

External Evaluation of Academic Support Services at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Final Committee Report

July 8, 2009

Under action implemented by the NCAA in 2007 (NCAA Bylaw 22.2.2.2-(d)), the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics (“Athletic Department”) at University of Wisconsin -Madison (“UW-Madison”) is required to conduct an external comprehensive review and evaluation of the academic support services provided student-athletes at the institution. Such review is required, at a minimum, every four years. This year, the external review is being conducted in conjunction with the completion of the NCAA certification self-study currently underway at UW-Madison.

At the request of Director of Athletics Barry Alvarez, a committee consisting of academic authorities outside the Athletic Department has been established to conduct the independent review of the academic support services. The external committee consists of the following members:

- David R. Zimmerman, Professor of Industrial Engineering, College of Engineering (Committee Chair)
- Kevin J. Helmkamp, Associate Dean of Students, Dean of Students Office
- David M. McDonald, Chair, Department of History, College of Letters and Science
- Michele B. Mickelson, Assistant Dean of Student Academic Affairs, School of Human Ecology

Pursuant to Operating Principles 2.2, Self- Study Item # 7 and the measurable standard provided therein, the external committee was directed to conduct a comprehensive academic support service evaluation which included the following eight areas a thru h in addition to all other services provided to student-athletes which fall under areas i thru n:

- a. Academic counseling/advising resources and services
- b. Tutoring
- c. Academic progress monitoring and reporting
- d. Assistance for special academic needs
- e. Assistance for at-risk students
- f. Academic support facilities
- g. Academic evaluation of prospective student-athletes
- h. Student-athlete degree selection
- i. Learning assessments
- j. Success skills
- k. Study hall
- l. First year/transfer orientation
- m. Mentoring
- n. Post eligibility programs

This is the final report of this external review committee. After a description of the sources of information used in the review, and the procedures followed by the committee, the findings of the review are presented. The findings are organized according to the above taxonomy, addressing each of the specific review areas. Where relevant, reference is made in the report to the previous NCAA certification self-study review conducted at UW-Madison in 2000.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

The committee members have had a variety of information available to them in the course of their review. Of significant note, the committee has thoroughly reviewed the material in the Academic Integrity section of the UW-Madison third cycle NCAA certification self-study report documents. This source has provided rich, comprehensive, and detailed information about all the academic services provided to, and available for, student-athletes at UW-Madison and focused on all of the aforementioned areas addressed by the committee. It has also provided important statistics about the academic performance of the student-athletes, as well as the types of activities comprising the academic services program at UW-Madison. The committee has also relied on supplemental information provided by the UW-Madison Athletic Department, including APR and federal graduation rate materials, academic overview survey information about student-athlete majors, etc.

A primary source of information for the committee has been interviews conducted with a variety of individuals having knowledge and perceptions concerning the academic services program. These individuals include:

- Assistant Athletic Director for Academic Services;
- Academic Services staff members, including student advisors, learning specialists, tutors, and career development specialists;
- Student-athletes, with representation across upperclassmen and freshman/sophomores, revenue and non-revenue sports, former student-athletes, and academic performance levels;
- Senior staff members of the Athletic Department, including the Senior Woman Administrator, Assistant Athletic Director for Student Services, Associate Athletic Director for Capital Projects, Executive Associate Athletic Director, and the Athletic Director; and
- Staff members in the Registrar's office who are responsible for eligibility of continuing student-athletes.

Many of the interviews were conducted at the Office of Academic Services within the Fetzer Center, which afforded the committee members an opportunity to observe the academic services programs—both formal and informal—in action.

COMMITTEE PROCEDURES:

Individual committee members had access to each of the information sources described above. In addition, all committee members were invited to each of the interviews; in virtually every case, at least two committee members, and often three members, were present at each interview. The

Athletic Department staff members, and especially the Assistant Athletic Director for Academic Services, were very forthcoming and cooperative in providing any requested information and scheduling interviews, while at the same time respecting the independence required by the committee during its review activities.

FINDINGS:

Before proceeding to our specific findings by area, it is useful to provide a brief overview of the review findings. In general, the committee was pleased to find that an impressive set of improvements in the academic services have been made since the NCAA second cycle certification self-study report in 2000. There have been tangible and significant improvements in:

- The infrastructure of the academic services program
- The more systematic procedures that have been established and implemented, throughout the program
- The attention to policies concerning academic services
- The focus on at-risk and students with special needs, including building a significantly strengthened learning specialist program
- The leadership of the academic services program
- The more formal association between the academic services program and the Athletic Department

These improvements are discussed in the individual area findings below. Certainly there are areas that will benefit from additional improvements, and we attempt to identify and describe these opportunities for improvement in our observations below. Most importantly, the significant work that has been accomplished under the present leadership of the Assistant Athletic Director for Academic Services provides a strong foundation for continued efforts to promote student-athlete welfare and further enhance the student-athlete experience at UW-Madison.

We have organized the findings of our review around the major areas set forth in the charge to the committee, as delineated above. In addition to these areas, the committee is mindful of the current “environment” in college sports—reflective of the campus environment generally—concerning academic conduct and misconduct. Thus, we have addressed these considerations as part of our overall review effort.

a. Academic counseling/advising resources and services

The broad array of academic services and resources available to UW-Madison student-athletes are described in detail in the third cycle certification self-study report. It is an impressive set of services and resources that has seen significant growth—in both magnitude and professionalism—over the period since the second cycle certification self-study. Our interviews with various stakeholders have confirmed the quality of these services and the high value that is placed on them by all concerned, especially the student-athletes themselves.

The committee notes, in particular, strides that have been made in bringing about better organization and structure in the academic services program, with specific divisions pertaining to advising, tutoring, and learning specialists to address at risk and special need student-athletes. Learning specialists add significant value to the academic services program. Learning specialists assist student-athletes, particularly those at risk, by providing additional academic assistance in accessing academic resources across the campus. As well, there has been much more attention paid to career services and a focus on life skills development, to address the needs of student-athletes as they approach graduation and departure from the campus.

The student-athletes interviewed by committee members were clear and firm in their appreciation for the services of their academic service advisors, tutors, and (especially) learning specialists. The student-athletes placed particular high value on the efforts of these staff members early on in their campus experience; several noted the importance of the staff members in helping them navigate the sometimes confusing path upon entry into the college environment. The Athletic Department supports two courses that deal specifically with the transition from high school to college as well as with race and ethnicity issues. In addition, a Life Skills Academy has been implemented to provide a structured life skills curriculum for first-year student-athletes.

The advising and tutoring and learning assistance appears to be very well-organized, around individual sports. We found no evidence of “preference” given to revenue sports in this regard, with student-athletes across the spectrum of the 23 sports expressing satisfaction with the assistance they receive from advisors, tutors, and learning specialists.

While primary emphasis in academic services is given to supporting student-athletes in their first (and perhaps second) years, there also appears to be adequate help—and, as importantly, no hindrance—to student-athletes in choosing their majors. Career counseling and life skills resources have also been added for the benefit of student-athletes as they approach graduation and departure from the university.

b. Tutoring

Significant strides have been made since the 2000 second cycle certification self-study in the area of tutoring student-athletes. Prominent among these developments has been the establishment of a Tutoring Coordinator within the Academic Services office. The tutoring coordinator position, and particularly the present incumbent of that position, has helped to better organize the tutoring services available to student-athletes and formalize the tutoring process. As a result, the professionalism of that function has been enhanced and greater control over both its quality and oversight in areas such as academic misconduct has been achieved.

The tutoring services and organization of that function are described in detail in the Academic Integrity section of the third cycle certification self-study report. Our interviews with members of the tutoring staff, the Tutoring Coordinator, students, and other Athletic Department staff members have confirmed that the tutoring function has been made much

more formal and well-organized under the Tutoring Coordinator. It appears that improvements have been made in compensation, selection procedures, pupil loads, qualifications, and other areas of tutoring. The tutoring function has grown significantly, with 60-70 tutors currently being used. More formal tutor recruitment and selection procedures have been implemented, with more emphasis placed on educational experience, particularly in working with at risk and special needs students.

Tutor training consists of two mandatory training sessions per year (fall and spring). Training sessions are led by the Tutorial Coordinator and take place during the first week of class in the fall and spring semesters. Tutors are given electronic copies of the Tutor Handbook and meet individually with the Tutor Coordinator. The Handbook contains compliance information and directions for the Badger Athletics Student Information System (BASIS), the online tutor database. Tutor student-athlete assignments and tutor hours are posted in BASIS. It might be useful for the handbook guidelines to address affirmative steps tutors could take if and when they encounter situations of potential non-compliance or misconduct.

As noted above, one of the strengths of the tutoring program has been establishment of a more formal tutoring program. The committee is pleased to see the addition of a Tutor Coordinator, improved recruitment and selection process, and more formal procedures that tutors must follow. The committee encourages the academic services program and the Athletic Department to continue these efforts to establish more standardized procedures for tutors in order to (a) maintain consistency in tutoring methods and (b) provide a clear and unambiguous set of expectations regarding academic conduct and misconduct.

Plans for all tutors to complete annual training sessions online are scheduled for implementation in the summer of 2009. The online training will feature a compliance assessment that tutors must pass before being permitted to tutor student-athletes. In addition, the external committee is aware of plans to incorporate into the aforementioned BASIS system, a procedure whereby tutors will affirm after each tutoring session, that their tutoring activities have complied with all NCAA and UW-Madison requirements. The committee commends the Athletic Department for these refinements to the tutoring program to further ensure that standard practices are followed and that close oversight of the tutoring function is maintained.

c. Academic progress monitoring and reporting

The academic services office has a sophisticated set of procedures to monitor the academic progress of student-athletes and to report on their eligibility. Both formal and informal methods of progress monitoring are utilized. Student-athlete progress monitoring activities are described in the third cycle certification self-study report. Particularly impressive is the use of an automated system (Badger Athletics Student Information System, or BASIS) to track progress through multiple reports that can be shared by academic services staff, coaching and Athletic Department staff, and the person responsible for documenting and reporting eligibility of student-athletes. The system also keeps a log of the student-athlete's use of the academic services office (Fetzer Center). Electronic progress reports are sent to faculty members twice each semester to keep track of academic progress, and problems

therewith, of student-athletes. The system also serves as the basis for weekly contact, and reports, between the academic services office and coaching staff in the individual sports. Class attendance is monitored through an attendance coordinator, with the help of class monitors hired by the academic services office. The office also has a system for communicating attendance and progress problems with the individual student-athletes, at either of the two student academic service centers or through the appropriate coach.

This system appears to work well, according to the interviews with both student-athletes and program staff. For most student-athletes, more emphasis is placed on monitoring academic progress in the first year (and sometimes the second year) of a student-athlete's tenure at the UW-Madison. There typically is less scrutiny after the student has selected a major and has more experience with time management techniques and study habits, although the Athletic Department continues to monitor the academic progress of student-athletes when necessary.

- d. Assistance for special academic needs, and**
- e. Assistance for at-risk students**

The academic services office has a comprehensive set of programs to provide assistance for at-risk students and students with special academic needs. These programs and activities are described in detail in the third cycle certification self-study report. In general, these programs and activities appear to be sound in design and effective in their implementation. The staff members are, justifiably, proud of their accomplishments in this area, and the student-athletes with whom we spoke are satisfied and appreciative of the efforts to assist at-risk and special needs students.

There are two elements of these initiatives that deserve special note. One of the major strengths of the at-risk, special needs initiatives at UW-Madison is the prominent role played by the learning specialists in the academic services office. Learning specialists are a major participant in the academic services program, and one that has been strengthened considerably since the 2000 second cycle certification self-study. Learning specialists have a very specific and clear purpose in the panoply of services, and they work very closely with both advisors and tutors to ensure that services to at-risk and special needs students are adequately coordinated. Recruitment and selection criteria for these positions are stringent and there is a consequent high degree of professionalism in the corps of learning specialists.

The other program warranting special attention is the Academic Athletic Mentor Partnership (AAMP). The intent of the AAMP program, started in 2007, is to initiate a mentor-mentee relationship involving community members, former student-athletes, and UW-Madison faculty members which will foster into a dynamic relationship for both the student-athletes of color and the mentors. The program has grown to include a variety of sports, including football, women's basketball, and women's track and field, and this past year more monthly AAMP events and meetings have been held. The academic services staff members also assist student-athletes in accessing other campus services, such as the McBirney Disability Resource Center.

f. Academic support facilities

There are two Athletic Department academic support facilities on campus. The McClain Fetzer Center has 15,000 square feet of room that includes 9 study rooms, open study areas with carrels, a 55-seat auditorium, a 42-station computer lab, a lounge area and 11 offices. This center remains a “state-of-the art” educational services facility, and it gets high marks from both student-athletes and staff members. It continues to serve the needs of both student-athletes based in the Camp Randall and Fieldhouse locations and student-athletes based in remote locations, primarily on the west side of campus.

The Athletic Department has enhanced its ability to serve the educational needs of Student-athletes by opening a satellite facility, also called the Fetzer Center, at the Kohl basketball and hockey facility. The Kohl Fetzer Center provides 5,000 square feet of study space which includes 5 study rooms, a lounge area, a 12-station computer lab and 4 offices. In addition to serving the academic needs of the women’s and men’s basketball and hockey programs, Kohl Fetzer also provides educational services for student-athletes in remote locations, taking some of the pressure off the McClain Fetzer Center in this regard. The committee’s interviews with student-athletes has confirmed the value of this new facility, and it has broadened the services available to student-athletes in hockey and basketball, as well as those in other sports who avail themselves of the Kohl Fetzer Center satellite facility.

Some academic advisors not based at the Kohl Center do not hold regular office hours there. However, there will be an opportunity to address the availability of Kohl Center advising services generally, and particularly to hockey student-athletes, when the newly proposed hockey competition/practice facility is completed.

In combination, the McClain and Kohl Fetzer Centers provide excellent facilities for meeting the educational needs of student-athletes. With the addition of the Kohl Fetzer Center, the Athletic Department can now focus even more attention on ensuring that it is meeting the needs of student-athletes whose sports involve competition and practice locations in outlying or remote locations, particularly those on the west side of campus, such as rowing, softball, tennis, and golf, as well as swimming. Student-athletes in these sports have access to both Fetzer Centers, as noted above, but it will be important for the Athletic Department to continue to assess how well the two Fetzer Centers are serving the needs of the other student-athletes, and ensuring that the two Fetzer Centers can accommodate their needs.

g. Academic evaluation of prospective and continuing student-athletes

The system for evaluating the academic standing of prospective and continuing student-athletes is described in the third cycle certification self-study report. The academic services staff members meet with potential recruits on campus visits to discuss available academic services, admission requirements, possible majors, and other information.

The academic evaluation of prospective student-athletes undergoes a preliminary review by the compliance staff within the Athletic Department. A final determination is made through the NCAA eligibility process and then by the UW-Madison Office of the Registrar.

Interviews with Athletic Department and Registrar's Office staff indicate satisfaction with this process and the academic services role as part of this process.

Academic progress monitoring also involves the maintenance of records of academic progress for purposes of determining continuing eligibility of student-athletes. This process is handled in the campus Registrar's Office, independent of the Athletic Department. All records are kept and updated by an individual in the Registrar's Office, who then reports eligibility to the Athletic Department each semester. By all accounts this system seems to be working very well. The Athletic Department Associate Director for Compliance, and the Assistant Director for Academic Services, are satisfied with the process and give it high marks; the individual responsible for this function in the Registrar's Office is also very satisfied with the process, and she reports that she has had complete cooperation and no attempts to influence the process from inside the Athletic Department.

h. Student-athlete degree selection

Assistance to student-athletes in selecting a major area in pursuit of their degrees carries with it a dual responsibility: adequate help in navigating the process of selecting a major, and the absence of pressure—formal or informal—in making that selection, in cases of potential conflict with the requirements of the student-athlete's participation in her/his sport. Some constraints on study and class schedule may be inevitable given the amount of time a student-athlete is required to devote to his/her sport, and the timing of practice and competition schedules; but it is important that the coaches or academic services staff not impose undue restrictions on the student-athlete in selecting a major area.

The committee was pleased to find virtually no evidence of such pressure at UW-Madison, either by coaches or academic service staff. To the contrary, the student-athletes with whom we spoke expressed satisfaction and gratitude for the assistance they received, particularly from the academic services office, in obtaining information about possible majors. Academic services staff members appear to be knowledgeable and candid about major area requirements, and helpful in guiding students through the process of determining personal interests, career goals, and major area admission requirements.

Once the student-athlete is admitted to a major area, in some cases there appears to be a parallel track of advising that ensues, with the academic services program continuing to provide some counseling assistance and another set of advising services flowing from the student-athlete's major area. It would be beneficial to see more coordination of these two advising tracks, and the committee suggests that more attention be devoted to coordinating the efforts between the UW Athletic Department academic services program and the major area advising programs. It is natural that student-athletes would continue to rely on the former, since they have a longer history with and are therefore quite comfortable with their athletic academic advisors; yet the major area academic services advisors may have more detailed and up-to-date information that would be helpful to the student-athlete. Linking the two advising mechanisms will further enhance the student-athlete's academic performance and campus experience.

The committee was also pleased to see that, since the 2000 second cycle certification self-study, considerable enhancements had been made in the career services available to student-athletes. These services are much more comprehensive, including a job fair and mentor program to assist student-athletes in making the transition from campus to career. An important element of the UW-Madison approach to this transition is that the academic services program “broadens” the career guidance to include several “life skills” activities (generally housed under the CHAMPS program). The career assistance activities, and particularly the CHAMPS program, got high marks from the student-athletes. Recent enhancements include a one-credit career course is available to student-athletes in their junior or senior year, Job Fair, and career networking events held in conjunction with the College of Letters and Science, the National W (letter winners) Club, and the Wisconsin Alumni Association.

i. Learning assessments

Learning assessments occur as part of the general student body orientation and further assessment is conducted when deemed necessary based upon student-athlete records and conversations with coaches, guidance counselors and sports medicine staff. During the general campus process of orientation of all incoming students, Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration (SOAR), students participate in placement assessment in English, Math, and Foreign Language. In an effort to integrate student-athletes into the campus community, student-athletes fully participate in the campus SOAR program.

Students with documented learning disabilities work jointly with an Office of Academic Services learning specialist and a staff person from the McBurney Disability Resource Center in an effort to ensure that the student is accessing all available campus resources. Students who have not been previously identified as having additional academic needs are preliminarily assessed within the Office of Academic Services, and then, if deemed necessary, a full psycho-educational evaluation is conducted by one of several alternative agencies or professionals.

Specific reading and writing assessments are also conducted for all incoming student-athletes in football, men’s and women’s basketball, and volleyball in the fall of the year, as well as any other student athlete for whom such assessment is deemed useful.

The committee’s interviews with student-athletes and staff members provided ample evidence that these services are adequately provided and are considered valuable by the student-athletes entering the University. It appears that there is a good combination of student-athlete assessment integrated with general campus SOAR activities for all incoming students and additional assessment and support as necessary.

j. Success skills

Student-athlete academic services relating to success skills begin with attention to study skills, note and test taking, grammar and writing skills, and time management. While the academic advisor typically coordinates these services, they also include help from learning

specialists, mentors, and tutors. There are specific criteria employed by mentors and learning specialists to determine the need for extra assistance in these skills. The criteria are noted in the self-study document in section 2.2. Student-athletes are also encouraged to use University resources, such as the Writing Center. In addition, a specific counseling psychology course is offered that prepares student-athletes for what to expect in their campus learning and other environment.

As student-athlete's progress through their tenure on campus they then become involved in the life skills and career development activities that have been discussed in sections (a), (d-e), and (h) above.

The committee's discussions with staff members and student-athletes confirmed that close attention is paid by the Office of Academic Services' staff to make sure that student-athletes have adequate study skills and are provided with additional help in these areas if needed. Several student-athletes mentioned specific examples of additional study skills help they have received by learning specialists, advisors, tutors, or mentors. The student-athletes also were complimentary of the career and life skills provided and several mentioned that there had been an increase in these activities in recent years. The committee feels that the importance of life skills and career assistance, particularly in these difficult economic times, cannot be exaggerated and suggests that these activities for upper class student-athletes be expanded even more.

k. Study hall

All student-athletes are afforded the opportunity to participate in study hall activities, which are typically held in either the McClain or Kohl Fetzer Center locations, several nights a week, and include proctors and supervised study tables. In this past year, eleven teams have elected to require student-athletes on their teams to participate in supervised study table. Student-athletes on some teams are required to log their hours with attendance monitoring provided through the BASIS system reports.

The committee is satisfied that study hall services are sufficiently emphasized by the Office of Academic Services and that coaches, in general, are "on board" with respect to the importance of organized study sessions. It is impressive that coaches in some sports require mandatory participation in study halls and support the log in and report requirements as well. Office of Academic Services staff members, including advisors, learning specialists, and tutors, strongly support organized study sessions; the committee suggests that, given their importance, the Athletic Department emphasize to all coaches that they identify student-athletes who might be in need of more a structured study environment.

l. First year/transfer orientation

There are multiple opportunities for first year and transfer student athletes to become well-prepared for campus life. They include the aforementioned SOAR and two additional programs run by the Office of Academic Services. The first is the New Student Orientation, which is a student-athlete only orientation held 1-2 days prior to the beginning of the school

year. During the orientation, student-athletes are informed of who their Office of Academic Services advisor is, the campus resources available, various presentations which include academic misconduct, a review of important compliance and academically related rules, and a general overview of the Athletic Department. The Office also provides a Life Skills Academy for all first year student-athletes.

To assist with a student-athlete's transition from high school to college, all first-year student-athletes are required to participate in the Life Skills Academy. The Academy consists of six meetings throughout the academic year. Each meeting consists of a lecture from an expert on a selected topic and small group work. Upper-class student-athletes serve as peer leaders and facilitate the small group portion of each meeting.

It is clear to the committee that the Office of Academic Services places strong emphasis on making sure that first year and transfer student-athletes are provided the assistance they need to become well-oriented to campus life and academic expectations.

m. Mentoring

Student-athlete mentoring has become an important part of the overall arsenal of student services offered by the Office of Academic Services. The mentoring program, mentioned in combined sections (d-e) above, assists academically under-prepared student-athletes by pairing students with professionals who assist the student-athletes with defining academic priorities, emphasizing time management skills, and helping promote better organizational skills. Student-athletes identified for the mentoring program meet with their mentor one or two times a week, to discuss study habits and time management, and the student and mentor cover class attendance requirements, competition travel and study requirements, and how to keep track of academic requirements and assignments.

The mentor program is directed by a senior member of the Office of Academic Services and is a resource for those student-athletes who aren't in need of the services of a learning specialist but can benefit from extra assistance.

The committee believes that this mentoring program is a critical component of the overall set of academic services offered to student-athletes. Now that the program has been firmly established, the Athletic Department needs to ensure that the program continues and grows so that it can serve all student-athletes needing the support offered by a mentor.

n. Post eligibility programs

There are a variety of programs available to student-athletes after they exhaust their competitive eligibility, including scholarships, assistantships, and other forms of support. The committee was pleased to find that such support sometimes continues into graduate school and post-graduation opportunities.

One advisor, the Assistant Director of Academic Services, handles all post competition responsibilities. In order for a student-athlete to be considered for post eligibility support,

s/he must apply for exhausted eligibility aid. If approved, the student-athlete is required to work 10 hours per week to an assigned position within the Athletic Department or on campus. Students must complete a weekly work sheet, and their support program is carefully supervised.

SUMMARY:

The committee has undertaken a comprehensive review of the academic support services programs and resources associated with the UW-Madison Athletic Department. The review has encompassed the eight specific areas set forth in our charge, as well as elements of the program relating to relationships between the academic services office and coaches in various sports, relationships between the office and other campus entities such as the registrar's office and individual schools and departments, and issues such as academic conduct and misconduct.

The primary finding of our review is that the academic services program within the Athletic Department at UW-Madison is very strong and much improved over the period since the last certification self-study review in 2000. The program is strong in many ways, including:

- The staff of advisors, tutors, learning specialists, and career/life skills assistance staff are highly professional, through upgraded selection and recruitment.
- The program is well organized, with a formal structure of divisions and reporting relationships.
- Consistency is promoted through guidelines and manuals that govern how the services are provided.
- The staff has a deep commitment to providing skilled and meaningful services to student-athletes.
- The staff members assist rather than hinder the selection of major areas by student-athletes, and there has been an enhancement of career services available to them.
- The introduction of the learning specialist program has been beneficial to student-athletes, in general, and in particular, to at-risk and special needs student-athletes. Learning specialists bring backgrounds in adult education and special education that greatly assist student-athletes' transition to university academics and maintain their academic performance.
- Similarly, the emergence of the mentoring program adds another important component to the overall set of student-athlete services. The committee looks forward to its continuation and growth.

Of particular note is the outstanding leadership provided by the Assistant Athletic Director for Academic Services, Doug Tiedt. There is unanimous acclaim for his organizational skills, skill and experience in academic services, vision, ability to work well with staff inside the office and relationships with other department and campus entities, and commitment to excellence. As an experienced educator and program administrator, Mr. Tiedt is highly respected, both by those who work with and for him, and by those within the Athletic Department and other campus entities with whom he interacts on a frequent basis. Staff in the Academic Services Office recognized Mr. Tiedt for the strong program foundation he has built during his tenure and for his

dedication to staff development. As Mr. Tiedt continues to grow in his position, and given the importance of academic services in enhancing the overall campus experience of student-athletes, the committee believes that consideration should be given to making him a member of the senior management team in the Athletic Department, with a commensurate reporting relationship to the Athletic Director. Involvement of the Director of Academic Services at the senior management level would not only acknowledge Mr. Tiedt's important role in the Athletic Department, but would enhance the visibility of the position of the Director of Academic Services Office and reaffirm the Athletic Department's continued commitment to academic as well as athletic excellence.

As with any such review, the external committee has identified areas that provide opportunities for even more improvements in the academic services offered to student-athletes. Most of the following suggestions reflect the committee's view that the accomplishments and strengths of the academic services program provide a strong foundation for taking it to an even higher level of performance and contribution.

The academic services office and senior staff within the Athletic Department has worked hard to instill in both student-athletes and coaches an appreciation for the importance of academics in the overall campus experience of student-athletes. The committee has seen and heard positive anecdotal evidence that many coaches and other personnel in specific sports have heard the message and have internalized it in their programs. The Athletic Department should build on these positive efforts to reinforce this message and ensure that it is carried consistently throughout all sports.

The services to student-athletes appears to be particularly strong at the entry point of their campus experience, and major improvements have been made to strengthen those services at the exit point—graduation and departure from campus—as well. The academic services office should extend these accomplishments by focusing more, as well, on the coordination of its services with those of the advising assistance offered by departments and schools on the UW-Madison campus. Making the handoff in advising to the departments is never an easy task, but more coordination in this area will further enhance the student-athlete experience on campus.

The external committee notes that both the Office of Academic Services and the Athletic Department have taken important steps to address the importance of appropriate academic conduct and the costs of misconduct. Beginning with the fall semester of 2008-09, representatives of the Office of the Dean of Students have participated in team meetings for every sport to advise student-athletes on the importance and ramifications of compliance and misconduct. Multiple coaches, and in many instances head coaches, have attended these meetings and reinforced the importance of academics by their presence. As mentors and teachers, it is important for coaches to uniformly support academic performance among their student-athletes. The positive reinforcement by coaches of the importance of academics sends a strong supportive message to student-athletes. Given the magnitude of the academic misconduct problem across campuses generally—throughout the country and certainly not restricted to athletic programs—the external committee (a) encourages the Athletic Department to continue this emphasis through education programs, and (b) encourages the Office of Academic Services to provide continuing guidance to tutors and other staff members on acceptable and unacceptable

practices, including affirmative steps to take when necessary. The message that the UW-Madison community will not tolerate academic misconduct should be conveyed to all students, including student-athletes, throughout their academic and athletic careers at the UW-Madison.

The external committee also is pleased that both the Office of Academic Services and the Athletic Department—as well as the Athletic Board—have maintained a focus on directed studies (independent study) courses. Here, as well, a continued program of education and oversight will be useful to ensure that this practice—which can provide a useful academic experience for student-athletes and non-athletes alike—is not abused.

One final note is in order, particularly in consideration of the difficult financial times facing campuses in general, including Athletic Departments. The accomplishments of the UW-Madison academic services program are impressive, as highlighted in this report. The external committee appreciatively takes note of the fact that these accomplishments have been the result of a solid, sustained commitment on the part of the Athletic Department to promote the academic performance and experience of student-athletes as part of their overall campus experience. In this period of increased financial scrutiny and potential cutbacks, it will be critical that the Athletic Department maintain its unqualified support for academic services; the highly committed student-athletes deserve no less.