

Annual report to Academic Council (2024-2025)

A. Introductory information

Established in 1907, the Athletic Council has been “reconstituted” on several occasions, mostly recently by a resolution adopted by the Board of Trustees on February 24, 2007 for the 100th anniversary. As per the Athletic Policy Manual, the Council’s remit includes the following: promoting an understanding of intercollegiate athletics amongst members of the Duke community; promoting the adoption and maintenance of strict academic standards at Duke and in the ACC; providing general oversight of the athletic budget; and, monitoring compliance with Title IX and pertinent federal regulations. These themes are reflected in the Council’s recent activities, as described below.

The Council is composed of the following: faculty members (7); administrators (5); students (7); alumni (3); trustees (2); and, various *ex-officio* members. The President chooses the Chair, who serves a three-year term. Current faculty members are: *Lee Baker (Vice-Chair, Trinity); Leslie Babinski (Sanford); Kendall Bradley (Orthopaedic surgery); Mine Çetinkaya-Rundel (Trinity); *Doriane Coleman (Law); David McAdams (Fuqua); *Andrew Janiak, Chair (Trinity); and, Linda Franzoni (Pratt), who serves *ex-officio* as Duke’s Faculty Athletics Representative [*denotes membership on Executive Committee—see below]. The entire roster can be found [here](#).

The Council has three sub-groupings: the executive, compliance and academic committees, each with its own focus and membership. The full Council meets once each semester; the committees meet periodically.

In addition to the statutory or traditional meetings of the Council and of its various committees, described in depth below, over the past three years Chair

Janiak adopted the theme of increasing communication between Athletics and the rest of the University, and also amongst the members of the Council. Last year's report provided examples of the former goal. As for the latter goal, the faculty members on the Council—who constitute its academic committee—agreed to increase our communication with its student members, and with student-athletes at the University more generally. With that aim in mind, we held a number of extra meetings this year. At those meetings, we learned of a wide range of student-athlete concerns and suggestions; we are continuing to follow-up on several of those issues now and will monitor them in the future.

B. Executive committee

In addition to the faculty members noted above (see *), this committee is comprised of the following members: Executive Vice-President Daniel Ennis, Deputy General Counsel Christopher Lott, Interim Dean of Academic Affairs Deborah Reisinger (Trinity), Margo Riddle (Alumni), Ann Pelham (Trustee), Grace Norair (Student Athlete Advisory), Faculty Athletic Representative Linda Franzoni and Secretary to the Board of Trustees Margaret Epps (the latter two members are *ex-officio*). The committee meets with the President, Provost, and senior leadership in the Athletics Department to determine agenda items for the two annual Council meetings.

The executive committee met on 8 November 2024 and identified the following themes for discussion this year: Duke's approach to administering its compliance with the anticipated ruling in the *House vs. NCAA* case and its handling of related NIL issues (see below for details); updates from the Presidential Working Group on Student-Athletes Success; and, the perennial issue of the Athletics budget. These items were placed on the agendas of the full Council. As in the past, the executive committee agreed that data and informational materials will be shared with Council members in advance as much as possible so that substantive discussion can ensue. The significant progress made toward that goal last year continued apace this year.

C. Academic committee

Late in the Fall, EVP Ennis and President Price formed an *ad hoc* committee with members from the Athletic Council and UPC to make recommendations concerning the changing financial environment of intercollegiate athletics, with special emphasis on the impending implementation of the settlement of the *House* case. Professors Baker, Coleman and Janiak served on the *ad hoc* committee. The committee issued its recommendations in the Spring semester to EVP Ennis and President Price, who then shared them with ECAC.

The academic committee comprises faculty members on the Council. It reviews data and anecdotal information pertaining to the academic experience of all student-athletes, discusses admissions procedures with Dean Guttentag, and assesses the extent to which student-athletes have academic experiences that parallel those of the general population at the University.

The committee met with Dean of Admissions Guttentag for a lively and wide-ranging discussion on November 7th, 2024. Duke remains “test optional” for undergraduate admissions, so we did not review standardized test scores (ACT and SAT) this cycle. We discussed the following topics: the admissions process for all students; how Duke compares to its peer institutions along various dimensions; and, whether Duke might remain test optional in the future. Dean Guttentag explained in depth how student-athletes are recruited and how that process intersects with the admissions procedures of the University. All final decisions are made by the Admissions office. We also discussed the practice—established by a Provost-level rule roughly two decades ago—of allowing a small number of student-athletes to enroll at Duke in January each year. We continued studying that topic in late 2024 and into the Spring semester of 2025. We are grateful to Dean Guttentag for meeting with us a second time—on January 30th, 2025—to continue discussing various issues, including the January matriculation of some student-athletes. Since those students miss the traditional orientation week held each Fall, the faculty recommended that they be invited to orientation activities in the August following their matriculation.

As is traditional, the committee met in the Spring (on March 26th, 2025) with representatives from Trinity College, including Interim Dean Deborah Reisinger

and Drs. Jennifer Hill and Alessandra Dinn. The committee was *very* appreciative of the fact that for the third year in a row, we received extensive data well in advance of our conversation. This cycle, in addition to discussing data covering majors of student-athletes as compared with the general student population, we also delved into further details, e.g., why student-athletes are more likely than others to choose a “BA” rather than a “BS” version of their major. One reason may be that the latter versions of several majors require completion of prerequisites external to the major. It was agreed that, other things equal, it would be beneficial for our students if we could avoid conflicts between practice schedules and large introductory courses that feed into popular majors or that serve as external prerequisites for the latter. Apparently, the Economics Department is working on that issue presently. We noted that student-athletes are less likely than other students to choose a STEM major, with very few choosing majors in Pratt Engineering. In tandem, student-athletes are more likely than others to choose Sociology as a major, a trend noticed in previous years, although it must be noted that the overall numbers are small.

Faculty also participate with Athletics staff in student-athlete exit interviews conducted for graduating seniors. These interviews last a full hour and involve a range of questions concerning each interviewees’ experiences as student-athletes. They are valuable sources of information for the faculty.

D. Compliance oversight committee

This committee is chaired by the Faculty Athletic Representative, Professor Linda Franzoni (Pratt). It discusses new and pending NCAA regulations, along with related matters. It also reviews any recent potential violations of NCAA regulations that have occurred at Duke. It meets at least once per semester. Our fall meeting occurred on 13 December 2024; the Spring meeting will be too late to be reflected in this report. At the fall meeting, we learned that for the first time since the 1960s, there will no longer be any “national letters of intent” for athletes; instead, students will sign financial aid, scholarship, or athletic agreements. We also learned about current guidelines concerning permissible

NIL-related activities, along with the fact that the vast majority of Duke student-athletes do not have NIL agents (a handful apparently do have such agents). We also received our regular update of all violations of NCAA regulations that have occurred at Duke during the past cycle.

E. The Athletic Council

The full Council held its annual Fall meeting on November 18th, 2024. President Price opened the meeting with remarks about Duke and the ever-changing landscape of intercollegiate athletics. We then heard a presentation by Grace Norair from the Student Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC), which led to an intriguing discussion. She proposed a novel points system for students—and perhaps faculty—who attend athletic events, something other institutions have developed to encourage attendance. We also learned about the new climate team in the Athletics Department, which has recently implemented several net-zero games and has future plans to reduce the Department’s carbon footprint. The Council then held a long and intricate discussion of the legal landscape, including *House vs. NCAA*, whose settlement *requires* universities to provide missed payments for NIL use for *former* student-athletes (subject to a statute of limitations) and *allows* them to make NIL payments directly to *current* student-athletes. *House* also induces a shift from scholarship limits to roster limits, thereby allowing universities to increase their total number of athletic scholarships. Financially, revenue sharing through direct NIL payments would be capped at roughly \$20M/year and an increase in scholarships could cost several million dollars annually. *House* also allows continuing independent NIL deals involving student-athletes, subject to monitoring by a court-appointed third party (likely, Deloitte). Despite its decreased national role, the NCAA will continue to run athletic competitions and to determine the academic eligibility of student athletes. Finally, the Council was introduced to the new Rowing coach, Adrian Spracklen, who provided us with a wide-ranging discussion of his choice to move to Duke.

At the annual Spring meeting of the Council, held on April 23th, 2025, we

conducted our annual review of the Athletics Budget in a wide-ranging discussion led by the C.F.O. of Athletics, Erica Aresco. Athletics continues to face budgetary challenges, with revenue still growing at a slower pace than expenses and a continuing budget deficit (~\$5.6M) projected for next fiscal year. The C.F.O. and her colleagues are presently working on a long-range Athletics financial plan that will be presented to the Council in the future. The Council also heard an extensive update on Duke's fundraising campaign led by Jordan Whitley-McCauley, Director of Strategic Initiatives. One major focus of the campaign will be on establishing new endowments for staff positions to relieve pressure on the Athletics budget. We also learned that the *House* settlement may soon receive final approval from the Federal judge overseeing it (see above for its pertinent financial implications). The Council then heard an update on the recommendations from the 2023 Presidential Working Group on Student-Athlete Success. In addition to various topics, we learned that some departments (e.g., Economics) have adopted the recommendation from the Group that basic introductory classes be staggered to meet at different times in the Fall and Spring, thereby reducing potential conflicts with athletic schedules. The meeting ended on a high note, with Grace Norair, head of the Student Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC), providing the Council with a comprehensive overview of the many programs and activities that SAAC sponsors each year. Finally, we met the new coach of Women's Soccer, Kieran Hall, who recently took over the hugely successful program from long-term coach Robbie Church. He explained his excitement at having the chance to lead the storied program.

Respectfully submitted

Andrew Janiak, Chair

25 April 2025