

Faculty Athletics Representatives Meeting Minutes
Sunday, September 28, 2008
Lock Haven University
Lock Haven, PA

Participants: Dr. Robert C. Ziegenfus, Chair (Kutztown); Dr. Robert Maris (Mansfield); Dr. Kevin Roth (Clarion); Dr. William Biddington (California); Dr. Kurt Fuellhart (Shippensburg); Dr. John Benhart (Indiana); Dr. Craig Stevens (West Chester); Dr. Janet Manspeaker (Cheyney); Dr. Paul Ballat (Lock Haven); Dr. Shala Davis, East Stroudsburg University.

Agenda Items and Discussion:

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Announcements
 - a. FARA Annual Meeting and Symposium, San Diego, CA November 13-15, 2008
 - b. NCAA Convention, Washington, DC, January 14-17, 2009
3. Conference Issues with Mr. Steve Murray
 - a. Spring 2009 PSAC Sports Schedule and Implications for Future Years – One problem was that the lacrosse conference championship would have occurred during final exams in order to coincide with the NCAA selection schedule. The Presidents, however, mandated a change to avoid finals week. Track will not have a problem this year, but will again in Spring 2010. Basketball crossovers in January of 2009 will occur only twice, one home and one away, though neither is during a regular semester. Softball will begin its first year of play with three divisions. A generic issue related to scheduling throughout the academic year is the need to reduce costs with the additional benefit of less missed class time in certain instances. Some possible modifications may be one or more of the following: fewer crossovers and more divisional games, reduce hotel costs by doing more busing; cluster volleyball matches at one site; change the home-away four game Friday-Saturday baseball schedule to all four games at one site.
 - b. PSAC Pre-Game Recitation – Some concern was expressed that this was not happening at all PSAC events. One solution used by Lock Haven is to play the message recorded in advance by a student-athlete.
 - c. Sportsmanship Initiative (Game Environment) – Mr. Murray suggested that four main topics need further discussion by the Conference. One is the use of questionable language and how it should be handled. A second is the booster bands and their choice of music and the words associated with the chosen songs. Third, are officials being asked to accept a degree of abuse in order to create an “exciting” environment? Lastly, the absence of an official policy on security could place athletes, officials, and fans at risk, with the potential for negative legal ramifications.
 - d. Community Engagement Initiative – Several FARs noted that they have had little involvement in this Initiative to date. A key consideration seems to be the role of the league versus the role of the individual institution. Mr. Murray indicated that

he has suggested that athletic directors should decide what works well in their context and focus efforts on those activities rather than trying to do many things less well. He also reminded each institution that there is NCAA accountability connected to the Initiative. Mr. Murray also suggested that institutional control might be enhanced by more involvement by the Vice-President responsible for the athletics program.

- e. New Chancellor Implications? Mr. Murray reported that he and President Dillman met with the chancellor. There is a plan to incorporate the league as a 501c(3) private non-profit entity with a start date of July 1, 2009. This change is seamless for the institutions. The Conference staff, however, would cease to be state employees and become non-profit employees.
 - f. Strategic Planning for the PSAC – Dr. Ziegenfus noted that the current Strategic Plan timeframe ends in 2008. Mr. Murray was not yet certain of the exact process that will be used to create an updated plan.
 - g. Teleconference for FARs and SAAC - There was a brief discussion of the possibility of holding the Fall meeting via a teleconference. A number of regional sites might be used to maintain interaction between the two groups and within each group. This interaction is considered one of the most important reasons for everyone to meet in Lock Haven. Technological requirements to host a teleconference need further investigation. It was agreed that the Spring Semester meeting needed to remain a two-day event given the past success in using this model.
4. Review of Board of Director's Action on Controversial Items from 2007-2008 – This document was attached to the agenda and will not be reprinted here.
 5. Conflict Avoidance Scheduling – Dr. Stevens relayed the concerns at West Chester University. He felt that the common calendar for Spring 2009 places extreme pressure on athletes as the end of the semester and exams are earlier than in previous years relative to the sports schedule. The concern was whether this will generate more negative faculty commentary about athletes missing classes (and possibly assignments and exams) during the crucial last two weeks of the semester. Currently, the status of conflict avoidance scheduling is as follows as reported by the institution's FAR: East Stroudsburg has in-season only with the affected athletes registering on the morning of the first day of registration (along with single parents, Honors students, and those in need of disability services); Clarion's policy is still under discussion; Mansfield has no proposal; Lock Haven has a policy that limits missed class time via action by the Provost; Shippensburg has a policy for basketball, baseball, and softball; Kutztown and California have had comprehensive policies in place for several years.
 6. PSAC Policy for Absences for Athletes? Dr. Ziegenfus inquired as to the presence of a policy on campuses about the specific designation of athletic competition (not practice) as an automatic excused absence. Specifically, is there a statement in the university catalog or other "official" document that addresses this issue? Dr. Ziegenfus has found that the presence of such a statement in the Kutztown University Catalog (print and online editions) provides substantial support when responding to faculty about a missed

class. That all University-related groups are included in the statement reduces the temptation for faculty to consider this just another benefit of being an athlete. Dr. Davis reported that East Stroudsburg University has a policy that a student cannot schedule a class if three or more classes will be missed. Dr. Benhart indicated the statement at Indiana University is ambiguous. Dr. Ballat stated that at Lock Haven the Provost approves the schedules for athletes by using the rule that a student cannot miss more than a week of class.

7. FAR Web Presence on PSAC Site – There was consensus that FARs should be identified with their institutional affiliation. A link to the FARA website was suggested as another possibility. This topic will be discussed further at the next meeting.
8. Extended Discussion topics – There was no time for any discussion about FAR duties and compensation/released time.
9. Recommendations for Advisory Council – None.
10. Other – The Spring meeting is scheduled for March 21-22, 2009.