

PROVOST'S ATHLETICS OVERSIGHT COUNCIL

Academic Integrity & NCAA Rules

Compliance Institutional Control

Student-Athlete Welfare

PAOC Meeting April 3, 2025

12:30-1:45PM

Location: ALC4103

In Attendance: Milton Overton, Daniel Niederjohn, Ivan Pulinkala, Tricia Chastain, Sheb True, Patrick Vickers, Matthew Iwanski, Randy Kennedy, Selena Patterson, AJ Johnson, Matt Mitchelson, Megan Stoltzfus, Latrice Lewis, Austin Brown (remote), Emma Friedel (student athlete), Claire Rutte (minutes)

Dan Niederjohn, Chair and Faculty Athletics Representative, opened the meeting at 12:30pm. Dan reminded all that this meeting was the last meeting of the academic year. Dan asked everyone in the room to say their names and titles. Minutes of February 6, 2025 PAOC meeting were approved.

Emma Friedel was the guest student athlete from softball. Emma is from Texas, and moved to Fayetteville, GA about eight years ago when she was in middle school.

Emma was asked to share with the group what a typical day looked like for her. She said she lifts at 7:00am and then goes to class. "I also spend time with lord, read the Bible, and do my devotions. I am a Christian," Emma said. She explained that classes are generally from 9am to 12:15pm. Then, after class, she goes to throw practice in the bullpen. Later in the day she joins her team for team practice. She also gives lessons to young girls. Emma said she, "shared love of the sport," with the young girls.

Milton asked Emma who her pitching practice was done with. Emma explained that she meets with her coach, and they discuss what her needs and goals are and then they focus on those items during her practice. Milton advised the group that Emma was not talking about team practice, but rather about individual practice. It is a practice focused on the individual athlete. Team practice comes later, he said.

Tricia Chastain asked Emma how she gets to practice and where practice was located. Emma said that she has three roommates, and they alternate driving, and that practice is at the PF (Practice Facility). Tricia followed up with, "How is life on campus? How is your experience?" Emma shared that Greek life has been a little loud lately, and that

sometimes she notices the dorms are a little dirty. "Probably from the people who previously lived there," Emma remarked, finishing with, "I am blessed to be living there." Lastly, Tricia asked what Emma thought of the meal plan, remarking that in Emma's day-to-day experience, she had not mentioned eating as part of her day. Emma exclaimed, "Oh, I eat a lot!" Emma confirmed that she is on the meal plan, but lately she and her friends have been "disappointed in the selection." Emma explained that when she and her friends get to the Commons, usually between 6:00pm and 7:00pm, there is little to no food left in the trays. "The Commons was a lot better last year," Emma said.

Patrick Vickers asked Emma what her degree was, and she replied, "I'm a business major in basic courses right now. I am not sure what I want to do yet." Patrick laughed, saying that he was 53 years old, and he still didn't know what he wanted to do when he grew up.

Dan Niederjohn asked Emma how the transition to CUSA has been for her and her team. "It's been rough. The level of competition is more competitive in all aspects," Emma replied. She continued to explain that she and her team were facing really good competition, and because much of the softball team was a young team, with freshmen and transfers, they were all still in the process of forming trust and connections.

Dan said to the group that the reason for these PAOC meetings is an effort to try to understand the student athlete experience. He asked Emma what else the group could do to help her and her teammates. Emma said having more support at the home softball games, to see an increase in the fan base, would make an impact. Emma would like to see an increase in the fan base beyond parents and the Banana Boys.

Milton: replied, "We will keep working on that and encourage all to attend and support."

Milton motioned towards Selena Patterson, sitting at the table, and shared with Emma that Selena was once a catcher. Emma said that she played for Birmingham Thunderbolts and EC Bullets. Emma excused herself for practice at 12:43pm and left the meeting.

Dan introduced Latrice Lewis, Staff Counsellor. This was Latrice's first PAOC meeting. Latrice began her position at KSU in November 2024. She works under CPS (Counseling and Psychological Services) and works directly with the student athletes. In her first month in this new role, Latrice explained how she met with students, getting them comfortable with her being in the building. Her goal from the start has been to make the student athletes feel less isolated and to help build relationships with them. Latrice explained that her job is to provide mental health services to athletes and to connect them to wellness and resources. Latrice advised that she also has a sport psychology

degree.

Latrice advised that she also does the NCAA screenings, and this summer she is kicking off nutrition screening. These sessions will have dieticians meeting with student athletes. Latrice wants to bring holistic wellness to the department and tailor her treatments to each team, based on their needs, and to be able to support the athletes better. She shared that in April a Monthly Market kicks off where nutrition and nutritional information will be provided. The PF (Practice Facility) will have its own market. As an example of making bridges between the student athletes and the University she shared that CYAAR (Center for Young Adult Addiction and Recovery) plans to do a presentation to football.

Ivan Pulinkala asked, "How have the student athlete's reactions been to you and are they open to you?" Latrice replied, "Very open." Latrice explained how for the first month she was just around them and in their environment. She worked on building relationships. Latrice said that the coaches are very open to her too. "The coaches appreciate me as the extra person to see needs and address them."

Milton said he appreciated Latrice, calling her extraordinary. He said, "Having someone embedded in the department is important to establish trust. It is a comprehensive approach, like a social worker and connecting University resources together. We are head and shoulders from where we were." Milton continued that having Latrice in this role helps to address team dynamics, as student athletes can often feel pressure to win, and they need someone to help them deal with that pressure. He finished by reminding all that the newly created sports performance position would also take a look at mental health and how it plays into sports performance.

Milton asked Latrice what else she needed, what could be done to help her. Latrice replied, "More people. We need more people in order to be more visible and accessible." She explained how her goal is to be a bridge and to connect athletes to other resources and more staff in the department would help towards this goal.

Tricia Chastain asked what was the industry standard for headcount?

Latrice said that bigger schools have 5-6 people (for example, like a UGA) who were concentrated on just the athletics department. Randy agreed, saying that larger schools even have education assessments built into their department. Megan Stoltzfus shared that before Latrice was in her current role, Megan did all the mental health screenings. Megan said she was very grateful to Latrice.

Milton Overton, Director of Athletics opened his state of the department address by sharing there has been much progress in the first year in CUSA. He said that Track and

Field won their first CUSA championship and that it was a step up in competition. He has been very pleased with how the teams have competed in Year 1.

Milton mentioned facility progress, specifically the baseball stadium, commenting that being able to see the progress has helped with fundraising. He appreciates all the levels of collaboration and remarked that the pulling together of resources directly impacted its success.

He discussed the “100-year change” in college athletics and how the House Settlement would be determined soon. “We are prepared to meet revenue share obligations. We have a lot of momentum. I appreciate all in the room and what you have been doing to navigate the change,” Milton said.

Milton encouraged all to come to SAAC. “The group cares about community and giving back, being of service to others,” he said. Milton motioned towards AJ, sitting in the room, and informed all that AJ was at the end of his career at KSU. Milton said he was very proud of AJ. Milton shared that AJ has been helping athletics as an intern by building a recruiting intelligence system and that AJ recently showed the system to Peter Chung (football). Milton explained, “It [recruiting system] does not exist in the marketplace today. It is very sophisticated. It looks at the value of players per position and how we can connect and give coaches more recruiting intelligence before the players hit the portal.” Milton shared that Matt Iwanski was also the GM and works with coaches in player acquisition via the GM tool of Teamworks.

Dan asked Milton when the baseball stadium would be complete. Milton replied, “End of May. We should have this group take a tour.”

AJ Johnson began the Student-Athlete Welfare and SAAC Update. AJ shared that he spoke with some athletes about missing class for competition and how at least two of the athletes' professors would not let them make up the test or said they had to do the makeup tests during finals. Megan explained how make up tests would be on the same day or right before the finals.

Dan shared that, “We have been struggling with this for a few years. We drafted a change to attendance policy and went to Faculty Senate and it did not go over very well.” Dan said that they would need to revisit this issue and determine what is an equitable makeup test.

Ivan Pulinkala suggested that they all discuss what is equitable on an individual case and reach out to each professor. He asked AJ to please let Sheb True know who the two

students are.

Tricia Chastain left the meeting at 1:13pm.

Dan shared that he had previously discussed the issue with professors. Then Sheb True suggested that there might be a better way to communicate with faculty about this issue. Sheb said he could communicate with the Faculty Senate and set something up about the policy. He said that sometimes a faculty member speaking with another faculty member helps and would reduce the student athletes from being all grouped together. Ivan agreed saying that student athletes might be grouped with other non-diligent students.

Sheb suggested they should onboard these policies to the student athletes, providing them with tools and letting them know they can talk to us. "The department is here to help." Sheb said he can work on a document.

Milton mentioned that at the beginning of each semester travel letters are sent to the professors. He asked, "Should we address makeups in those travel letters?" Randy advised that the letters sent to the professors are considered excused absences. All agreed that a process of determining equivalent assignments is the issue.

AJ Johnson continued with his update. There will soon be voting in new leadership SAAC. AJ said "Travel to Liberty was the best ever. It was the smoothest and most accommodating trip."

Meghan Stoltzfus, Director, Student-Athlete Development provided her SAAC update, advising that the SAAC Spring Tailgate is not happening for softball this year. "Due to some roadblocks with scheduling and supplies, we cannot do this event," she said.

Megan spoke about student athlete development. She shared that Flight Plan is next week. It is the 4th annual networking scrimmage on April 8 at KSU Center at 6pm in Room 400. All are welcome to attend and join. She said that the purpose of the event is to practice. Megan said there has been an increase of attendance by 10% or more from last Spring to this spring for mandatory attendance events. Megan is thankful to Milton and Randy for making these mandatory. She shared that she is looking into financial literacy next semester.

Megan said the scrimmage on April 8 will have about 25-30 companies in attendance. Many of these companies are from relationships that Megan has made. Sheb True said he has some connections within the colleges and with the deans and would be happy to

discuss it with Megan.

Mathew Iwanski, Associate Athletic Director, Athletics Compliance reported out saying, “we are in a holding pattern with the House Settlement until April 7 the date of the final hearing.” He suggested if anyone had questions to please reach out to him directly.

Milton said, “Matt makes sure we are in compliance with all the NCAA rules.”

Matt said that he now has a full staff of four for the first time since February 2023. Matt and his staff are working on building relationships and monitoring and educating the teams.

Randy Kennedy, Associate Athletic Director of Academic Services said there are four weeks left of classes and that midterm grades and a progress report would be provided at the end of the semester. He shared that the CUSA Academic Awards were released on April 3 and that the Faculty Achievement Award went to Dr May Gao. Randy said he was working on graduation rate data for NCAA for academic aid. He shared that the student athletes were finishing on a high note this semester and said how he and Dr Garr discussed integration of Summer Bridge and ECON1. Sheb True commented on the graphics that Randy creates and said that he is able to see how well the students have done. Milton commented to Sheb, “thank you for welcoming SASS into Academic Affairs.”

Dan Niederjohn, Faculty Athletics Representative and Associate Professor of Psychology began his update with thanking all in the room for voting on the one-time exception for baseball travel outside of 48 hours.

Dan reminded all that about a year ago during a PAOC meeting they were all looking at midweek games during football and made a one-time exception for that entire day. Dan said that looking at fall again, a two-time exception or change in policy would be needed for football in the upcoming season. He asked the group, “do we make the exception just for football or for all sports?” He asked if anyone had any thoughts or options for exceptions during midweek games. Per Randy, other CUSA schools are excused for the entire day. AJ and Megan were in favor of what other CUSA schools do, saying it should be applicable to all teams and not just football.

Ivan said the students must be academically supported, and it could be framed per sport.

Matt Iwanski said, “If we allow all sports the same exception, it could be taken advantage of. It should an exception and not a standard across the board.” Milton agreed saying that the exception should be need based.

Dan advised that he would put something together for all to review to change the policy just for football for now.

In other business, Dan requested approval of future meetings. The dates were agreed to be September 4, 2025, November 13, 2025, February 5, 2026, and April 2, 2026. The meeting location of these rooms has yet to be determined.

The next Meeting is September 4, 2025. This meeting was adjourned at 1:47pm.

The minutes from the April 3, 2025 meeting were approved on September 4, 2025.