

INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS PRIORITIES COMMITTEE

REPORT

December 8, 2005

Committee Members: Bruce Johnson, Professor of Agriculture, Chair, Darlene Bailey, Associate Director of Athletics, John Black, General Counsel, Jana Estergard, Equal Opportunity Officer, Kent Kay, Chief Financial Officer, Bill Kirkman (community member) BKD LLP, Greg Onstot, Vice President for University Advancement, Peggy Pearl, Professor of Child Development, Bill Rowe, Director of Athletics.

In recent years, athletics budgets at Division I institutions have continued to grow to the point that many feel such budgets are out of control. A number of Division I-A institutions receive large amounts of revenue from football programs that benefit from huge stadiums, significant television monies, and conference participation in post-season bowls. In addition, these institutions receive significant revenue from NCAA distribution of basketball revenues based on the number of teams selected for the NCAA championship tournament. On the other hand, many NCAA Division I-AA institutions, including Missouri State University, have budget challenges since they do not play football in and hence do not receive ticket revenue from large stadiums filled with fans nor do they have 5-7 conference members playing in the NCAA basketball tournament each year. At Missouri State University, the challenges are many since our coaches are competing with I-A institutions for student-athletes and, thus, want as many advantages as possible. The list of needs never stops. Athletic training needs more help and budget, same for sports information, athletics development, The Achievement Center, etc., and virtually every sport wants improved salaries and larger operating budgets.

Within this context of needs growing more rapidly than revenue sources in the intercollegiate athletics department, President Michael Nietzel commissioned the Intercollegiate Athletics Priorities Committee (IAPC) to make recommendations regarding some tough but necessary decisions about the 21-sport program sponsored by the University. Specifically, Dr. Nietzel charged the IAPC to: (1) examine the scope of intercollegiate athletics at the University and make recommendations about the future viability of 21 sports teams; (2) make recommendations regarding policies for leasing, ownership, and construction of intercollegiate athletics facilities.

Charge #1. Examine the scope of intercollegiate athletics at the University and make recommendations about the viability of 21 sports teams. President Nietzel provided the committee with four guiding principles for evaluating the success of the University's 21-sport athletics program: (1) ability to compete; (2) academic record of student-athletes; (3) record of integration into campus and University culture; and (4) ability to live within its budget and be as financially independent as possible.

Beginning with its organizational meeting September 2, the Intercollegiate Athletics Priorities Committee (IAPC) met eight times. Dr. Nietzel attended four of the eight meetings. Brenda Espy, the athletics director's executive assistant, served as secretary. Following an evaluation of the athletics program, the IAPC concluded the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics should no longer sustain 21 sports. Although the committee recommends a reduction in the number of sports sponsored by the University, it also recommends all student-athletes (on dropped sports teams) currently receiving athletics financial aid be allowed to continue to receive such aid, provided they maintain academic eligibility requirements, through their fourth year of athletics eligibility at the institution. In addition, the committee recommends the viability of the University's sports programs be examined periodically using parameters similar to those used by the IAPC.

Deliberations about which sports to drop from the program included minimizing the number of student-athletes as well as staff affected, compliance with Title IX requirements, impact on the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics' budget, net savings to the University, and implications for the University's diversity goals. For example, with respect to diversity, the 41 African-American student-athletes on last year's football team represented more than 10% of the University's 390 undergraduate full-time/part-time African-American students. The committee was cognizant of the NCAA requirement that a Division I institution must sponsor a minimum of six men's sports and eight women's sports. It was the understanding of the committee that no female sports could be dropped unless the adjustment in number of sports resulted in compliance with Title IX requirements.

To quantify President Nietzel's four guiding principles, the committee agreed to a system whereby members of the committee rated each sport according to facilities available for practice and competition, integration into the campus and university community, ability to compete and academic record of its student-athletes. The ratings are shown in the attached chart. Intercollegiate athletics facilities were rated as excellent (3), good (2), or poor (1) based on overall quality; safety; spectator friendliness and adequacy; whether facilities were qualified to hold conference championship events; and cost to rent and/or maintain. Rating factors for integration of the sport into the campus and university community included level of popularity; community/campus pride; campus awareness; alumni support; spectator attendance; and local/national recognition. Each sport was rated from 1 to 5 (highest) based on the committee member's perception of each sport's level of campus/community integration. The ability to compete principle was rated on the last five years of conference finishes; trends in competitive results, strength of conference, and success in conference tournaments. Committee members rated each sport's ability to compete on a scale of 1 to 5 (highest). Each sports team's academic record was rated according to the NCAA's Graduation Success Rate (GSR). The GSR scores were arranged in ranges and assigned a ranking. The following ranges and associated rankings were used to rate sports teams from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest): a GSR score below 60 = 1; 60 – 69 = 2; 70 – 79 = 3; 80 – 89 = 4 and 90 – 100 = 5. Since seven members of the IAPC rated each sport team on facilities, integration into

campus/university community, and ability to compete, the GSR rankings were weighted by seven (7). Thus, the football team with a GSR of 46 received a ranking of 1; 1 times 7 = a rating of 7. Women's golf with a GSR of 100 received a ranking of 5; 5 times 7 = a rating of 35.

Based on this multi-factor rating system, Men's I/O Track and Cross Country had the lowest score (48) followed by Men's and Women's Tennis with scores of (55), football (67) and men's soccer (73).

Following consideration of each sport based on the set of guiding principles, the number of student-athletes and coaches affected, Title IX implications, and impact on the University's diversity goals, the IAPC recommended the following scenarios to President Nietzel for dropping sports:

Scenario 1:

- Men's Indoor Track
- Men's Outdoor Track
- Men's Cross Country
- Men's Tennis

Scenario 2:

- Men's Indoor Track
- Men's Outdoor Track
- Men's Cross Country

Scenario 3*:

- Men's Indoor Track
- Men's Outdoor Track
- Men's Cross Country
- Men's Tennis
- Women's Tennis

*The committee recommended Scenario 3 only if the University verifies the feasibility of this scenario meeting Title IX requirements.

Men's Indoor/Outdoor Track and Cross Country. In FY05, 26 student-athletes participated on Men's Indoor/Outdoor Track and Cross Country teams (see footnote #1). Since several of the student-athletes participated on two and some on all three teams, the three sports accounted for 57 participation opportunities. During the past five years, men's indoor track placed sixth three times and seventh two times in a conference of seven teams. Men's outdoor track placed sixth two years, fifth two years and third one year. In a conference of ten teams, men's cross country placed sixth once and fourth four times in the last five years. Male track/cross country student-athletes entering Missouri State in F1998 had a Graduation Success Rate of 60% compared to the overall student-athlete GSR of 63% (see footnote #2). With the University continuing to offer Women's Indoor/Outdoor Track and Cross Country, there would likely be no reduction in the number of coaches and associated salaries as well as benefits.

Men's Tennis. In FY05, eight student-athletes participated on the Men's Tennis team (see footnote #1). The team has a head coach and no assistants. During the past five years, Men's Tennis placed 6th, 7th, 5th, 4th, and 3rd in an eight-team conference. However, the team did win the conference tournament in 2005. The Men's Tennis team had a Graduation Success Rate of 45% compared to the overall student-athlete GSR of 63% (see footnote #2).

Women's Tennis. In FY05, seven student-athletes participated on the Women's Tennis team (see footnote #1). The team has a head coach and no assistants. During the past five years, Women's Tennis placed 4th, 1st, 2nd two years, and 8th in a ten-team conference. The Women's Tennis team had a GSR of 44% compared the overall student-athlete GSR of 63% (see footnote #2).

Financial implications of dropping sports. The precise financial impact of dropping selected sports is not totally clear. Dropping sports would cause a decrease in athletics' expenditures and a loss of NCAA revenue to the athletics department for these sports. However, in the case of Men's Indoor/Outdoor Track and Cross Country, some expenditures incurred, such as team travel, are shared by Women's Indoor/Outdoor Track and Cross Country and would continue to occur even after the men's program is dropped. Another result of dropping a sports program would be a reduction in the amount of monies transferred from the University to the athletics' budget for student fees paid by these student-athletes. But some affected students likely would choose to remain at the University after their sport is dropped and continue to pay fees. Thus, the overall net savings to the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics from dropping sports is difficult to estimate.

In addition to recommending a reduction in the number of sports in the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, the IAPC committee endorses the commitment of the Athletics administration to investigate the possibility of cutting costs by (1) reducing the total number of grants-in aid as well as (2) limiting the number of grants-in-aid provided to out-of-state student-athletes for selected sports. These cost cutting measures would be implemented over a three-year time period, beginning in FY07.

Footnotes relating to Charge #1:

1. Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA) Report, October 15, 2005.
2. NCAA Graduation Success Rate Report, November 1, 2005.

Charge #2. Make recommendations regarding policies for leasing, ownership, and construction of intercollegiate athletics facilities. The IAPC made the following recommendations:

1. Based on a vision of the future needs of the general student body and intercollegiate athletics, the University should develop a master plan for recreational and athletics facilities. The master plan should include facilities that will provide optimum recreational, intramural, and club sport opportunities for students as well as to allow the institution's intercollegiate sports teams to be competitive in conference and post-season play.
2. A campus wide committee with representation from appropriate constituencies will be formed to develop the master plan. Subcommittees for intercollegiate athletics, academic programming and recreation will be formed as a subset of the larger committee.
3. When University-owned athletics and recreational facilities are utilized for a combination of classroom instruction, club and intramural sports, general recreation and intercollegiate athletics, operating, maintenance and repair costs will be prorated according to use.
4. In the quest to provide adequate facilities for practice and competition, the Athletics Department should consider high quality off-site facilities available for lease. Factors involved in considering off-site rental facilities would include not only cost but, also, the ability of the institution to control the scheduling of practice and competitive events as well as availability of facilities for hosting pre- and post-season tournaments.
5. The University should make a concentrated effort to purchase additional green space to meet student demand for recreational activities and intercollegiate athletics needs for practice and competition.