

Report and Recommendation on Resolution 2015-4 Student-Athlete Academic Initiative Working Group

At its February 2015 meeting, the Faculty Council considered the following resolution submitted by Prof. Jay Smith:

*Resolution 2015-4. On Fully Integrating All Academic Support Services
Because we the faculty want athletes to have academic experiences comparable to those of other students, the University should fully integrate all academic support services (e.g., advising, tutoring, and other activities), thus ensuring that athletic-academic support services no longer stand apart from the regular academic support complex.*

By a Faculty Council vote, this resolution was referred to the Student-Athlete Academic Initiative Working Group for a recommendation.

The Student-Athlete Academic Initiative Working Group believes that student-athletes should have academic experiences that are comparable to those of other students at the University. However we do not believe that merging student-athlete-specific resources such as the Academic Support Program for Student Athletes (ASPSA) into more general university advising and support resources will constitute progress toward that goal.

The Working Group therefore recommends that Faculty Council vote against Resolution 2015-4, for the following reasons:

- APSPA services complement, rather than duplicate, regular academic advising.
- APSPA is open on evenings and weekends to accommodate student-athletes' academic schedules, and playing and practice schedules
- The Loudermilk Center provides a setting where student-athletes build community and find mutual support.

Each of these reasons is detailed more fully below.

APSPA Services Complement Regular Academic Advising

UNC strives to provide a broad array of academic opportunities, including academic support, to all students. Just as many schools, departments, and administrative units work together to provide academic opportunities, many also work together to provide academic support. This decentralized but cooperative model allows the University to provide each student with support based on his or her specific needs so that the student can be successful; it also allows the University to reach students where they are and where they feel most comfortable. At the same time, all students, including student-athletes, have access to a broad range of services offered across campus.

For student-athletes, advising services in the College of Arts and Sciences and the professional schools provide core academic planning and advising independent of athletics-specific concerns. These include:

- In-depth knowledge of the UNC curriculum;
- Transactional authority for University Policies (e.g., declaration of major and clearance for graduation);
- Advisors addressing any personal challenges that may impede a student-athlete's academic performance (e.g., students may choose to share information with advisors about issues such as medical, psychological, financial, family, etc.); and
- Advisors working strategically with students to plan their academic futures.

Meanwhile, the Academic Support Program for Student Athletes (ASPSA) provides specific counseling and support for student-athletes, including:

- Tutorial assistance;
- My Academic Plan (MAP);
- UNC and NCAA Eligibility;
- Department of Athletics Compliance policies;
- Scholarships/awards; and
- Recruiting (coordinated with coaching staff).

The ASPSA along with Advising services in the College of Arts and Sciences and the Professional Schools provide general academic support to student-athletes:

- Student guidance and schedule planning;
- Course planning;
- Major selection;
- Degree progress tracking;
- Academic planning and discussion of strategies to address academic challenges; and
- Connection with campus resources (Learning Center, Writing Center, Peer Tutors).

The ASPSA in this sense parallels other academic support provided to specific student groups, such as Carolina Covenant Scholars, Morehead-Cain Scholars, and Chancellor's Science Scholars. The Working Group's view is that this two-pronged model provides the best opportunity for student-athletes to have access to the full range of opportunities at the University as well as the specific support they need due to the demands of the student-athlete life.

APSPA Services and Location Are Tailored to Athletes' Schedules

Academic services are provided in the Loudermilk Center for Excellence in a timely and efficient manner thanks to its central location on campus and its proximity to athletic offices and practice and conditioning facilities. Loudermilk is open and fully staffed at times when many other campus offices are closed (Sunday through Thursday until 10 pm).

The Academic Advising Program is located in the Steele Building but also maintains a satellite office in Loudermilk to provide further times and locations specifically for student-athlete academic advising.

In addition to advising office hours in the Steele Building and Loudermilk, the Academic Advising Program also provides advising hours for all students in Hardin Residence Hall each weekday afternoon and evening.

Building Community and Mutual Support

The Loudermilk Center provides a place for student-athletes from 28 different teams to meet and interact with the shared purpose of being immersed in their studies. In focus groups and exit surveys, UNC student-athletes consistently describe a strong sense of belonging to the “Carolina Family.” The Loudermilk Center represents a physical space where this sense of community prevails.