Faculty Athletic Committee
2007-08 Annual Report

Faculty Members: Harold Babb, Jennifer Cable, John Gupton, Susan Leahy, Dan Palazzolo (Chair), and Walter Stevenson. Ex-officio members: Joe Kent, Interim Provost, ex officio Bruce Matthews, Assistant Athletic Director of Academics, and Ed Ayers, President

The Faculty Athletic Committee (FAC) met several times over the past year. It elected a chair; discussed a variety of issues with Bruce Matthews, the Associate Director of Athletics; and developed a pilot project that allows some student athletes to register early for classes. The proposal was endorsed by the university faculty at the March 2008 meeting. The text of that proposal is described below:

Early Registration for Student Athletes

The FAC, with the support of the University faculty, recommends the following policy to enable student-athletes to register early for courses. After considering a variety of issues and the committee recommends implementation of an early registration model on a trial basis for the next two and half years. The experiment should allow us to determine whether early registration for student-athletes will improve their ability to manage their schedules and reduce class and exam scheduling conflicts without making it more difficult for other students to register for classes.

1. The current allotment of student-athletes allowed to have early registration should be increased from 35 to 50 for the fall semester preregistration period, beginning in March 2008. You should determine which of those students should be given priority.
2. Incoming first year student-athletes should be given early registration for fall 2008 courses when they enter this summer.
3. All first year and second year student-athletes, plus an additional 20 junior or senior student-athletes with special needs related to registration, will be eligible for early registration for spring 2009 courses during the preregistration period in the fall 2008.
4. The same policy under recommendation #3 will be repeated for three subsequent semester registration periods (spring 2009, fall 2009, and spring 2010) and the results of this trial process will be assessed.
5. The Provost and the Faculty Athletic Committee, in consultation with the Assistant Director of Athletics for Academics, will determine if any adjustments need to be made to this policy at the end of the spring 2010 semester.

Conditions:

- Early registration for eligible student-athletes will come with the same condition given to Richmond and Bonner Scholars, i.e. student-athletes will have early registration for their class year.
- Student-athletes who are eligible for early registration will be allowed access for each semester so long as they are eligible.

Expected Effects:
Once the model is fully phased in, roughly 200 student-athletes will have access to early registration.

Early registration for student-athletes should reduce the number of conflicts with class related participation in intercollegiate athletics and allow the student-athletes to develop more manageable schedules. Thus, although no registration system can completely eliminate scheduling conflicts, faculty are likely to encounter fewer requests for class absences and fewer requests to reschedule tests and quizzes.

Adding student-athletes to the early registration list comes at a good time. First, the new unit system will reduce the total number of courses students need to take and should create more seats within courses for all students. Second, the Registrar will be implementing a new degree audit system that will allow schools and departments to anticipate class demand better than the current system and engage in more efficient curriculum planning. Thus, more seats should be available to all students for courses that are in high demand.

Assessment:

- The Registrar will continue to monitor the effects of early registration on class loads and provide progress reports each semester to the Provost, Faculty Athletic Committee, and Assistant Director of Athletics for Academics.

Rationale:

The Faculty Athletic Committee’s recommendation is based careful consideration of the potential effects of early registration on all students and faculty. Though individual members of the Committee hold different opinions the extent to which the University should allow early registration for student-athletes, we collectively agree that this is a good time to experiment with early registration for certain student-athletes. Our recommendation creates a way of giving student-athletes a priority without granting them a special privilege. Thus, we limit early registration mainly to first and second year students. We also recommend moving ahead on a trial basis and assessing the results to determine if, in fact, early registration creates a gross inequity between student-athletes and other students. Early registration for student-athlete will give them an advantage in terms of selecting time slots for course sections (some of which will be sought after by other students, and some of which will not), but we do not know if such an advantage will prevent other students from getting courses they need. We would like to move beyond theoretical discussions of the pros and cons of giving student-athletes early registration and conduct an experiment to observe the effects.

We hope that the policy will make it easier for our student-athletes to balance their academic and athletic commitments and reduce class conflicts that might lead to absences or makeup exams, without creating a privilege for a specific class of students.

Submitted by Dan Palazzolo, Chair
April 28, 2008