

Duke University
ARTS AND SCIENCES COUNCIL
Minutes of the Meeting of 9 November 2006
Chair: Prof. Lee D. Baker

It being a bright and balmy November afternoon, with Council members somewhat slow in assembling, Prof. Baker was unable to call the meeting to order until 3:40 p.m. At that time he called for any corrections of the Council minutes of 9 October and, hearing none, declared them approved.

Immediately thereafter Prof. Baker introduced the main business of the day by noting that one of the important missions of all Council members was to take information back to their constituencies. Certainly not least during a time of narrowing specializations, there was a constant and growing need to facilitate communication and interaction among areas of knowledge. This afternoon, therefore, he was pleased to say that the primary overseer of the academic efforts of all Duke athletes, Mr. Bradley Berndt, Assistant Athletics Director (who was himself something of a bridge between the Athletic Department and the rest of the faculty), would be addressing the Council.

Mr. Berndt said he was happy to try to “bridge some gaps.” And, indeed, “It is really critical to me that you take information back to your departments.” He wanted everyone to understand that “We care about the athletes as individuals”—and “we” included the colleague accompanying him this afternoon, Mr. Anthony Bennett, Program Coordinator in Athletics Administration. While Mr. Berndt himself hoped that the afternoon would entail not only a presentation but also a dialogue, he proposed to start things by commenting on three subjects: (1) statistical matters, (2) academic support, and (3) “hot” topics.

To begin with some basic facts, Duke was currently working with about 620 student athletes. Approximately 325 of them (i.e., about half) were on some sort of scholarship, about 140 of these being partial scholarships. In all, these 620 athletes were organized in 26 athletic teams, and the cumulative GPA’s of 21 of the 26 were 3.0 or higher.

All of Duke’s teams were grouped in one of three different tiers. Tier 1 consisted of football and men’s and women’s basketball; Tier 2 consisted of about fifteen “Olympic” sports (e.g., lacrosse, soccer, tennis, track and field, and golf); and

Tier 3 consisted of five sports (men and women's swimming, men and women's fencing, and wrestling, none of which received athletic scholarships).

As for performance, the APR (Academic Progress Rate) provided a one-year "snapshot" of all athletes and was concerned strictly with eligibility and retention. The NCCA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) demanded an APR rating of 925 (out of a possible 1000), and all of the Duke teams were rated above 960. In fact, Duke currently was one of the few schools in which all sports achieved more than that rating.

As for graduation rates of athletes holding partial or full scholarships, the latest data (from 2006), gathered for federal purposes, indicated that 91% of Duke's athletes who entered as freshmen in 1999 graduated—thereby placing Duke at the top among Atlantic Coast Conference schools. Of all Duke freshmen who entered in 1999, 93% graduated, and the NCCA reported an overall 97% graduation success rate for Duke student athletes. (This rating excludes from the 1999 freshman cohort those athletes who, before graduating, left Duke in good academic standing.)

Prof. Caroline Bruzelius (Art and Art History) inquired whether it was possible for an athlete to receive scholarship support for five years if he or she did not graduate in four years. Mr. Berndt: It was possible to extend some athletic scholarships for five years, and, in fact, a sixth year of aid could be granted by using non-institutional NCAA funds.

Prof. Baker then asked if Mr. Berndt would care to say a few words regarding parity vis-à-vis the three tiers of athletes. Mr. Berndt: the men and women in Tier 1 were generally less well prepared academically than those in Tiers 2 and 3. Tier 2 athletes tended to come in at a higher level than Tier 1 athletes, and Tier 3 athletes generally resembled the overall Duke student body most closely. For one thing, the Tier 3s tended to be better prepared academically when they arrived. Though Duke spent very little on scholarship aid for men's cross-country, the students involved nevertheless ranked high athletically. They tended to be students with a great deal of discipline and dedication.

Prof. David Malone (Education) inquired how the total number of athletic scholarships was determined and what sort of differences there were between partial and full scholarships. Mr. Berndt: The NCAA sets ceilings on what we can offer. For instance, the NCAA allows up to 85 full scholarships—and Duke awards all 85 in football. Title 9 also gives us federal guidelines, and we have to stay constantly

alert to gender and equity concerns. For example, in a “mirrored” sport such as tennis our current women’s team has 8 scholarships and our men’s team 4.5. Women’s soccer is allowed 14 scholarships, and men’s soccer 9.9.

Prof. Chris Conover (Public Policy) asked whether the overall enterprise of athletics at Duke was “self-funding.” Mr. Berndt: We bring in about 90% of our budget each year and Duke University subsidies cover the rest. About twelve million dollars come in with annual fund contributions—and go directly out to finance sports scholarships. Nevertheless, most “ivy” schools subsidize their athletic programs at a far higher rate than Duke does.

Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences George McLendon, formerly of Princeton, observed that “The subsidy at Princeton was much larger.” At Duke, he said, a “fairly fixed” amount of money had for a number of years been set aside for athletic scholarships. Then again, Duke would be likely to spend money on at least some of these students even if they were not athletes. Duke also had “diversity goals.” Furthermore, it had some “implicit subsidies”—a handy example being reduced tickets to sporting events for faculty members.

Prof. Leslie Saper (Mathematics) recalled being told both that scholarships were offered for five years in a six-year “window” and that subsequently athletes might obtain a sixth year of support from an NCCA scholarship. Granting both that and the impressive graduation rates of athletes, he wondered how many graduated in the four-year period expected of other Duke students. Mr. Berndt: Duke normally expected that athletes would graduate in four years, and virtually all did graduate by 4.5 years. Red-shirted athletes, primarily in the sport of football, sometimes came back for a ninth semester.

Prof. Leslie Digby (Biological Anthropology and Anatomy) observed that as a pre-major advisor a few years back she had advised athletes, and her experience suggested that that kind of faculty-student contact could be successful. Mr. Berndt: Yes, that had been a great model. Unfortunately it proved not to work as well as its planners had hoped. He then described various ways that several people currently in his office could help when either faculty members or students had a question or problem.

As for the “Hot Topics” he had noted earlier, Mr. Berndt ventured to open the can of “Missed Classes.” A significant factor in the problem was that about 80% of the athletes’ contests were scheduled by the ACC. More or less fortunately, since

football had no games on national television, all of our football games could be played on Saturdays, and there was comparatively little missed-class time. Almost all of our volleyball and lacrosse games were also played on weekends. As matters turned out, the athletes who missed the most classes played golf or tennis—and they also had some of the highest GPA's.

He then called particular attention to the “courtesy letters” made available to all student athletes to present to any of their teachers whose classes they might miss. He also urged faculty members to feel free, when presented with such letters, to discourage students from enrolling in any class where timing was likely to pose a significant problem.

In response to a query from Prof. Baker concerning the supposedly voluntary but troublesome tradition of “captain's practice,” Mr. Berndt suggested that whenever a problem arose, the teacher should get in touch with his office. It was likely that he or one of his associates could be “helpful intermediaries.”

Prof. Luciana Fellin (Romance Studies) spoke of problems raised in her department by athletes. How might one reconcile academic success and the many absences of athletes who were taking language courses that not only met three, four, or even five times a week but also required sustained work and practice? For example, she had one student who missed all of the classes in two consecutive weeks because of a tournament. Even though the faculty scheduled extra office hours and offered tutoring, athletes did not often take advantage of them. Mr. Berndt replied that he was familiar with some of the difficulties involved. In fact, foreign languages and mathematics were both areas of real concern—and both he and his colleagues were very much aware of the fact that Duke had a language requirement.

Prof. Leslie Digby: Could some of the problems posed by language courses be ameliorated by scheduling them in the summer? Mr. Berndt: Part of the difficulty was that languages, requiring significant time, were hard to teach even in the summer. Language courses were generally best “absorbed” over a sixteen-week semester. Then, too, fewer language instructors were available during the summer.

Prof. Bruzelius had another question: A number of football players (“lovely fellows”) had informed her that they had to practice five or six hours a day. Was this possible? Mr. Berndt: “I hope not!” In fact, according to NCCA regulations, there was a 20-hour limit. In any case, the football players should work hard to accommodate their football time to their academic time, not vice versa. “We have to

keep educating them as to what is most important.”

Prof. Alfred Goshaw (Physics) wished to know whether exit interviews were conducted with athletes after their graduation in order to determine the quality of their experience at Duke. Mr. Berndt responded that the NCCA expected Duke to schedule a sampling of exit interviews, and Duke currently did about 35 to 45. He himself would like to see the University do better than that—in particular, by interviewing more senior student-athletes.

Prof. Baker felt that the afternoon’s conversation about athletes should also at least touch on the subject of athletes and Study Abroad. Though Study Abroad at Duke had become increasingly important in recent times, in fact almost the cornerstone of a Trinity College degree for many students, Duke athletes were by and large missing out on it. Mr. Berndt: True enough. Although his office had tried and would continue to try to work with the Study Abroad office, the most problematic hurdles remained. The good news was that the problem was not universal among athletes. For example, athletes playing baseball or lacrosse could study abroad during the fall semester. Still, the overall picture was not good.

With the conversation drawing to a close at this point, and despite the various problems that both his office and the faculty at large had to face, Mr. Berndt said he wanted everyone to understand that he was very appreciative of the support that he had received from many of the people present at this afternoon’s meeting. It was very good to realize the extent to which Duke athletes were being supported from “both sides.”

Prof. Baker thanked Mr. Berndt for his valuable information and frank comments. Then, after ascertaining that there was no pressing new business, he requested a motion to adjourn. A cheerful chorus of voices responded, and the meeting was brought to an expeditious end.

Respectfully submitted,
Dale B. J. Randall
Executive Secretary