



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

DIRECTOR OF
ATHLETICS

Ward Sports Medicine Building ■ Greenville, North Carolina 27858-4353 ■ Phone: 919/328-4501 ■ FAX: 919/328-4537

ATTACHMENT # 1

DRAFT

Position Paper

Department of Athletics

Academic Retention Standards at ECU

The augmented Enrollment Services Council has forwarded a report to the Credits Committee that contained a specific proposal for raising the retention standards at East Carolina. We are grateful for the extended time provided by the Faculty Senate for discussion of this proposal.

In an effort to contribute to that discussion, we would like to address the following:

- the purpose of academic retention standards
- the record of retention and graduation rates with ECU student-athletes
- the effect of the NCAA standards on student athletes, and
- the fairness of a level academic playing field for ECU student-athletes in relation to other Division I schools in North Carolina.

Part 1: The Purpose of Retention Standards: We are debating retention standards at ECU, we believe, because we are trying to devise a system that will be fair to all students and give them the greatest chance of earning a college degree. Retention standards are for the purpose of achieving that goal.

Members of the Enrollment Services Council believe that raising ECU's academic retention standards will increase those chances. This may be true. We understand that once a student's GPA drops too low, it becomes impossible to achieve the required 2.0 for graduation. With the current retention standards, this has been a problem. Also, no one at ECU wants us to have the lowest standards in the UNC system.

Because many majors require a 2.5 GPA for admission, the Enrollment Services Council has concluded that achieving at least a 2.0 GPA early is important. This is another reason, they think, to require a 2.0 early. We are not sure that this step is the only way to encourage students to prepare for their major study.

For one reason, we still have regional accessibility responsibilities at East Carolina. We have had and continue to have students in our region whose scholastic preparation is not the best in the state or region, but who have come to ECU and have succeeded. It is this avenue that many think of when they talk of the value of our university to this region. While we have other aspirations and accomplishments, we believe this accessibility responsibility remains important.

Not every major requires a 2.5 for admission. If all did, would not we revise the graduation requirement to at least a 2.5 also? We do not advocate raising the graduation requirement to 2.5 because of these regional responsibilities to our citizens to provide opportunity for students to get a college degree. We believe that requiring the 2.0 level more gradually, albeit more quickly than the current requirements do, is a reasonable approach on the regional responsibility criterion. Perhaps some majors will be beyond the reach of some students, but certainly all students can be made aware of the 2.5 requirement in some majors in other ways than raising the retention standards so quickly. We draw this conclusion on behalf of all of our students at ECU.

Moreover, as we look at the ESC's recommendation, we do not find factual support for the claim that raising the retention standard to 2.0 after 59 hours would in fact cause more students to be retained and more students to be graduated. That factual support, we think, is crucial. If we had those facts, then we would have to weigh them against our point about our regional responsibility to allow as many students as practicable try for a college degree.

While we do not see that factual information in the ESC report, what we do see is the opinion that raising the bar that quickly would spur students on to greater achievement. We believe in raising the bar, but we want to know more about the costs, costs both to students lost from the general student body, and costs in terms of meeting our regional responsibilities to provide opportunities. Freda Pollard of CIS tells us that in the Spring 1997 graduating body, 37 students had a GPA of less than 2.0 at some point in the previous year. We can not tell how these students would have performed under the ESC proposed standards, but we do know they did graduate under the current standards.

Also, nowhere in the ESC report is information from other schools where significant raises in retention standards were tried. At Western Carolina University recently, for example, a significant raise was implemented and subsequently 5% of the student body was adversely affected. Why should we eliminate the possibility that students get so low in GPA that they can never graduate by setting the bar so high that we risk losing as many or more students to suspension? Why not give students two or three semesters longer to get to the 1.8 or the 1.9 or the 2.0? The Enrollment Services Council report is silent on this question, so far as we can see. Our regional responsibility is better served, we think, by asking if there is not a more gradual raising of the bar possible that would also address the problem of students lingering so long with a GPA so low that they would never be able to achieve the 2.0 required for graduation.

Lastly, some have said that we can always lower the standards if they create a problem. Surely this view is generated by those who do not face public opinion daily. In Athletics, the public is always present and it is our view that neither the Chancellor, nor the Trustees, nor our Admission officials, nor our Faculty would enjoy stating publicly that East Carolina University is lowering its academic retention standards. Such an announcement certainly would not sound consistent with our newly earned doctoral II designation.

Since no factual support indicating a net gain in retention or graduation rates is tied to the dimension of increase recommended in the ESC proposal, while we agree that it is desirable to raise the academic retention standards at ECU, we counsel caution regarding the dimension of the increase until we have examined all the variables and values that are involved.

Part 2; Graduation Rates with ECU Student-Athletes: Graduation rates for student athletes at ECU, as compared with the study body at ECU, and like data for the other Division I schools in the UNC system are important to consider. The year indicates the freshman year in the following tables:.

<u>School</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>%-Graduating: All Students</u>	<u>%-Graduating: Student-Athletes</u>
ECU	1990-after 5 yrs	40.9%	63.2%
	1991-after 5 yrs	40.0%	49.2%
	1991-after 6yrs	48.0%	61.1%
	1992-after 5yrs	43.0%	50.9%
NCSU	1990-after 5yrs	59.5%	57.0%
	1991-after 5yrs	55.7%	54.4%
	1991-after 6yrs	63.7%	60.7%
	1992-after 5 yrs	55.3%	57.0%
UNC-CH	1990-after 5yrs	80.0%	66.0%
	1991-after 5yrs	81.7%	71.8%
	1991-after 6yrs	84.3%	75.1%
	1992-after 5 yrs	78.2%	68.7%

Also, the following graduation rates for ECU student-athletes who have exhausted their eligibility are impressive:

1994:	82.2%
1995:	83.0%
1996:	85.0%
1997:	85.0%

Three conclusions follow from these data and from other known facts.

First, ECU has significantly higher graduation rates for student athletes as compared to the ECU campus graduation rates as a whole, whereas NCSU has about the same for their student body and for their student-athletes and UNC-CH has a higher graduation rate for the student body than for their student-athletes. Therefore, ECU must be doing something right regarding academic support for student-athletes. In fact, the average 5-yr graduation rate from 1990-1992 freshman for the UNC system as a whole [all students] is 55% and ECU's student-athlete average for that period is 54.4%. Moreover, the exhausted-eligibility graduation rates for ECU confirm the viability of the academic support programs for student-athletes in the ECU Department of Athletics.

Second, significantly higher admission credentials serve UNC-CH students well in terms of their graduation percentages. Lower SATs and PGPA's [predicted GPAs] for ECU admittees no doubt affect the graduation percentages negatively by comparison.

Third, the lower retention standards at ECU when compared to NCSU and UNC-CH may have some bearing on the lower student body graduation rates at ECU. But, again, it is difficult not to believe that better admission credentials at NCSU and UNC-CH carry over directly to higher graduation rates.

Regarding the application of the proposed ESC retention standards to current student-athletes, a review shows that more than fifteen starting players in major sports would have been suspended who have graduated or are currently on track to graduate.

Therefore, given the profile of the average student admitted, ECU is doing relatively better in graduation rates with student-athletes than our sister institutions. Also, however much the ESC's proposed retention standards might affect retention and graduation rates positively or negatively, more than fifteen student-athletes in major sports would have been suspended under those proposed standards who were not suspended under current standards, but in fact went on to graduate or are on track to do so.

Part 3: NCAA Requirements for the Student Athlete: Student-athletes already face more stringent requirements than the general student body at ECU, at least at certain levels in their academic career. We believe that any proposal for raising our standards must take into consideration these NCAA requirements:

—At the end of the freshman year, 24 semester hours must be completed, at least 18 of which must be completed in the regular academic year. No more than 6 of these 24 can be earned in the summer.

—At the end of the sophomore year, 48 hours must be completed, at least 36 of which must have been earned in the two regular academic years. No more than 12 of these 48 can be earned in the summer. Plus, 25% of degree requirements must have been completed and an overall GPA of 1.8 is now required.

—At the end of the Junior year, 72 hours must be completed, at least 54 of which must have been earned in the three regular academic years. No more than 18 of these 72 hours can be earned in the summer. Plus, 50% of degree requirements must have been completed and an overall GPA of 1.90 is now required.

—At the end of the fourth year, 96 hours must be completed, at least 72 of which must have been earned in the four regular academic years. No more than 24 of these 96 hours can be earned in the summer. Plus, 75% of degree requirements must have been completed and an overall GPA of 1.90 is now required.

The fact that these NCAA requirements set higher bars for our student-athletes than the current ECU standards do may be related to greater success in retention and graduation rates for ECU student-athletes than for the ECU student body. This suggests that it would be appropriate to set the bar slightly higher for the ECU student body. But, the question of how much higher can we raise it to be fair to all students, initiated in Part 1, above, we will continue to raise in Part 4, below.

Therefore, the question becomes what happens when we add the proposed ESC requirements to these NCAA requirements, especially in relation to our sister institutions.

Part 4: The Importance of Fairness and a Level Academic Playing Field for ECU Student-Athletes: Combining these NCAA requirements with the standards proposed by the Enrollment Services Council, we believe, would unfairly burden our student-athletes.

For example, at the end of a 24-hour freshman year, the NCAA does not have a required GPA. NCSU requires a 1.5 and UNC-CH requires 1.5. The ESC proposal would require a 1.6. Further, at the end of the 60 hrs, the NCAA requires a 1.8, NCSU requires a 1.8, UNC-CH

requires a 1.75, whereas the ESC proposal requires a 2.0. Indeed, UNC-CH does not require a 2.0 until 105 hrs, nor NCSU until 84 hrs.

The point of these examples is that once probation occurs and with only a one semester time line available to avoid suspension, these incremental differences can be monumental in the lives of some student-athletes. Once suspended, the career of a student-athlete is almost always over, whether or not they would ever return for degree work.

We believe it is unfair to our student-athletes to require that they meet standards higher than those applied at our sister institutions. If there were factual support that indicated that more students would be retained and graduated if we accepted this unfair challenge, we would be able to weigh the conflicting values. But what is the factual support for the ESC proposal that would be used to weigh against this currently expressed inequity? Again, as we found in Part 1 in considering our regional accessibility responsibilities, as best as we can see, that support is absent.

Other values are also at stake. For example, in the last several years, Coach Steve Logan has focused recruitment activities within North Carolina. Recruiting budgets have dropped significantly and available scholarship monies have increased for other sports. If Coach Logan has to recruit against our two sister schools with higher retention standards here, these funds that now go to gender equity goals will be re-diverted back to out-of-state recruiting. Also, our regional responsibility will be shifted back to a weaker position.

Moreover, we know that if a 2.0 GPA is required in the second or third semester, coaches will be forced to replace these fifteen or so players [see Part 2 above] by using junior college players, many of whom would remain eligible only for two or three semesters themselves. This occurs at other universities that we have contacted. We would rather have the time to work with our student-athletes in order for them to have a better chance of graduating [see graduation rates for those exhausting eligibility in Part 3 above] rather than succumbing to what actually amounts to student-athlete exploitation forced on us by stringent early retention standards designed by our own campus, especially when no factual support for the desirability of those stringent standards is given.

Why would we accept these real and tangible disadvantages in favor of non-data supported intuitions that raising the bar to a 2.0 after 59 hours will increase our graduation rates?

.

There is a way to significantly raise our retention standards while preserving a level academic playing field for our student athletes, especially as compared with our sister institutions, while recognizing the force of the NCAA requirements, and while setting the bar higher for all of our

students more, consistent with our regional responsibilities. The following standards, which we propose, are higher than NCSU's when the NCAA requires it and equal to NCSU's standards when the NCAA does not require higher standards.

Our Proposal:

1-24 hrs 1.50
25-47hrs 1.60
48-71hrs 1.80
72-96hrs 1.90
97+ hrs 2.00

Current ECU Standards:

8-31 hrs 1.35
32-63 hrs 1.60
64-95 hrs 1.80
96+ 1.90

ESC Proposal:

1-29 hrs 1.60
30-59 hrs 1.80
60+ hrs 2.00

Our proposed standards are higher than the NCAA requirements at the first two levels, but equal to NCSU's. They are higher than NCSU's at the top three levels, but equal to the NCAA standards at levels 3 and 4. Moreover, they significantly raise the current ECU standards. Also, our proposed standards are equal to those at UNC-CH at two junctures and higher at the other three junctures. Does this not set our bar higher in a fair manner?

Our analysis is based on fairness in competition and the proper respect for factual support that might justify doing something that otherwise is unfair. Both of these operating principles are based on solid, American values.

So, our challenge to the academic community at East Carolina University is to seek a consensus we can all live with on this important and complex issue.

We believe a consensus could be developed for our proposed standards, once our analysis is studied. We believe our proposed standards are required to properly serve our region [see Part 1]. We believe they are required for fairness to our student-athlete [see Part 4].

We also believe that they will require our general student body to set their sights higher. Lastly, we believe we can all work hard within that equitable structure assisting all our students to attain their college degree.

Therefore, on the grounds of fairness and the lack of any factual evidence that our proposed standards would not serve as well as any other to achieve the desired goal of significantly increased retention and graduation rates, we recommend our proposed standards.

FULL FACULTY SENATE AGENDA

6 October 1998

Attachment 2.

FACULTY WELFARE COMMITTEE REPORT

Revise the *ECU Faculty Manual*, Part VI. Privileges for Retired Faculty (section H.2, page VI-6) as follows:

Add the following revised text noted in **bold print**:

"2. Privileges for Retired Faculty

a. The following privileges are awarded to retired faculty:

- 1) Use of campus addresses that include a post box and **electronic mail account** for a period of at least one year, subject to availability.
- 2) Right to be included in the University catalogues and directories.
- 3) Continuance of eligibility to take one course per semester without fees, subject to class availability. (Prior to age 65, retired faculty are not eligible to participate in the system-wide tuition waiver program. As stated in the university catalogs, "persons 65 years of age or older who meet the requirements for the in-state rate of tuition and the university requirements for admission can have their tuition and fees waived provided space is available in the requested course{s}").)
- 4) Access to library services under the same conditions as active faculty, including the use of the shuttle bus, subject to space availability.
- 5) Continuance of eligibility to purchase tickets to inter-collegiate athletic, cultural, and entertainment events under the same conditions as active faculty.
- 6) Access to the University Employee Assistance Program (EAP) when such services are available. This will include information on Social Security, financial, insurance, and retirement assistance.
- 7) University identification card upon request.
- 8) Free campus parking decal, valid in all locations, with the exception of private parking lots.

b. Upon the recommendation of the unit personnel committee, unit head, and appropriate dean, the appropriate vice chancellor may grant the faculty retiree emeritus status which includes the items listed above under VI.H.2.a.1-8 and, in addition, the following privileges:

- 1) Access to recreational facilities under the same conditions as active faculty and covered by the same liability insurance.
- 2) Continuance of eligibility to march, wearing appropriate regalia, in University commencement exercises and other University formal processions, as active faculty."