Intercollegiate Athletics Committee, 2005-2006 Annual Report

To the Academic Senate, Los Angeles Division:

In the 2004-05 academic year the Athletics Department, in collaboration with the Intercollegiate Athletics Committee (IAC) proposed a plan approved by Administrative Vice Chancellor Pete Blackman to provide supplemental funding. The proposed plan was to increase tutoring services aimed at students in academic difficulty and to hire a professional learning specialist. A primary focus this year was to see if this funding had borne fruit.

**Women’s Basketball**

In the Fall meeting the Women’s Basketball Head Coach, Kathy Oliver, Assistant Coaches: Pam Walker, Trisha Stafford-Odom, and Maylana Martin spoke to the committee on the academic status of the team. Coach Olivier informed the committee that the freshman summer program really helped the team; it allowed the student-athletes to get acclimated to UCLA’s academic environment. Kenny Larson was brought in to counsel the student-athletes, to assist with their management skills and to help them get organized. The coaches have implemented a system where once a week, the assistant coaches meet with five of the players and they talk about what is going on in the student’s classes. This is a huge plus because the students are not just talking to the coaches about basketball. During recruitment visits the coaches inform the incoming students that they are coming to UCLA to get their degree and to play basketball. They stress balance. The team has had very few people come to the school and not get their degree. The students meet with the academic counselors; they have mandatory study hall and individualized tutoring. Coach Oliver stated that she believes that UCLA is in an elite group. There is a cluster of academic universities that UCLA comes up against. They are recruiting a specific profile of a kid that is a student-athlete.

The committee was eager to know if there is some role that an academic could play to provide some support for the players or team. Coach Olivier suggested she and her assistant coaches brainstorm on that issue and get back to the committee. The committee suggested training tables or luncheons, like the football team holds. By doing so, the student-athletes will have the opportunity to get to know some faculty and possibly form mentoring relationships.

**Athletic Department Annual Report**

The Committee reviewed and evaluated the data included in the annual report. The point was raised that some sort of correction factor or baseline is lacking. The students are not all starting from the same place. For someone who is coming from an academically unprepared background, or a difficult family background, a 2.30 average may actually be doing pretty well. Also, SAT scores and GPAs in high school are good predictors of how well someone will do in college, but not necessarily how well someone will do in life. Professor Yancey
stated that she would be in favor of taking more S3s and S4s if it could be demonstrated that because of the support they received at UCLA that they were graduating and going on to leadership positions in various fields.

**Admissions**

*Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs - Tom Lifka*

The Vice Chancellor discussed how the University is in a unique, and in some ways, difficult situation due to the fact that it is in Division IA. He explained, we’re a highly visible and very competitive institution when it comes to intercollegiate athletics. The general disposition is that the university would like to stay that way. But the reality of the undergraduate educational and development program over the past 20 years is that the university is also highly competitive academically and the student body reflects that. Therefore, some of the athletes that the university is anxious to pursue because of their high quality athletic ability have a difficult, although hopefully not an impossible time. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that we do not have any undergraduate programs that are a “safe haven.” The Vice Chancellor expressed that a key role of the Admissions Committee is to introduce necessary changes in criteria for admission slowly and flexibly so that UCLA does not create an impossible situation for its coaches. Last year the university probably had the best year in terms of academic performance that we’ve ever had, including those that are somewhat risky. Overall, the Vice Chancellor is satisfied and feels that the Committee has done it’s work well. The data that Chair Riley has developed shows that most of the high-risk athletes are in men’s basketball and football. We have had a lot of different circumstances. We have had years in which a significant number of high-risk players are brought in with the understanding that we would admit few or none the next year. We have far better success with the caliber of student whose grades are good even if their test scores are low because they see themselves as successful students. Such students are more likely to keep trying to overcome obstacles and therefore graduate. Traditionally UCLA has had trouble with admits whose grades are around the 2.5 level and the Board scores are somewhat better.

Some coaches take their responsibilities for the academic progress of their players more seriously than others. And they structure their program to reinforce it. If you do not do x, y, and z academically, then you do not practice, you don’t play. There have been a lot of differences in the past few years: (1) hiring new people to support the least well-prepared students and focusing efforts on them, and (2) a change in the athletic director, and a change in the coaches. A wake up call was the year the overall athletic graduation rate fell precipitously.

*Associate Athletic Director – Petrina Long*

Associate Athletic Director Petrina Long reported that they are working on some interesting proposals regarding faculty mentoring on campus. They have been able to identify some people entering who have problems that are now getting assistance.
The focus of the Admissions Committee is not on the institution or its program, it’s on the individual students. They question: Do they have a reasonable chance to graduate? And is this the right place for the student? The Admissions Committee tries to take things on a student by student basis. There is a concern about exploiting students. As long as the coaches and others who talk with these students when they’re being approved are very clear and open about the realities, and the student still make the choice to come here, that individual comes here with full knowledge about what the environment is like at UCLA.

A certain class of athletes are highly sought after by certain kinds of businesses for their competitive nature, their ability to work in teams, and their ability to see failure as the challenge and motivating factor rather than an obstacle. The athletic department is piloting a program whereby a couple of former college scholarship athletes who are in their late thirties and are matching up Fortune 500 companies with a select set of athletic departments. They will bring in eight employers to interview seniors. There is no guarantee of a job, but what they will do is actively solicit athletes and critique them on resumes and performance. UCLA is one of the very few schools where academic excellence and athletics are not completely incompatible.

**Quarterly Update**

Petrina Long informed the committee that the Athletic Department and student-athletes are wrapping up their academic year and it is going well. For the past year and a half a number of academic programs have been incorporated. Sabrina Youmans works with the students with disabilities and the mentor program; these programs are to keep the higher needs students on track. The two programs have been very successful. Ms. Long explained that in their prospective budget proposal they plan to expand the present academic program to a slightly different model called Community Learners. With this program they will try to add a faculty component on a pilot basis as well as the academic mentors and tutors. They hoped this program would motivate and excite the students about the educational experience the university has to offer. She disclosed that there is an unusually large class of football admits that are at risk, these students are really going to need the program. The department would like to replica this year’s academic success with next year’s class.

Ms. Long announced that they also have a new athlete award program that was sponsored by Rose Gilbert. There are going to be two types of graduation medals for the scholar athletes that received 3.2 and above, and for student-athletes. The athletics department felt that the students-athletes should be recognized for being able to balance the regular school load as well as the weight of being an athlete. Ms. Long informed the committee that there are a number of academic achievement awards, such as the team awards for highest GPAs and the over all Highest GPA award that is given out to a senior and the Director’s Honor Roll for those with a quarterly GPA of 3.0 and above.
Ed Kezirian, Assistant Director of Academic Services and Football Liaison, spoke to the committee about the academic progress of the football team. Chair Riley noted that the higher risk freshman admittees (Rated S3 and S4) had done much better than in prior years and asked if Mr. Kezirian thought that the GPAs for the football team would stay up or if the student-athletes might find it tougher as they continue. Mr. Kezirian speculated that things might be a slightly tougher with the much larger number of S4 admittees in 06.. He commented that the students from 04-05 have received assistance from Sabrina and the academic staff that has helped a lot. Mr. Kezirian explained that some of the students want to get into the Life Sciences major or are trying to get into different departments. The academic mentors encourage them to branch out to different majors. Mr. Kezirian explained that not all of the kids have their sites on the NFL, but it could be a combination of both, not enough time to study and focused on making it to the NFL, for some students.

The football team as well as other student athlete’s grades have risen because of a combination of programs offered. Ms. Long reported that there has been more mentoring, more coordination of academic support, and students meet with their team counselors. She explained that before students were given to a tutor and a mentor and either it worked or it didn’t work. Now Sabrina meets with the mentors and the team counselors regularly so that they can stay on top of each and every kid. At times, interventions with parents and coaches are held to get the student back on track. Mr. Kezirian pointed out that they have to turn most of their attention to the S3s and S4s, and the S2s will not get as much assistance as the new ones. He communicated that the program enables the students to try to do it on their own, because the funding does not allow them to carry all of the students. Ms. Long shared that they have an Academic recruiting presentation with students and parents that explains the academic rigors and expectations of the student-athletes. It was pointed out that in comparison to other institutions, UCLA’s S2s would be academically elite for big time football. At most institutions S3s would be at the top and S4s are the typical student-athletes.

It was suggested that it would be beneficial for faculty and the teams to track athletes post graduation. It could serve as a motivational tool for current student athletes to see what they could become or do after they finish school. Mr. Kezirian pointed out that during career day a lot of former student-athletes come back to share what they are doing. The IAC remains concerned that there may be serious bias in simply taking to those students who are eager to come back to Campus to talk to coaches. They are likely to be the most successful. Therefore an important future goal of the IAC will be to push for a scientific interview study of the post school success of our elite athletes. Funds could be provided for a study by a graduate student in the Education Department.

Respectfully submitted,
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Robert Goldberg, Molecular, Cell & Developmental Biology
Donald Morrison, Management
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September, 2006