

**FACULTY ATHLETICS REPRESENTATIVE  
REPORT TO THE FACULTY SENATE**

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1. By way of introduction, let me say that I am a professor of Marriage and Family Therapy in the Department of Child Development and Family Relations in the College of Human Ecology. We offer an M.S. degree in Marriage and Family Therapy and a Ph.D. in Medical Family Therapy. I have been the Faculty Athletics representative since July 1<sup>st</sup> of 2003.

2. For those of you who may not know, the faculty athletics representative or FAR provides oversight and advice in the administration of the athletics program and plays a strategic role to ensure academic integrity, institutional control of intercollegiate athletics, and enhancement of the student-athlete experience.

The FAR is appointed by the Chancellor for a three-year term, and I am in the first year of my third three-year term. As the FAR, my immediate supervisor is Provost Sheerer. The position is provided with 50% release from teaching duties. So I teach half-time and do FAR duties half time.

Most importantly, I want to make clear that I **DO NOT** work for the department of athletics. I am a faculty member and am paid by academic affairs. I represent the Chancellor, the Provost, and I represent you as I oversee what goes on in athletics and work to improve the connection between academics and athletics. You can review my report of activities that is on the Faculty Senate web page to see what I do as FAR.

3. This is my seventh report to this body and my fourth as a member.

4. In all my reports so far I have asked for faculty members, this body, and the University Athletics Committee to become more active in overseeing what goes on in athletics, ensuring institutional control of athletics, ensuring academic integrity, and better integrating athletics into the educational mission of this university. We need to continue building bridges to further decrease distance between academics and athletics.

5. Getting more faculty involvement here is my message again today. All faculty and certainly members of this body need to be informed about what is going on in athletics. Please be curious and get involved.

6. Most importantly, as faculty members we cannot contribute to the separation of athletics from academics. Each of you has a role to



play. Please communicate your concerns and questions to your representatives on the university athletics committee or to me. Building the bridge has to be a collaborative effort.

7. Please also ensure that within your unit student-athletes are treated the same as other students: no better and **certainly no worse**. This is the essence of academic integrity: fairness for all.
8. I believe that with all things considered, we are in good shape here with our athletics program. We have in place a process whereby faculty can and should have sufficient input into and oversight of athletics. We already have in place a structure that closely approximates what reformers of athletics across the country are calling for. We just need to keep working to make sure our process here works.
9. I want to conclude my report today with a quick review of how our student-athletes are doing academically. They do well for the most part, but they could do better.
10. For example, in terms of the APR with the exception of women's tennis (top 10%), volleyball (top 30%) and women's swimming (top 40%) in the country, the rest of our teams are in the bottom half in the country as compared to other Division I teams. Most of our APR problems are tied to retention and not academic performance.
11. We are not competing as well academically in the conference as we have in the past. Last year, ECU, with an overall average GPA of (2.863), was 5<sup>th</sup> in the C-USA out of 12 institutions. This year, ECU, with an overall average GPA of (2.900), is 7<sup>th</sup> out of 12 institutions. So our GPA went up slightly and our ranking within C-USA went down. We want to continue to compete academically just as we do athletically in C-USA. All of this information is on the Faculty Senate website for your review.
12. A quick review of the report from the Academic Integrity Subcommittee, which is before you and on the Faculty Senate website, reveals that as compared to the overall student body at ECU our student-athletes are doing well. Please review that report for specifics. Please note that I included similar data from two previous years for comparison. Let me draw your attention to Part III of this report – Selected additional recognition for academic achievements. You can see that our student-athletes are doing well.
13. Student-athletes continue to outperform the student body as a whole and graduate at higher rates than the student body as can be seen in Part IV- Additional Academic Information. Of course,



graduation is the goal. The Graduation Success Rate for all student Athletes is 78%.

14. Please note the impressive community service that our student-athletes have contributed. That information is in Part V.
15. This academic success can be attributed first to the student-athletes, the vast majority of whom are committed to being the best students they can be, and second to Ms. Nita Boyce and her staff in the student development office, who do an impressive job providing academic support to student-athletes.
16. Finally, there have been no major problems regarding academic integrity or rules compliance and the welfare of student-athletes has been maintained. But as faculty we need to continue our vigilance, involvement, and concern. We all have an essential role to play in the continued successful integration of athletics into the overall educational mission of this university.
17. I do have some concerns:
  - I think we need to do a better job of screening students who receive Chancellor's Special Talent Waivers. That has been happening this year with the implementation of new policies and procedures that require more careful scrutiny of requests for special talent waivers from athletics including more faculty input. We need more information on both the academic potential and the commitment to academics of these individuals along with their academic preparation as measured by high school GPA and test scores. The new process is providing that information and the review committee now makes a recommendation to the Chancellor which he considers. Admission decisions should be based on whether someone has a reasonable chance of graduating and not on how good an athlete he or she is. We should not accept athletes who do not want to be students no matter how good at their sports they are. I hope this process will continue and we are learning a lot in the first year of implementation.
  - The best predictor of academic success and graduation for student-athletes is whether they identify primarily as students or athletes. This fact is supported by research that the NCAA has conducted. I believe that we need to do a better job getting faculty members connected to our student-athletes as soon as possible. Clearly they spend a lot of time with their coaches and with the academic support staff in athletics and with others in the department of



athletics and develop good, strong relationships with those people as they should. I believe staff members in the department of athletics are good role models, provide a positive influence for our student-athletes, and are interested in the development of the whole person. But I would like our student-athletes to also develop good, strong relationships with faculty members. If this were to happen more than it does now, I believe our student-athletes would be more likely to identify themselves as students first. The University Athletics Committee is considering ways to implement a faculty mentoring program for our student-athletes. This has been successful at other institutions. I hope it will happen here.

- Although there have been no systemic problems in terms of academic integrity, I continue to worry about the possibility that individual faculty members may be doing things to help student-athletes that bring academic integrity into question. Please remind your faculty members that student-athletes should be treated like any other student. Student-athletes should not get special treatment and maintaining their eligibility is their responsibility. In fact, eligibility should never be considered when assigning grades. Please let me know if you or any of the faculty members that you represent ever feel pressure to assign a grade other than the one earned by the student-athlete. The University Athletics Committee and I monitor very carefully what goes on with the tutors and mentors, but no one monitors what individual faculty members do. That is my concern and I need your help.
18. Finally, I want y'all to know that I am learning a lot about the integration of athletics and academics nationally through my service on several national NCAA committees, especially the Academic Cabinet. This is the Cabinet that reviews everything in Division I that relates even indirectly to academics. It is populated by FARs from across the country along with some athletics directors and compliance people.
19. I can say with confidence that we struggle with the same things that every other Division I institution does and that we do better than most of them at integrating athletics into the educational mission of the university. I think we have our Chancellor, Provost, Athletic Director, and the members of the University Athletics Committee to thank for our success.



20. Thank you for your attention. Are there any questions?