Annual Report of the Faculty Athletic Committee, 2013-2014

The members of the Faculty Athletic Committee (FAC) are: Jeni Burnette, Hank Chambers, Randy Raggio (Chair), David Salisbury (filling in for Paul Achter) and Thad Williamson. Ex-officio members of FAC are: Bruce Matthews (Assistant Athletic Director for Academics), and Paul Achter (Faculty Athletics Representative to the NCAA).

The FAC opened the fall semester with a September 5, 2013 meeting at which we reviewed the ’12-’13 FAC Annual Report and Bruce Matthews updated the committee on the academic performance of UR student athletes in the Spring 2013 semester. The FAC did not have any concerns with student athlete academic performance as reflected in GPA, GSR (Graduation Success Rate) and APR (Academic Progress Rate) reports. During that meeting, we determined that the two primary issues the committee must deal with during the upcoming year were administering the student-athlete satisfaction survey that had been under development in prior years, and better understanding the concussion issue and UR’s approach to handling student athletes with head injuries.

At that meeting, we also selected a new chair and solicited nominations from the FAC to President Ayers for Faculty Athletics Representative to the NCAA (FAR). After Paul Achter was selected as FAR, we welcomed David Salisbury to the FAC to serve the remainder of Paul’s term.

To better understand the concussion issue, the FAC met with Chris Jones, UR’s Director of Sports Medicine, on November 12, 2013. At that meeting, Chris gave the FAC an overview of current research and UR’s protocol for dealing with head injuries. After the meeting, the FAC worked with Chris and Bruce Matthews to revise the Concussion Notification Letter that is sent to faculty when a student athlete sustains a head injury so that it would be more relevant for faculty. The revised letter was put in place in February 2014, and in April 2014 the first student athlete with a head injury completed the new protocol, which culminated with a letter from the appropriate Coordinate College Dean to the student athlete’s instructors indicating that the student athlete “has now completed all aspects of the UR head injury protocol, has been evaluated by Dr. White and cleared for full unrestricted activity starting today.”

After this meeting, the FAC added four questions to the student athlete satisfaction survey to capture coaches’ and athletes’ perspectives on the concussion issue.

The FAC invited Keith Gill to its January 27, 2014 meeting to get an update on athletics issues that may impact student athletes. We noted that the completion of the practice fields on River Road will allow more teams to practice simultaneously, which will reduce the size of the window in which teams are practicing, and increase the amount of time available for classes and other activities. We discussed the recent change to student athlete housing policy and the student athlete satisfaction survey. Randy Raggio reported that the FAC had received a determination from Kirk Jonas that the survey was not subject to IRB approval, and that Patty Murphy had reviewed a copy of the survey and made recommendations on the wording of a couple of questions, but otherwise had no
objections to its use. The FAC and Athletic Department were asked to make final recommendations for revisions to the survey so that it could be administered in the spring semester.

Also at that meeting, Bruce Matthews updated the committee on the academic performance of UR student athletes in the Fall 2013 semester. The FAC did not have any concerns with student athlete academic performance as reflected in GPA, GSR (Graduation Success Rate) and APR (Academic Progress Rate) reports.

Randy Raggio met with Keith Gill on February 4, 2014 to discuss the goals and expected use of the student athlete survey and to explore ways to improve communication between the FAC and Athletic Department.

Members of the FAC reported to their respective faculties about the new Concussion Notification Letter and protocol, shared the Fall 2013 student athlete academic performance update, and informed them that we would be conducting the student athlete survey before classes were over this spring.

On March 26, 2014, Randy Raggio met with Ben Edwards, president of the Student Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC), to begin a relationship between the SAAC and FAC and to ask for his group’s support in encouraging student athletes to complete the survey.

The student athlete satisfaction survey was launched on April 12, 2014 and will be open until April 28. As of April 28, 2014, the survey had recorded 136 responses from the 275 emails that were opened (49.5%).

Randy Raggio met with the SAAC on Monday, April 14 to talk about the purpose and goals of the survey and to ask SAAC representatives to encourage their teammates to participate.

FAC participated in the December 6, 2013 and April 18, 2014 meetings of the Athletics Council, on which the FAC represents the UR faculty. In the fall and spring athletic council meetings, athletic department administrators reported about recent efforts to provide student-athletes with more international experiences. In a new summer program, sixteen student-athletes participated in “Athletics & Academics in Spain,” where they completed their language requirement, lived with host families, and maintained their training regimen. And during spring break, the women’s field hockey team and a university faculty member traveled to Ireland and spent a week playing field hockey and engaging the local communities to internationalize their experiences.

Next year we will analyze results from the student-athlete survey and develop plans to deal with any concerns that surface. We will continue to strengthen relationships with the Athletic Department, coaches and Student Athlete Advisory Council. We plan to meet with Keith Gill once each semester to discuss issues that impact student athletes’ overall experience at UR. In addition, we will continue to address issues related to course scheduling and out-of-class activities that conflict with practice and/or competition. We will welcome three new members to the committee next year as Jeni
Burnette is leaving UR, and Hank Chambers’ and Paul Achter’s (replaced by David Salisbury) terms expire this year.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Raggio, Chair, 2013-2014