

Faculty Athletics Representative Annual Report

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It's been a challenging year for student-athletes at UW just as it's been challenging for all of us. The Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) identified two priorities for the year: 1) mental health support, and 2) social justice initiatives. In January of 2020, Athletics hired its first full-time Director of Student-Athlete Well-Being, a licensed counselor who also supervises two GAs linked to the University Counseling Center. In addition to offering training to coaches and staff, hosting workshops for teams, and screening all student-athletes for mental health issues, the Director and her staff recorded almost 1,000 individual counseling sessions. That number increased in 2021—and it continues to rise. The good news is that more UW athletes than ever are receiving support for anxiety, depression, PTSD, substance abuse, or sexual abuse/assault. Also, more of them—including those initially resistant to intervention—are comfortable requesting support. Student-athletes value these services highly, and when the Director left UW this fall, they expressed deep concern about a potential gap in services. A new Director, someone experienced working with high-performing athletes, has been hired and will relocate to Laramie this summer. In the meantime, staff at UCC, already flooded with demand from the UW community, has stepped in to offer regular counseling sessions and training. Their efforts have been crucial and much appreciated. Demand for these services probably hasn't yet reached its peak.

The pandemic hasn't allowed student-athletes to make as much headway with their social justice initiatives as they'd like. But some athletes, coaches, and staff members continue to work with law enforcement, faculty in the School of Culture, Gender, & Social Justice, and the Mountain West Conference to address concerns. These concerns, centered on racial discrimination, gender equity, and LGBTQ inclusion, are real, and they are not easy to resolve. I applaud the skilled efforts of our faculty colleagues and our student-athletes to educate and engage. They have strengthened our community. I have learned a great deal from them, and there is much more to learn, and act upon.

The Athletics budget was under great strain during the last fiscal year. The pandemic crushed ticket sales and funds raised via advertising partnerships. With enormous effort, including salary reductions for all Athletics staff making more than \$32,000/year, a projected \$4 million deficit was whittled down to about \$200,000. The gap was covered by reserve funds. The future looks more stable. And it seems possible that a pair of long-planned facility projects, a new swimming pool and renovations to the west side of War Memorial Stadium, may launch **if** private funds are raised to enhance those offered by the Wyoming legislature.

In a curious twist, the harder the pandemic was for student-athletes (cancelled contests, sickness, quarantine, interrupted training), the better they performed in the classroom. Recent team GPAs are listed below. A summary of the distribution of majors for student-athletes is also included. Graduation/retention rates are higher than the general student population, as are GPAs. Analyses of the effects (good, bad, or neutral) of online instruction on at risk student-athletes is ongoing, but the Office of Academic Service in Athletics continues to maintain an impressive record.

OAS must graduate all athletes in 5 years. And Division 1 athletes must retain a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher. Out of nearly 500 athletes, including members of the spirit squad, only 6 were on probation at UW after the fall 2021 semester. All 6 were in their first term at UW, and all 6 are projected to “recover” academically this spring. Record numbers of UW athletes have been honored by the Mountain West, WAC (Men’s swimming & diving), and Big XII (Wrestling) for their academic achievements. All academic trends are positive. More student-athletes are graduating quickly and enrolling in graduate programs (MA, MBA, MS, JD). These young people value UW’s academic excellence as much as they value their Division 1 athletic experiences. And their coaches recruit, more than ever, young people who can succeed and thrive here.

A finale note: This will be my last FAR report for the Senate. I informed President Seidel last summer of my intention to step away from the intricate and gratifying work of serving as his liaison to Athletics. The process to choose my successor is nearly complete. My thanks to all of you on the Senate for aiding me in my role over the last 16 years.

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Student-Athlete Distributions of Majors: Business Related (24%), Arts & Humanities Related (20%), Health Related (16%), Science & Math (9%), Communications Related (7%), Engineering (6%), Agriculture (6%), Education (5%), Graduate Programs (4%), Undecided (4%)

Student-Athlete GPAs:

<i>Team</i>	<i>Academic Year 20-21</i>	<i>Fall 2021</i>
Football	2.863	2.849
Men’s BB	3.099	3.420
Women’s BB	3.527	3.698
Men’s Golf	3.612	3.486
Women’s Golf	3.604	3.369
Men’s Swimming	3.332	3.507
Women’s Swimming	3.494	3.671
Wrestling	2.781	2.925
Men’s Track	3.416	3.156
Women’s Track	3.482	3.472
Women’s Soccer	3.579	3.590
Women’s Volleyball	3.577	3.540