



National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics

September 24, 2004

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Julie Cromer
Director of Membership Services
NCAA

Dear Julie;

I have attached a copy of the final report from the N4A Task Force that reviewed NCAA Academic Reform. The members of this task force are colleagues in our profession who have many years of experience working in academic athletic support in Division I Athletics. They have spent long hours reviewing the NCAA reform issues and have developed a document that best reflects the perspective of many in our profession.

On behalf of the membership of the N4A, I want to thank you and the leadership of the NCAA, in allowing us to provide input into the academic reform movement. We appreciate this opportunity and look forward to providing examples of model practices that address the specific issues of academic reform.

I would be happy to discuss this report with you at your convenience. Also, please feel free to share this report with other constituent groups.

Sincerely,

Steve McDonnell
N4A President
Associate Athletics Director for Academic Services
Texas A&M University

1975-2005
30th Anniversary - Raleigh, NC



N4A Task Force
**“Practices and Concepts for the Success
of NCAA Academic Reform”**

September, 2004

Task Force Members

Dr. Karl Mooney (Chair), Director, Academic Services for Student-Athletes, University of Central Florida

**Kim Barger-Durand, Assistant Athletics Director
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**Dr. Ruth Darling, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
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**Dr. Gerald Gurney, Associate Athletics Director for Academic Affairs
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**Phil Hughes, Associate Athletics Director for Student Services
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**Dr. Adrienne Leslie-Toogood, Assistant Professor, Faculty Athletics Representative
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**Virginia Romero, Director of Academic Support Program
Cerritos Community College**

**Todd Wyant, Associate Athletics Director for Student-Athlete Services
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Preface – The Role of Academic Athletic Advisors

The mission of the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics (N4A) is to cultivate and improve the opportunities for academic success for student-athletes in universities and colleges by providing informed, competent, and holistic advising while enhancing communication between the academic and the athletic communities.

Academic advisors are active participants in all areas of academic athletic evaluation, support and guidance. From initial academic evaluation of student-athlete prospects, to the evaluation of student -athletes' progress toward a degree to maintain or achieve athletic eligibility, to the completion of their degrees or their return to campus to complete their degree programs, academic athletic advisors actively contribute to every aspect of student-athletes' academic athletic careers.

The valuable information that can be gleaned from the experiences and successful records of academic athletic advisors and others who provide academic athletic support must be included in the NCAA's process of academic reform. It is clear that academic athletic advisors will be critical to the success of academic reform.

This document provides some concepts and best practices that the N4A membership believes are essential to NCAA academic reform. It addresses the topics of unit reporting lines, accountability, initial eligibility, student-athletes' progress toward a degree, budgets and the cost of academic reform, and communication and education. It also cites the importance of support and shared accountability from the institution, athletics administrators and coaches while providing some points for initial dialogue that would ensure support from members of those groups.

As a contributing stakeholder in the success of academic reform, the N4A welcomes the opportunity to work with the NCAA as an affiliate organization in this landmark effort. Through candid discussions of the actual and likely outcomes of current and proposed legislation, N4A members believe that a strong partnership with the NCAA is essential to the

implementation, evaluation, further development and success of the academic reform movement.

Unit Reporting Lines

- **Phase III of NCAA Strategic Plan recommends that academic support units should report to an academic authority of the institution.**
 - **While the N4A recognizes that there are several successful academic athletic reporting models, it embraces the changes of academic reform that are cited in the NCAA Strategic Plan. Having a primary reporting line directly to the chief academic officer best ensures overcoming undue pressures from the athletics program and promotes institutional control. The N4A further recognizes that within each model there are elements that best fit each institution.**
 - **An established academic reporting line facilitates an integration and utilization of institutional resources. Such a model would foster greater opportunities for student-athletes to interact with the general student body.**

Accountability

- **Coaches must share accountability for the academic achievement of student-athletes they select for admissions consideration. The N4A recommends a national head coaches' graduation rate requirement that establishes an historical graduation record of each recruiting class brought by them to their institutions.**
 - **Graduation rates should be compiled and published for each head coach and follow that coach from institution to institution. Similarly, any historical disincentive penalties should also be published upon a coaches' movement from one institution to another.**
 - **A good graduation record would serve as an incentive for recruiting, hiring, contract renewal, bonuses, etc.**
 - **A poor graduation record would serve as a disincentive for recruiting, hiring, contract renewal, bonuses, etc.**
- **The N4A strongly encourages NCAA attention to effective enforcement or revision of its 20-hour per week participation rule for student-athletes.**

Initial Eligibility – Open Door and Higher Standards

- **Current initial eligibility standards seem incongruent when coupled with increased progress toward degree requirements. The N4A recommends an examination of the importance of higher secondary grade point average achievement on the initial eligibility sliding scale.**
- **Each institution must evaluate all prospective student-athletes it considers based upon their predictability of academic success as compared with the admissions profiles of the general student body.**
- **The N4A endorses the concept that freshmen be ineligible for athletic competition to facilitate their transition to collegiate studies. We recognize that freshman ineligibility would likely require an increase in the number of scholarships but conclude that the pedagogical benefits outweigh the costs.**

Progress Toward Degree

- **The requirements of academic reform (e.g., percentage of degree completion) and transfer requirements must be clearly and vigorously communicated to those responsible for athletics programs and student-athlete success within the community college family.**
- **N4A supports the creation of a core curriculum for two-year college transfer student-athletes. The inconsistency of AA degree requirements and the difficulty of two-year college transfer student-athletes to be immediately eligible upon transfer, to be retained at the four-year level and eventually graduate are matters of immediate concern.**
- **New progress toward degree percentage requirements may cause student-athletes to accept enrollment in majors that predict eligibility rather than encourage exploration of more challenging or personally meaningful major fields of study. N4A is concerned that current legislation may not encourage sound educational outcomes.**
 - **There is an immediate need to establish the criteria for a template of an acceptable waiver policy and procedure for changes of major for student-athletes in good academic standing for that major field of study.**
 - **NCAA should conduct a study of two-year college transfer student-athletes' academic success at four-year institutions to understand the impact of academic reform legislation.**
- **To foster retention and graduation of student-athletes, the N4A endorses legislation that will reduce or abolish the non-renewal of athletics related**

aid for reasons of poor athletic performance. Institutions that admit student-athletes to their campuses should not cancel or graduate athletic related aid based upon recruiting errors.

- **Post-season competition –**
 - **N4A supports a minimum six-hour rule for post-season competition for student-athletes in their final season of competition. Such achievement could serve as an incentive for athletics programs.**
- **N4A endorses an incentive concept of awarding a 5th year of eligibility for student-athletes who graduate within 4 years. Such a concept would encourage student-athletes to be on a fast track to graduate and to pursue post-graduate study.**

Budgets & Cost of Reform

- **N4A acknowledges that academic reform may mean a greater commitment and reliance upon institutional resources. The athletics departments should provide the principle financial resources for academic athletic and life skills support.**

Communication and Education

- **The NCAA, athletics conferences and collegiate institutions should improve efforts to educate and require coaches to understand the disincentives of academic reform as they apply specifically to their programs.**
 - **Coaches' NCAA certification examinations should require competency regarding an understanding of basic academic reform legislation.**
- **Institutions should evaluate how their teams' past graduation performances may result in the future application of disincentives.**
- **Best practices should be developed by all institutional stake holders, including academic athletic professionals, coaches, and athletic and institutional administrators to assist institutions in jeopardy of failing to achieve levels of academic performance that are above the academic filters.**
 - **The N4A endorses the creation of a professional academic athletic consulting group to assist programs that do not meet the academic filters.**
 - **The N4A recommends that the NCAA establish a fund to support the provision of needed academic consulting and development of**

corrective measures for institutions that have an historical record of failing to meet the academic filters.