

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Fort Wayne Senate

FROM: Michelle Parker, Faculty Athletics Representative  
Chair, Mastodon Athletics Advisory Subcommittee

DATE: August 23, 2024

SUBJ: 2023-2024 Annual Report of Faculty Athletics Representative Activities

**Annual Report of FAR Activities**

As set forth in the Purdue University Fort Wayne Faculty Athletics Representative Position Description, this is the annual report of the activities of the Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR) for the Academic year 2023-2024. The report is traditionally requested in April but since I started the FAR role in August and it is to encompass the academic year, I am submitting it at the end of July to accurately reflect all of the activities that I have completed and not have any crossover from the previous FAR.

I began my role as FAR on August 15, 2023 and have spent much of this year familiarizing myself with the many activities and requirements of this position. Dr. Jens Clegg, Kelley Hartley-Hutton, Jason Baldwin, Rachel Holycross and I met multiple times to transition the role to me. In addition, prior to my August 15<sup>th</sup> start date, I accompanied Jens to the Horizon League meetings in June 2023 and Summer athletics certification in early August. These were excellent opportunities for me to observe the then acting FAR and to familiarize myself with the position.

One of duties of the FAR is to ensure that student athletes are being treated the same as other students on campus. This means that they are not being given any extra benefits or advantages not available to other students or not permitted by NCAA policies. Whenever there is a grade change submitted for a student-athlete that could affect their eligibility, I am asked to reach out to the faculty member to make sure that the change in grade was due to the efforts of the student and not their status as a student-athlete. I am asked to follow-up on grade changes several times per year in a normal year. This year I worked with 4 student athletes with their grade appeals. All 4 appeals were miscalculations of grades and were corrected on the student's transcripts.

The main issue that continues to impact our student athletes on campus is the lack of an excused absence policy for university sponsored business. Each semester, student athletes need to have a missed class worksheet filled out to communicate class periods that will be missed only due to travel and competition (not practice). Most of the impacts come from a course only being offered once a year and only at one time where the athlete doesn't have a choice to take it at a time that would minimize missed classes for travel and competitions. I answered questions from faculty on ways that a student athlete could still participate in class even though they are travelling. This has been aided by our busses being equipped with mobile hot spots so students can Zoom into the classroom while travelling. Due to the new medical excused absence policy that was started this year, our student athletes didn't need

any assistance from me to help them with missed classes and assignments due to injury, medical procedures or hospitalization as the Office of Student Conduct and Care in conjunction with the athletic training staff handled the communication.

Each semester, there are a number of faculty who do not return the grade check forms sent to them by student athletes. These forms are critical in monitoring student athlete eligibility and to keep the university in compliance. When the student athlete's efforts to get the forms back are not working, coaches approach me to request that I reach out to faculty who have not completed the forms. I worked with Jason Baldwin over the summer to work on a new communication through Navigate that hopefully will increase the return rate of these grade reports.

## Conferences Attended:

**Faculty Athletics Representative Association (FARA) Annual Conference.** November 2023. This conference is an annual meeting of all Faculty Athletic Representatives. The meeting includes training, education, and information for FAR's on topics from the NCAA, legislation, mental and physical health of athletes.

**NCAA National Convention.** January, 2024. Due to weather, my flight was canceled to the convention and I was unable to get rescheduled with enough time to participate in the convention. Will be attending next year.

**Horizon League Meeting.** June 2024. This meeting brings together FARs, Athletic Directors, Senior Women's Administrators (SWA) and representative student athletes from all of the Horizon League institutions. During the FAR breakout session, we review all potential changes in the league to make sure that the student athlete's well-being is taken into consideration. During the larger group meetings, we discuss Horizon League initiatives, communication strategies and areas for impact along with training sessions for student athlete well-being.

**NCAA Regional Rules Seminar.** June 2024. This meeting is usually a several day conference in person. Due to the pandemic the sessions were broken up across several different times during the summer and released as recordings to be reviewed. The conference holds meetings and trainings on NCAA rules and policies and the enforcement and application of said rules and policies.

## Athletic Travel:

I had an opportunity to travel on 3 occasions with our student athletes.

**Horizon League Cross Country Championships** –October - Dayton, OH. I rode on the bus with the track team to the Horizon League Cross Country Championships to support our men's and women's cross-country student athletes competing in the conference meet.

**Men's Volleyball** – February - Charlotte, NC. I did not travel with the team, but I was in Charlotte for personal travel and attended their game with Queens University of Charlotte. I was able to meet and talk with the players before and after the match.

**Women's Softball UTEP Invitational** – February - El Paso, TX. While on the trip, I supervised study tables, drove the equipment vehicle to and from the softball field and the hotel and delivered food for the student athletes and coaching staff to the fields. In addition, I was able to learn about the demands on our student athletes while on an extended road trip.

**NCAA Division 1 Track and Field East Regionals** – May - Lexington, KY. Had dinner with our 2 student athletes that qualified as one of the top 48 in the East region the night before the championships, attended the following day to watch both of them compete and also picked up/delivered food for the athletes during the competition.

### Committee Work:

The following are committees that I am a part of representing the role of FAR:

**Student-Athlete Leadership Team (SALT).** This meeting is held monthly. SALT has student-athlete representatives from each of the athletics teams. In the meeting they coordinate athletic and service events as well as matters of importance to student-athletes. They also discuss and seek advice on academic matters from the FAR.

**Student Athlete Services (S-AS).** This committee holds monthly meetings to coordinate student-athlete issues and includes representatives from the Mastodon Academic Performance Center, The Registrar's Office, Financial Aid, and the Compliance office.

**Compliance Committee.** This committee meets three times per year. The committee is composed of representatives from different areas of campus that affect student athletes (Chancellor, Registrar, Bursar, Compliance, Athletics, Student Affairs, Financial Aid, Institutional Equity, Office of Student Conduct and Care, etc.). The group coordinates to make sure there are no compliance issues with student athletes.

**Faculty Senate Mastodon Athletics Advisory Sub-Committee (MAAS).** I am the chair of this committee. The committee is a sub-committee of the Faculty Senate Student Affairs Sub-Committee. This committee met once each semester. Its purpose can be found in the Senate Bylaws section 5.3.4.3.2.

**Mastodon Athletics Advisory Board.** I serve as a member of the Athletics Advisory Board. This committee meets twice per semester and is primarily composed of community members that are supportive of athletics.

**Mastodon Athletics DEI Committee.** This committee meets every month to review policies to make sure that we are in compliance with all DEI requirements and plan events to promote DEI awareness within Mastodon Athletics. In addition, we coordinated multiple events to bring awareness to DEI such as sponsoring PRIDE games with women's softball and men's volleyball and baseball, Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service video, partnering with PFW DEI office with a belonging campaign. All but 1 team has participated in Safe Zone training and that team will be participating in the training this fall.

**Mastodon Coaches Committee.** This committee meets once each month to communicate information to all coaches about academics, budgets, academics, financial aid, compliance and equipment/facilities.

**Faculty Involvement in Mastodon Athletics (FIMA).** This is a committee that I created and chaired as part of my role as FAR. While I am tasked with maintaining the well-being of the student athlete, I also want to continue to increase the awareness and involvement of faculty with our athletes and athletic department. This year, the committee was able to partner with New Faculty Institute and invite all new faculty to PFW to join us for a women's soccer game at the annual Party at the Pitch. We had our first ever college night where 75 ETCS Faculty, Staff and students attended a men's basketball game. We created Don Zone training which was offered once each semester. This training provided information and rules pertaining to athletics and was presented by the athletic director, senior women's administrator, FAR, Mastodon Academic Performance Center and Compliance. The last initiative completed was Very Important Professor Nights at Men's Volleyball and Women's Basketball games. We recognized a total of 5 professors on court on behalf of 6 JR/SR athletes.

### Athletic Attendance:

I attend athletic events to support our student-athletes and ensure their experience is a positive one. I tried to attend at least 1 competition for each sport this year, the only teams that I was unable to attend was Men’s Soccer in the fall and Men’s and Women’s Golf in the spring. I did attend:

<b>Sport</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Men’s Volleyball	4 matches
Women’s Volleyball	2 matches
Women’s Basketball	4 games
Men’s Basketball	8 games
Women’s Soccer	1 match
Men’s Soccer	Did not attend
Men’s & Women’s Cross Country	1 race
Men’s & Women’s Track & Field	1 invitational & NCAA Regionals
Men’s Baseball	3 games
Women’s Softball	5 games
Men’s Golf	Did not attend
Women’s Golf	Did not attend

**Student Athletes:**

There are several situations where I work directly with student-athletes. To protect their anonymity, I will use generalities and avoid names.

**Student-Athlete Missed Class Worksheets.** These worksheets are given to student-athletes at the beginning of each semester. The worksheets have the days of class that the student will have to miss for athletic events that are officially sanctioned by the university. The student-athletes work with the faculty member to come to an agreement and the faculty member signs the form. If there is a complication with a worksheet, or if faculty have concerns about the days the student athlete may miss, I am called on to mediate between the faculty member and the student-athlete regarding what can and cannot be missed as well as how it can be made-up. My goal is to help both parties arrive at a solution that is acceptable for both while protecting the academic integrity of the course and the students learning. This year there were 2 incidents that I was involved in mediating and we were able to come to an agreeable solution by delaying a travel time and allowing a student to Zoom into the classroom while traveling. Overall, the majority of faculty work with the student athletes and are willing to help them compete and do well academically.

**Advising.** The student athletes have academic advisors in athletics as well as in their major areas so I do not directly advise them for their majors and coursework. As the FAR they occasionally come to me for advice on interacting with faculty and for career advice.

**Appeals.** If a student-athlete has a conflict with a coach or someone in the athletic department and wishes to appeal a decision that has been made, a committee is formed with members from the Athletics Advisory Sub-committee. There were no appeals this academic year.

### **Compliance Department:**

The compliance department serves to ensure that all NCAA and legal rules are followed by the athletics department and that student-athletes stay within the rules to stay academically eligible. If there are violations the compliance department reports them and works through any consequences. Whenever there is a violation of NCAA rules and policies, I am required to review the case and sign off on any actions or consequences of the violation. This year there were 5 minor violations, and no major violations this year.

### **Academic Eligibility Certification:**

Three times per year, the Certification Team (Compliance, Registrar, Mastodon Academic Performance Center, and FAR) are required to certify that student athletes did or did not maintain their athletic eligibility. This is determined by the academic progress rate, where each student-athlete is required to hit certain progress towards their degree and GPA requirements each semester. After the fall and spring semesters, we meet together for **two to three full days** and after summer **one to two full days** to review the academic record of each student athlete, their grades from that semester and certify that they have met the progress requirements and are eligible to play their sport. Each student must be certified individually ensuring that all of their coursework from that semester has been accounted for. With over 280 student athletes this is an intensive process.

### **Athletics Department:**

I meet regularly with the Athletic Director, Kelley Hartley Hutton, to consult on academic issues and ensure that there is a faculty voice in athletics decisions. The Athletic Director is very open to input and actively seeks ways to improve communication between athletics and academics.

I also have the opportunity to work with the coaches of the different teams. I have met with some coaches on a one-on-one basis to answer questions or address any issues that they may have. All of the coaches that I have met with actively promote academic excellence on their teams.

I also work closely with the Mastodon Academic Performance Center (MAP). This year, I established office hours 2 days a week in the Study Tables room. These on-site hours make me available to student-athletes who have questions, but also allow me time to discuss issues with the academic advisors. I am notified of any academic problems or challenges with student-athletes. As FAR I work to make sure that university academic policies are being followed and that advising policies are in the best academic interests of the students. The MAP advisors are very open to my comments and actively seek my input for policies and procedures as well as day to day issues.

As part of the process of monitoring eligibility, each day I (as well as the advisors in MAP and Compliance) receive a report of the enrollment and status of student-athletes to ensure that student-athletes are enrolled full time. I worked with the advisors, compliance and Sam Pray to revise this report to further refine it so that it was accurately

reporting those students who are below full time (12 credit hours). Reasons why a student would be below full time would be the last semester of their degree program or they are a graduate student.

I was invited to participate in the hiring process for an advisor for the MAP center this year. I participated in the interview process and gave feedback on the candidates.

The NCAA selected our Men's and Women's Soccer teams to participate in a survey on student athlete experiences with social media and gambling. I worked with both coaches to determine a time for their team to take the survey, administered the survey and then sent the survey back to the NCAA. The survey was anonymous with no identifiable information about any of our athletes. This data will be collected, analyzed and used to protect and improve student-athlete experiences.

I also participated in multiple events within the Athletics this year. At the beginning of the Fall semester, I participated in the 3 mandatory student athlete meetings to go over policies and rules. I presented the role of the FAR and talked with the student athletes about the dangers of using AI for cheating and plagiarism. I attended the academic recognition dinner in both the fall and spring semesters that recognized our student athletes who had above a 3.2 GPA in the previous semester. In the Spring, I presented the Men's Golf and Women's Basketball teams with the awards for the highest team GPAs in the department during a Men's Volleyball game. At the end of the Spring semester, I attended the Mastys which is the student athlete awards ceremony and I was asked to give the closing remarks at the Student Athlete Stole ceremony. In addition, I attended the Men's Basketball Kickoff Luncheon and the Men's Basketball Casino Night fundraiser.

I have the opportunity to work with the Mastodon coaches by meeting with some coaches on a one-on-one basis to answer questions or address any issues that they may have. All of the coaches that I have met with actively promote academic excellence on their teams.

Part of my duties include being made aware of any concussions. I am notified by the athletic trainers when the concussion is diagnosed and when the student athlete is cleared to return to academics and athletics. Office of Student Conduct and Care, ensure that faculty in the classes of the affected student-athlete are aware of the injury and of the status of the student. In all existing cases, protocols were followed and the student-athlete was not allowed to compete until completely cleared by the proper medical professional.

### **Chancellor:**

I meet the Chancellor at least once per semester to discuss the academic progress of student-athletes and give input/answer questions on issues that affect athletics and academics. I also worked with the Chancellor to collect data and write the Chancellor's Report on Athletics which is presented to Senate in late Fall. This year the Chancellor was unavailable to present the report and I presented it to the Faculty Senate.

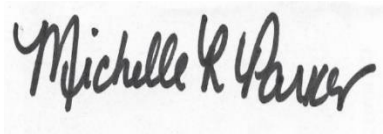
### **Horizon League:**

As a member of the Horizon League there are several duties and functions performed by the FAR. At the end of each of the 14 sport's seasons, the FAR's of the league are sent the names and dossiers of the nominees for academic all-conference awards within that sport. We are required to read over each dossier (about 20-24 athletes per sport) and then vote on those that we feel based on their academic and athletic performance deserve that honor.

In the Spring, I am expected to select 1 female and 1 male senior student athlete for nomination from PFW to the Horizon League Post Graduate Scholarship. I send out the scholarship information to our qualified student athletes,

vet the submission and select our PFW male and female nomination and forward their application packet to the Horizon League. The Horizon League sends all FARs the application packets for each nominee from each school. Using a rubric, we evaluate each athlete based on their achievements in academics, athletics, service and leadership and submit our evaluations which are then compiled and 1 female and 1 male athlete scholarship winner is announced by the Horizon League.

The Horizon League FAR's hold a video conference once per month to meet and discuss legislative and procedural issues. I read the prepared documents and policies and attended and participate in these meetings. I was elected to serve as Vice-Chair of the Horizon League FAR committee for a 2 year term from Fall 2024-Summer 2026 and then will serve a 2 year term as Chair from Fall 2026 – Summer 2028. I have worked with my fellow FARs on sharing our Don Zone training as they felt it would be beneficial on their campuses as well. I have been working with all of the FARs in updating the Horizon League document from 2019 on Excused Absence Policies within the league.



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