May 20, 2015 UT Press Release on NCAA Public Recognition Awards for Team APR
48. Data on Enrollment by College and Department
49. Data on Undergraduate Major Selection
50. Data on Enrollment by College, Department and Undergraduate Majors by Ethnicity and Sport

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

1. **Steve Patterson**, Former Men's Athletics Director
2. **Chris Plonsky**, Women's Athletics Director
3. **Professor Andrea Gore**, Chair, Faculty Council 2015-2016
4. **Professor Jody Jensen**, Chair-Elect, Faculty Council 2015-2016
5. **Professor Martha Hilley**, Faculty Representative – Men's Athletics Council
6. **Leonard Moore**, Senior Associate Vice President for Campus Diversity; Professor of History
7. **Randa Ryan**, Executive Senior Associate Athletics Director, Division of Student Services
8. **Blake Barlow**, Assistant Athletics Director, Risk Management and Compliance Services
9. **Trace Wilgus**, Director, Athletics Risk Management and Compliance Services
10. **Professor Michael Clement**, Faculty Athletics Representative to the NCAA
11. **Professor Pamela Powell**, Clinical Associate Professor
12. **Charlie Strong**, Head Football Coach
13. **Paul Liebman**, Chief Compliance Officer – University Compliance Services
14. **Professor David Fowler**, Chair – Men's Athletics Council
15. **Professor Mary Steinhardt**, Chair – Women's Athletics Council
16. **Shelby Stanfield**, Vice Provost and Registrar
17. **Kim Taylor**, Associate Registrar (Athletics)
18. **Kat Hastings**, Associate Athletics Director for Student Services
19. **Dr. Tina Kien**, Academic Counselor, Director of Learning Services

20. **Dr. Marnie Binfield**, Academic Counselor / Mentor Coordinator
21. **James (“Jim”) Shelton** – Academic Counselor
22. **Jason Bourgeois** – Academic Counselor
23. **Allen Hardin**, Senior Associate Athletics Director – Sports Medicine
24. **Michael Bos**, Associate Athletics Director, IT
25. **Diane Todd Sprague**, Director – Office of Financial Aid
26. **Gordon Lipscomb**, Assistant Director of General Processing – Office of Financial Aid
27. **Thomas Badger**, Athletics Certification Administrator for Financial Aid – Office of Financial Aid
28. **Shaka Smart**, Head Men’s Basketball Coach
29. **Marilyn Kameen**, Senior Associate Dean, College of Education
30. **Sherry Field**, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs
31. **Susan Kearns**, Director of Admissions
32. **Allison Calnan**, Administrative Associate (Athletics Liaison)
33. **Gary Susswein** (Director of University Media Relations)
34. **Brent Iverson**, Dean of Undergraduate Studies
35. **Soncia Reagins-Lilly**, Dean of Students
36. **LaToya Hill**, Associate Dean of Students for Student Conduct and Emergency Services
37. **Judith Langlois**, Provost
38. **David Laude**, Senior Vice Provost for Enrollment and Graduation Management
39. **Richard Flores**, Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, College of Liberal Arts

40. **Eric Beverly**, Assistant Athletics Director, Football Student Services
41. **Karen Howard-Goss**, Academic Counselor (Football)
42. **Lori Hammond**, Associate Athletics Director – Athletics Risk Management and Compliance Services
43. **Mike Perrin**, Men’s Athletic Director
44. **Brian Davis**, former Associate Athletic Director for Football Student Services
45. **Charles Adkins**, McCombs School Of Business; Men’s Athletic Council Student Representative
46. **Professor William Beckner**, Past Chair, Faculty Council Executive Committee
47. **Professor Kerry Kinney**, Faculty Council Executive Committee
48. **Professor Angeline Close**, Stan Richards School of Advertising and Public Relations
49. **Professor Louis Harrison**, College of Education
50. **Professor Anthony Petrosino**, College of Education
51. **Professor Noel Armendariz**, School of Social Work
52. **Professor Ben Carrington**, Men’s Athletic Council Faculty Representative
53. **Professor Ted Gordon**, Former Men’s Athletic Council Faculty Representative
54. **Jody Conratt**, Former Women’s Athletic Director
55. **Karen Aston**, Women’s Basketball Head Coach
56. **Jerritt Elliott**, Women’s Volleyball Head Coach
57. **Connie Clark**, Women’s Softball Head Coach
58. - 83. (26 student-athletes)

Women’s Basketball - 2

Women's Golf - 1

Baseball - 2

Rowing - 2

Women's Track - 2

Men's Golf - 1

Softball - 1

Men's Swimming - 2

Women's Swimming - 1

Soccer - 2

Men's Track - 2

Women's Diving - 1

Football - 3

Men's Tennis - 1

Volleyball - 1

Men's Basketball - 2