

Annual Report to Faculty Council From the Faculty Athletics Committee 2023-2024

Submitted by Aimee M. McHale
Chair, Faculty Athletics Committee (2024-2025)
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Committee Overview

The Faculty Athletics Committee (FAC) “informs and represents the faculty and advises the chancellor on any aspect of athletics, including, but not limited to, the academic and broader University experience for varsity student athletes and the general conduct and operation of the University’s athletic program” (*Faculty Code § 4-7[b]*).

Faculty Athletic Committee’s roster for 2023-2024:

Chancellor

Kevin M. Guskiewicz, Chancellor, ex officio (through January 12, 2024)
Lee H. Roberts, Interim Chancellor, ex officio (beginning January 12, 2024)

Voting members (term expires):

Lissa Broome, School of Law, Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR), ex officio
David Berkoff, Orthopaedics, 2025
Stacey Daughters, Psychology, 2026
Cassandra Davis, Public Policy, 2026
Kathleen Fitzgerald, Sociology, 2025
Shawn Kane, Family Medicine, 2026
Aimee McHale, Public Health Leadership & Practice, 2025
Lisa Rahangdale, Obstetrics and Gynecology, 2024
Keia Sanderson, Nephrology, 2024
Abbie Smith-Ryan, Exercise and Sport Science, 2025
Isaac Unah, Political Science, 2024
Carmina Valle, Nutrition, 2026
Erianne Weight, Exercise and Sport Science, 2024

Non-voting consultants:

Michelle Brown, ASPSA
Bubba Cunningham, Athletics
Dwight Hollier, Athletics
Robbi Pickeral Evans, Athletics
Vince Ille, Athletics
Amy Grau, Office of the Chancellor
Elijah Green, Student-athlete liaison from the Student-Athlete Advisory Council (Football)
Kiersten Thomassey, Student-athlete liaison from the Student-Athlete Advisory Council (Field Hockey)

Leadership Structure

The Chair of the committee for 2023-24 was Erianne Weight. Abbie Smith-Ryan served as Vice Chair.

Discussion Topics, Actions, & Initiatives

- **September 2023**

- Big-Picture College Athletics Issues:
 - *ACC Conference Expansion:*
 - Discussion of key points by Chancellor Guskiewicz and Bubba Cunningham;
 - FAC written submission to Chancellor and draft opposed opposing expansion both shared with ACC FARs by Lissa Broome;
 - Key concern is increased travel-related issues for student-athletes, echoed in experience of SAAC members;
 - Suggestion of making class recordings available for student-athletes (and others) who have university-excused absences
 - Cunningham: Athletics may need to rethink (increase) current policy on permissible number of missed classes (currently 7 per semester for regular season competition)
 - Broome: ACC will work on how to minimize effect of conference expansion on student-athletes
- Eligibility:
 - UNC BoT met to discuss and receive legal update on NCAA eligibility of football player Devontez Walker.
- Prize Money:
 - Concerns about inability of UNC tennis player to receive US Open prize money in light of current NIL opportunities.
 - Cunningham: discussions underway to allow prize money similar to policy for Olympic athletes.
- ASPSA Update (Michelle Brown):
 - 141 student-athletes graduated in May and August
 - SAs earned a term and cumulative 3.2 GPA
 - About 60 student-athletes had a study abroad experience last year, not quite back to the pre-pandemic level of 100 student-athletes.
- Athletic Director Update (Bubba Cunningham):
 - ACC's new office has opened in Charlotte
 - The new Tennis facility opened last spring and the renovated Golf course will open soon.
 - The new BlueZone Training Table open for all student-athletes to get a meal between 10:30-1:30. FAC's reports from the SAAC-FAC focus groups about dissatisfaction with the Fueling Station played a role in this development.
 - Parking still needs work. Although Athletics was successful in getting Women's Basketball parking in the Rams Head Parking Deck, there are still issues for other student-athletes.
- FAC Goals for 2023-2024:

- Bridge divide between academics and athletics
 - **Facilitate for-credit course opportunities for SAs***
 - **Support well-being and mental health of SAs***
 - Position UNC to make informed decisions in rapidly changing college athletics environments
 - *Based on SAAC members' feedback, FAC will prioritize for-credit course opportunities and SA well-being and mental health.
 - For-credit course opportunities:
 - Onboarding materials turned into for-credit courses, maybe in conjunction with Thrive course
 - Credit for courses in required Leadership Academy, maybe linked to Triple-I
 - Courses for content related to NIL
 - Courses for athletics participation – some peer schools do this, including in ACC
 - Courses related to community engagement
 - Major/minor related to athletics and innovation
 - SA well-being and mental health:
 - Suggest having Dr. Jeni Shannon, Director of Mental Health and Performance Psychology for Sports Medicine to come to talk to FAC about advancing the well-being and mental health of student-athletes.
 - Green described the need for more free time without either school or sport obligations. He also wished for more time to go home to be with family and friends throughout the year.
- **October 2023**
 - Chair Erienne Weight announced that UNC and Duke are co-sponsoring an athletics conference and will host an event at the UNC-Duke football game for the FACs from each school to meet.
 - FAR Update:
 - NCAA seeking uniform NIL legislation, some safe harbor from litigation, SAs not to be considered employees
 - Overview of NCAA DI Council actions and upcoming priorities.
 - Football player Devontez Walker received a waiver allowing him to play after four games of sitting out due to eligibility issues.
 - ACC updates, including potential changes to ACC Post-Graduate Scholarship
 - ASPSA update:
 - Recognition of women's tennis and men's fencing as highest GPA women's and men's teams
 - SA Development hosted career fair and major/minor fairs
 - APR and GSR will be released per usual timing
 - Action Items Review:
 - SA well-being and mental health:
 - Sports Psychology course: Explore possibility of new for-credit course or course-section of existing course for athletes only to ease load of MH counselors
 - Dedicate games to MH awareness?
 - Discuss MH with SAAC, SA Development, coaches
 - Parking: meeting set on 10/18/23 with Cheryl Stout, head of Campus Parking
 - For-credit course opportunities:
 - Moving forward with help from SA Development

- Try to identify courses that are related to NIL and other relevant topics for SAs (e.g., marketing, branding, social media strategy, etc.)
 - Preparation for Head Coaches Meeting on 10/17/23
- **November 2023** – no meeting
- **December 2023**
 - ASPSA Update:
 - Graduation Success Rate (GSR) record-breaking year.
 - Pilot program in spring with a few teams to incorporate travel letters into University Approved Absences system, no longer separate letter for SAs. Alleviates stigma and stress associated with informing professors of upcoming sports-related absences. Initiative has been long in the planning, implemented on a pilot basis.
 - Undergraduate Majors Report Key Takeaways (FAC Member Carmina Valle):
 - Exercise and Sports Science is the top major among student-athletes.
 - Communications is the second ranked major.
 - Review of Action Items:
 - Potential for 3-credit onboarding course
 - Key Takeaways from Head Coaches Meeting:
 - Coaches discussed possibly more involvement with FAC.
 - Establishing routine with coaches and faculty athletic representative.
 - Key Priorities: Parking, Conference Realignment, Mental Health Support, Academic Credit for Student-Athlete Activities, Hardship Waiver Parking System, Friday Center Courses, Educating faculty about Student-Athlete Success
 - Key Takeaways from SAAC-FAC Focus Groups:
 - Resources vary by teams
 - Ensuring that student-athletes benefit from the University’s Wellness Days
 - Parking for practice and weightlifting
 - Academic Challenges noted:
 - MAPS Program – difficulty of some students in enrolling in courses that may be set aside for students in other graduate programs; some faculty are unaware of the MAPS degree and how it is supposed to work.
 - Stem Majors: Some struggle with scheduling labs that are consistent with practice times and other athletic obligations.
 - Tutors may not be available for some courses
 - Challenges for SAs accessing study abroad/internships
 - Language classes have strict absence policies
 - Office hours and class dynamics
- **January 2024**
 - Review of Priority Items:

- Support for SA well-being and mental health:
 - Discussion re: survey of SAs about mental health, interested in differences between teams
 - Concern about whether SAs out of season are getting benefit of student well-being days as many report significant team activities being scheduled on those days
 - Recording classes for SAs who miss due to travel
 - Parking Issues
 - Build relationships between faculty, SAs, coaches, others who support SAs:
 - Consideration of multiple ways to foster greater engagement and support of faculty and departments with SAs in classes.
 - Leadership for-credit course: syllabus work ongoing
 - ASPSA Update:
 - Reported SA fall GPA will be at least a 3.2.
 - Every student-athlete fulfilled their advising requirement.
 - Good APR numbers
 - At least 47 freshman and transfer students matriculated in the spring semester, the most ever, and participated in ASPSA's transition programming.
 - New travel letter/University-Approved Absence pilot.
 - Textbook ordering system pilot.
 - FAR Update:
 - Discussion of D1 Council actions likely to be taken at January 2024 NCAA annual convention
 - Several NIL initiatives
 - Infraction penalties to better incentivize rules compliance
 - Non-traditional courses – high school courses that are part of NCAA core may be taken online
 - Sports wagering
 - NCAA concern with financial challenges and disparities and potential proposals to address
 - ACC updates: post-grad scholarships decreased from 3 to 2 per school but amount increased from \$6000 to \$9000 each.
 - UNC: Meeting with Beth Moracco, new Faculty Chair, to orient her about FAC, UNC Athletics and breadth of current issues.
 - Parking meeting on 10/18 with Cunningham, Weight, Broome, Clint Gwaltney (Athletics) and Cheryl Stout (parking)
 - Need more specifics about parking challenges for each team
 - Stout to request new bus stop at T&F complex/Finley practice fields on B Line.
- **February 2024**
 - Meeting joined by Jason McGrath Associate Provost, Director of

Undergraduate Admissions, and Michael Davis, Senior Associate Director of Admissions

- 11 SAs required review by the Committee on Special Talent.
- Of 2,270 SAs admitted from 2016-2022, 99.87% have graduated, are still enrolled, or left eligible. Only 3 SAs left academically ineligible.
- Undergraduate transfers were at 33 for 2023, the highest ever. Undergraduate transfers with a college GPA below 2.5 are also reviewed by the Committee on Special Talent.
- The UNC System's test optional policy will sunset for students matriculating in 2025 if the UNC System does not reinstate it. At the time of the meeting, no decision had been made.
- ASPSA update:
 - Finalizing UNC's annual Intercollegiate Athletics Report to the UNC System office.
 - The travel letter and textbook pilot programs are underway and going well.
 - Efforts to streamline the University's attendance policy are ongoing.
- FAR update:
 - NCAA convention/D1 Council/Pres. Baker/Cmtee on Academics:
 - NIL policies
 - Enhanced educational benefits
 - Subdivisional structure potential changes
 - Transfer portal
 - New metrics for graduation rate reporting
 - Mental health for SAs
 - Legal updates
- Review of Priority Items:
 - Possibility to add SA liaison for student government
 - Donors have supported funding of new minority Mental Health Fellow position
 - Concerns about how to handle missed assignments for SAs who are traveling
- **March 2024**
 - Meeting joined by Dr. Jeni Shannon, Dir. Of the Carolina Athletics Mental Health and Performance Psychology Program, to review NCAA Health and Wellness study results.
 - Four best practices identified: MH-promoting environments; identification of SAs with MH symptoms and disorders; clear referral pathways; licensure of providers who oversee care
 - Areas of Education and outreach identified
 - Training and support for coaches
 - MH literacy for all athlete facing staff
 - Trauma informed practices
 - Sleep
 - Action plan for all stakeholders

- FAR Update:
 - NIL cases and policies update
 - ACC: schedule changes due to conference expansion
 - ACC compliance review undertaken in February (every five years).
 - Parking: CH Transit to install new bus stop at Finley Fields per FAC meeting with Cheryl Stout.
- ASPSA Update: Approved absences: still working on solutions
- **April 2024**
 - Meeting joined by Cheryl Stout from UNC Transportation and Parking for a robust discussion of parking issues with entire FAC
 - Student parking allocation and hardship process are student government roles per UNC Student Code
 - Athletic Director Update:
 - Ongoing litigation related to:
 - Employment status of SAs
 - NIL
 - Prize money for professional tournaments
 - Transfer portal/one-time transfer exception
 - Sports Wagering: presentation by Nate Wood, Assoc. Athletic Dir. for Compliance. Informative and comprehensive presentation and conversation about sports wagering, which is now legal in NC.
- **May 2024**
 - Athletic Director update:
 - Athletics budget presented to BoT
 - *House* litigation proposed settlement with huge budget allocation for past NIL
 - FSU and Clemson litigation – no real movement
 - ACC decision pending on extension of ESPN contract
 - FAR update:
 - Knight Commission response to NCAA President Baker’s recent proposals for restructuring D1
 - Graduation “passport” idea
 - Academic issues re: expansion of CFP and conference expansion
 - Baseball-specific NCAA legislation
 - ACC SAAC proposal for set ratio of MH providers:SAs
 - ASPSA update:
 - SA spring GPA will be over 3.0
 - Summer transition program
 - Discussion on sports wagering (follow up from April meeting presentation) and concerns about implications for UNC SAs – should FAC/Provost provide information/guidelines for faculty/staff/students?
 - SA Parking
 - Student government liaison – still pending
 - Onboarding course – syllabus still in works

- FAC membership: election and leadership transition

Respectfully submitted by Aimee M. McHale, FAC Chair 2024-2025