

Activities of the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) May 2008 – January 2009

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### **Background:**

Those of you who may be unfamiliar with the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) are invited to visit the organization's Web site at:

<http://www.neuro.uoregon.edu/~tublitz/COIA/index.html>.

COIA describes itself as “an alliance of 56 Division 1A university faculty senates whose aim is to promote comprehensive reform of intercollegiate sports. The need for reform of intercollegiate athletics is serious and requires immediate and focused action.”

Some of the key areas of concern for COIA members are: “academic integrity, athlete welfare, governance of athletics at the school and conference level, finances, and commercialization.”

### **History and Current Status:**

COIA was founded in 2002 and works together with other organizations (see below) that are concerned about how NCAA programs at colleges and universities operate and fit into the academic, cultural, scientific and civic goals and responsibilities of academic institutions.

Currently 56 of 119 Division 1A schools participate in COIA. A list of member faculty senates can be found at: <http://www.neuro.uoregon.edu/~tublitz/COIA/Members.html>.

It is noteworthy that as of January 11, 2009, only five Big XII faculty senates are members: Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma State and UT Austin. For comparison, nine of the eleven Big Ten faculty senates are members (Purdue and Wisconsin declining) and nine of twelve from the SEC (Georgia, Kentucky and LSU declining). Notable big-time athletics program absentees include University of Southern California, Florida, Georgia Tech, Miami, Virginia Tech, OU, Texas Tech and my *alma mater* Boston College.

There is a long history of calls for reform of college sports going back to the 1920's. Many rational observers think that spending any time doing this is Sisyphean, quixotic or just plain crazy. For a fairly recent critical assessment of the challenges facing the three most prominent modern faculty groups (the Faculty Athletics Representatives Association, the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics, and the Drake Group) concerned about college sports, see: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2005/11/09/knight>.

## **Current COIA Activities:**

I was appointed our FC's COIA representative just last May. Therefore, in preparing this brief report, I went to a horse's mouth, Nathan Tublitz, biology professor at the University of Oregon ([tublitz@uoneuro.uoregon.edu](mailto:tublitz@uoneuro.uoregon.edu)) and national co-chair of COIA. Here, slightly edited, is his view of COIA activities:

- 1) Rating system: This joint project between COIA and the Curley Center for Sports Journalism aims to provide a self evaluation of the integration of athletics into the academic mission of the institution. A survey will be sent out to all Division 1A institutional Faculty Senate Presidents and COIA reps (where applicable). They will be jointly responsible for filling out the survey. COIA will collate the survey data so that individual institutions may compare their results with aggregate data from their own conferences. COIA may publish a list of schools ranked in the Top Ten.
- 2) Correlation of academic and athletic rankings. COIA is also working on analyzing the relationship between academic rank (using the Shanghai, Lombardi and other ranking systems) and athletic success (using football and basketball rankings).
- 3) Public statements: COIA has issued several public statements/press releases/letters in the past year on various issues. These are all posted on the COIA website (see below).
- 4) Working with other organizations: COIA works with the NCAA, Faculty Athletics Representatives Association (FARA), Division 1A athletics directors (D1A Ads), the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics (N4A), the Knight Commission, the AAUP, and other groups. COIA has spoken at their conferences and issued letters of support on some of their issues. COIA feels it is important to have faculty speak with one voice nationally on intercollegiate athletic issues.
- 5) Membership drive. COIA is in the process of reaching out to those D1A faculty senates that are not yet COIA members in order to apprise them of the benefits of COIA membership in the hope of getting them to join COIA.

**Current COIA Concerns:** Browsing these links will give you a sense of COIA concerns.

Formal COIA policy papers in full or summary form (pdf or html) are at:

<http://www.neuro.uoregon.edu/~tublitz/COIA/policypapers.htm>.

A sample of public debate on the issues addressed can be found at:

<http://www.neuro.uoregon.edu/~tublitz/COIA/news.htm>.

Shorter commentaries, arranged by subject categories, including formal responses from organizations like the NCAA and Eric Dexheimer's four articles on UT Austin athletics spending from fall 2007, are available here:

<http://www.neuro.uoregon.edu/~tublitz/COIA/reports.htm>.

### **Recent Specific Concerns That Resonate at UT Austin:**

As I have emphasized in the past, using the rules, guidelines and customary practices of the NCAA and of UT Austin and the UT system, The Men's and Women's NCAA Programs at UT Austin are well-run and models of transparency. This is a widely held opinion among prominent journalists who cover sports, as I found out when I participated on a panel at the Hechinger Institute at Columbia University in October 2007.

Last May right after I was appointed COIA representative, UT VP and CFO Kevin Hegarty, Athletics Directors DeLoss Dodds and Chris Plonsky, and Associate Athletics Director Ed Goble met with me for several hours and gave me a detailed and reassuring view of the athletics budget and how building projects are funded. This November, Brian Davis, Associate AD in charge of academics for men's athletics, kindly arranged for me to meet casually with some of the varsity football players and also has given me a good view of the challenges student athletes face at UT Austin. The President's Office has also provided funds for travel to the annual COIA conference.

I give my sincere thanks to all of them for their time and attention.

**BASIC PRINCIPLE:** UT Austin's NCAA Program or, as *Texas Monthly* called it in its November cover story (well worth reading) Longhorns Inc, is 'the Joneses' (DeLoss Dodds' famous off-the-cuff description) with which other NCAA programs try to keep up. As trendsetters, UT Austin has a responsibility to make sure not only that we 'follow the letter of the law', but that we live up to our institutional motto: what starts here changes the world. The implication of our motto is 'for the better'.

COIA areas of concern that we should think about:

### **Academics, Academics, Academics:**

The official NCAA stats for NCAA student athletes turning professional are as follows:

Men's Basketball - 1.2%  
Women's Basketball - 1.0%  
Football - 1.8%  
Baseball - 9.4%  
Men's Ice Hockey - 3.7%  
Men's Soccer - 1.7%

Obviously the percentage is higher at big-time sports schools like UT Austin, but even then careers are often short and a good education is needed at all times in our lives.

### **QUESTIONS:**

There are serious concerns about how the academic experience of student athletes in NCAA programs is evaluated by the NCAA. Some of these were raised during discussions at the FC meetings that focused on UT Austin's NCAA programs in 2007-08.

How well does the new NCAA Academic Progress Rate (APR) measure student athlete academic achievement?

To what degree does it have negative effects on selection of courses and majors and on student advancement towards degrees or their ability to change degrees?

And how does the NCAA itself use APR data to encourage student athlete academic accomplishment?

In November, national news stories spoke to the clustering of majors among student athletes and their ‘majoring in eligibility’ [http://www.usatoday.com/sports/college/2008-11-18-majors-cover\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/sports/college/2008-11-18-majors-cover_N.htm). These trends are related to APR pressures.

Also of concern are the 6-year graduation rates, especially among African-American athletes. In a press release (<http://www.neuro.uoregon.edu/~tublitz/COIA/index.html>) of July 4, 2008, COIA pointed out that the satisfactory point total of the complicated APR statistics (925) worked out roughly to a 50% graduation rate and that the NCAA was reluctant to penalize schools who failed to meet that minimum standard.

The NCAA also now uses something called the Graduation Success Rate that gives an institution credit for student athletes who ‘transfer to other schools in good academic standing’. Thus overall the Federal Graduation Rate for the 2001 Football Bowl Sub-Division was 56%, but the GSR was 66%.

We should have concerns in all these areas. UT Austin, whether legitimately or not, two years in a row has been highlighted in the national press as a ‘bottom-feeder’ among Top-25 football schools: “BCS teams flunk off the gridiron.”

(<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/chi-perspec1221academicdec21.0.4079625.story>)

The emphasis here was on both overall and minority football graduation rates. To quote:

“This year, it was Oklahoma and Texas fans battling it out for the right to play in the Big 12 and National Championship games. Texas fans were devastated when they lost the rankings fight.

But the real tragedy for this team is that only 40 percent of its players, and only 27 percent of its black players, will graduate. Texas’ football players put the school on the national stage. And what do they get in return? Besides the precious few that will make it to the NFL, most will leave school without a degree and with few career prospects.”

And a national *NY Times* story on December 26, 2008

[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/26/sports/ncaafootball/26recruit.html?\\_r=1&emc=eta1](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/26/sports/ncaafootball/26recruit.html?_r=1&emc=eta1)

put a spotlight on UT's failure to 'emphasize academics' to a nationally coveted recruit. He chose OU. The story also reported that said recruit attended a party held by UT boosters during OU-UT game weekend that featured copious drugs, alcohol and 'freaky sex'. This obviously was not an official UT-sponsored event, but we surely bear some responsibility for creating this kind of tailgating and 'Tailhook' mentality. And, like it or not, this is the picture of UT that is out there, thanks to our big-time sports program.

Then there is the end goal of the APR. See slides 16-24 of the admirably clear and convenient explanation of APR by the UT Men's Athletics Council (FC meeting of November 2007)

[http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/2007-2008/reports/athletics\\_rpt.ppt.htm](http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/2007-2008/reports/athletics_rpt.ppt.htm).

To retain eligibility, student athletes need to have passed 6 hours of course work in a preceding semester and have completed 24 hours by the end of the first year. They must take at least 18 hours per year in the 3 following years. A higher percentage of degree total is set at beginning of 5<sup>th</sup> semester 40% (48 hours at UT Austin), 7<sup>th</sup> semester 60% (72 hours) and 9<sup>th</sup> semester 80% (96 hours).

The cumulative GPA required is 2<sup>nd</sup> year **1.8**, 3<sup>rd</sup> year **1.9** and 4<sup>th</sup> year **2.0**.

Keep in mind that UT Austin cumulative undergraduate GPA for ALL students in all courses is MEN **3.05** WOMEN **3.18** TOTAL **3.12** and you will see how minimal these requirements are.

The system is designed so that student athletes who meet the requirements will have completed 96 of UT's needed 120 semester hours after four years; that is, they will be almost a year short of graduating.

Three other areas of concern under academics are:

CLUSTERING IN COURSES AND MAJORS: 42% of all male student-athletes according to our 2007 Men's Athletics Council report majored in Education, 21% in Liberal Arts, 16% in Communications.

HOURS SPENT ON ATHLETICS: The NCAA surveyed college football players in 2008: "Major-college football players reported spending **an average 44.8 hours a week** practicing, playing, or training for their sport."

ADMISSIONS STANDARDS, RECRUITING, ACADEMIC ACCOMPLISHMENT: A recent study by the *Atlantic Journal-Constitution* of 54 public universities in the Bowl Championship Series conferences revealed that UT Austin had a very large gap in SAT scores between regular students and the student athletes whom UT recruits and admits.

[http://www.ajc.com/sports/content/sports/stories/2008/12/28/academic\\_athletes\\_database.html?appSession=516140906946467&RecordID=18&PageID=3&PrevPageID=2&cpipage=1&CPIsortType=&CPIorderBy=](http://www.ajc.com/sports/content/sports/stories/2008/12/28/academic_athletes_database.html?appSession=516140906946467&RecordID=18&PageID=3&PrevPageID=2&cpipage=1&CPIsortType=&CPIorderBy=)

SEE ALSO: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/12/29/admit>

At UT Austin the average SAT 2003-2005 for all male students was 1265, for male athletes it was 1029 (**236-point differential**), for football players it was 948 (**317-point diff.**) (3.20 GPA) and for male basketball players 797 (**468-point diff.**) (3.23 GPA).

By comparison at University of Oklahoma: SAT for all male students was 1180, for male athletes it was 981 (**199-point diff.**), for football players it was 920 (**260-point diff.**) (3.00 GPA) and for male basketball players 869 (**311-point dif.**) (2.77 GPA).

It should be noticed that despite a high gap in SAT scores between the normal male student body and male athletes in football and basketball, UT's football and men's basketball players managed to attain average GPA's well above the average men's GPA of 3.05.

This brings us to the question of how these results are attained. If the average male football and basketball athlete comes in at an academic disadvantage and then has to put in over 40 hours per week at these sports and travel away from classes, the GPA achievement is truly noteworthy.

If this is a result of tutoring and counseling and study facilities available only to athletes, we should perhaps look into how those successful features can be extended to all UT students. See on this issue:

[http://chronicle.com/weekly/v55/i02/02a09901.htm?utm\\_source=pm&utm\\_medium=en](http://chronicle.com/weekly/v55/i02/02a09901.htm?utm_source=pm&utm_medium=en)

We should also investigate other factors.

### **Proposals:**

1. It would be good in the future for the yearly reports of the Men's and Women's Athletics Councils to have separate academic statistics compiled for scholarship vs. non-scholarship athletes.
2. It would also be good to have reports not just on colleges in which the students are majoring, but on the specific majors they choose.
3. May we also have for each sport a rundown of the top-ten athlete-enrolled courses?
4. Since the concern for athletes who do not graduate after 6 years is persistent, may we ask that UT athletics undertake what many academic departments have had to undertake: a report on what former participants in their programs end up doing?

And finally there are two proposals that Nathan Tublitz, having reviewed our student-athlete academic profile, makes:

- 1) Recruit and admit only those student athletes who are capable of doing college work on their own at UT (without the plethora of tutors, advisors and minders to help them);

2) Require student athletes maintain a cumulative 2.5 GPA or higher in order to remain on scholarship and athletically eligible (this is not unlike other campus scholarships which have a minimum GPA requirement).

The above are strong measures but if anyone can implement them and still have a strong athletic program, I believe it is UT.

### **Money, Money, Money and the Sports “Arms Race”**

In fall 2007, after reading Eric Dexheimer’s stories about athletic spending at UT Austin (see all four articles under COLLEGE SPORTS FINANCES AND THE "ARMS" RACE at <http://www.neuro.uoregon.edu/~tublitz/COIA/reports.htm>), Peggy Pickle, daughter of the late U.S. Rep J.J. 'Jake' Pickle, who authored the original Pickle Amendment that created the federal tax-deduction loopholes for such things as skybox rentals and contributions to the Longhorns Foundation that determine preferential seating, wrote the *Austin American-Statesman* that her father never intended that “our sports programs” would “eclipse the purpose of the University of Texas.”

UT's ca. \$125-million athletics budget works out to \$244,000 per year for each of its 511 athlete-students. If the athletics and academic budgets at UT were combined, the sports budget would be about 7% of the total. This is being used on 1% of the student body. Meanwhile the institutional budget works out to about \$34,000 per student, while the official figure for student-related expenditures is \$11,344 for each student.

By contrast, for 2006, according to Fred Heath, we spent \$41.6 Million in total library expenditures and \$16.0 million on library materials for our 50,000-plus students and our nearly 3,000 faculty.

The NCAA numbers change frequently, but the most current stat is that only 17 of 119 D 1A programs ‘make money’. The average deficit in 2006 of the 99 schools then in the red was \$8.9 million annually. Is this responsible decision making by institutions?

What responsibility do we have in our role as the Joneses?

In regard to our setting the standards, it should be noted that the \$900,000 per year salary we have decided to pay to an assistant football coach whom we designated head-coach apparent has already been copycatted at University of Oregon where one of its assistants was given a like designation at \$7 million over 5 years.

And University of Texas at San Antonio has received approval from the UT System Board of Regents to start a big-time football program that will cost its 28,000 students an additional \$240 per year in fees to \$480 total (\$20 per credit hour) in order to generate 70% of the projected \$18-million per year that sports expansion will cost. Meanwhile the UTSA Library reports that it is still occupying the same space as it did when the campus opened in 1973 and has inadequate room for its print collection, computers, student study areas and book-shelving. UTSA Library fee is (\$14 per credit hour)

For recent developments at the University of Oregon and even right down the road at UT San Antonio, see: <http://www.registerguard.com/csp/cms/sites/web/opinion/5038969-47/story.csp>

[http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/education/Will\\_football\\_be\\_worth\\_the\\_cost\\_to\\_UTSA\\_students.html](http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/education/Will_football_be_worth_the_cost_to_UTSA_students.html)

<http://www.mysanantonio.com/opinion/commentary/36596379.html>.

In my formal questions to the president, I asked why we fund so few varsity sports in comparison with schools like OSU and University of Michigan. Here, I would ask those who run our NCAA athletics program two questions:

1. As a top program, besides winning, what do we do better than other schools for our student-athletes?
2. What areas at UT Austin are most in need of further improvement?

Respectfully submitted,

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