

Grinnell College

Phase I (Part a): Members of the Physical Education Committee and administrators from the Athletic Department met with Dean Paula Smith to generate questions to be posed to the three academic divisions, members of the Physical Education Department, and the Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC). The group reconvened in early June to summarize the responses from these groups and to draft questions to be asked of representatives of Student Affairs and Admission prior to the ACM Deans' Meeting.

Members of Grinnell College working on the FaCE Project in Phase I:

- Professor Paula Smith, Academic Dean of the College
- Associate Professor Elaine Marzluff, Chemistry and Faculty Athletic Representative
- Associate Professor Gail Bonath, Library and elected faculty member of the Physical Education Committee
- Associate Professor Greg Wallace, Director of Athletics and Wellness
- Associate Professor Andrew Hamilton, Physical Education and Assistant Director of Athletics
- Assistant Professor Heather Benning, Physical Education and Assistant Director of Athletics
- Alec Moore, Student

Summary of Responses

1. In considering ways in which athletics and academics are integrated on Grinnell's campus, are there examples in this division of courses with subject content or methods/skills related somehow to athletics?

Responses from students and faculty were very similar; Students appreciated that there were opportunities in the curriculum for them to consider the role of sports in an academic context.

Examples of ways in which athletics and academics were articulated as being integrated at Grinnell College:

- Integration of athletic themes into actual courses curricula
 - Humanities 101 – Homeric values on athletic competition as a ritual to rebuild community and achieve resolution to internal rivalries were taught through readings and discussions of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*
 - Dance – Athletes in movement for performance, bodily movements. The dance instructor choreographed a piece for men's cross country runners and women's sprinters
 - Political Science – Section on the dynamics of international sporting events and how they affect politics
- Integration of athletic themes through courses assignments (Autonomous student selection)
 - Statistics – using basketball and baseball statistics for class analysis assignments
 - Education – examining US educational policy: differences between DI and DIII athletics

- History of 19th Century – exploring US popular culture: examination of sport figures
 - Mentored Advanced Project (MAP)
 - MAP on baseball
 - MAP on the history of running
 - MAP on adolescent stress reaction to exercise intensity
 - MAP on applying baseball statistics to questions of politics (candidate evaluation)
 - Regularized credit-bearing physical education courses (non-major)
 - Academic courses (4-credit): Sport psychology, Organization & Administration of Athletics, Coaching Methods, Outdoor Leadership, Athletic Training
 - Wellness courses (.5-1 credit): Aerobics, Beginning Swimming, Floor Hockey, Indoor Soccer, Power Walking, Tennis, Racquetball, Volleyball, etc.
- 2. DIVISION QUESTION: In your role as an advisor, what level of importance do you place on learning not only about your advisees' academic interests but also their co-curricular involvement?**
- Do you know which of your advisees/students are involved in athletics? Do you talk with them about their athletic experiences when you hold advising sessions? How well do they seem to balance these different parts of their life?**
- Responses were mixed among and within the Divisions: Some professors inquire about co-curricular demands while advising, others don't address athletics or other co-curricular demands (music, theatre, work study, etc.) at all
 - Nobody saw co-curricular engagement as an independent component of advising
 - *This is clearly an area that we may want to examine further as we think about the role of advising and consideration of the "whole student" which can include their athletic involvement*
- 3. SAAC & DEPT. OF PHYS. EDUC. QUESTION: Consider also the overall campus climate as it concerns academics and athletics integration.**
- What are the most positive starting points upon which to build better integration of athletics and academics on your campus? What are the most potent barriers to better integration of athletics and academics on your campus? Is there general agreement about the value of integration?**

Student Responses

- Students expressed feeling "stuck in the middle" between expectations of their professors and those of their coaches; expressed a desire for a better understanding between the two groups about missed class/missed practice/missed competition
- Lack of common understanding among professors about what policy or procedure is for missing class for an athletic event; need for professors to be specific about absence policy as it relates to varsity athletic participation
- Student perception that athletes in high visibility sports (football, baseball and basketball) are treated differently than athletes in those sports that are less visible by

the faculty

- Some sports require athletes to miss more class than other sports
- Students feel very strongly that they do not want extra “things” (e.g. joint readings, research presentations/sharing) added to their athletic trips

Physical Education Department Responses

- Recognition of how our department feels well-supported by the current President
- Appreciation and value of head coaches’ roles as full-time teaching faculty
- Identification of departmental involvement on a variety of campus committees (e.g. Benefits Committee, Committee on Student Life, Budget Steering Committee, etc.)
- Desire to build on guest coach program; work toward having a faculty advisor for each team
- Recognition of need for dialogue about scheduling conflicts (i.e. when science labs run past 4:05 and student-athletes have practice or a competition)

4. What would “integrating academics and athletics” look like at Grinnell College?

Could some of the material you are teaching in your classes potentially tie-in with athletic events and programs? Could your students use some part of the athletic curriculum, facilities, faculty, or events as a learning resource?

Where are some of the campus and community settings in which you have interactions with the P.E. faculty and other athletics staff? Are there ways in which these engagements can be enhanced to achieve a well-integrated experience for members of our community?

- Sentiment that integration (or awareness thereof) is important but there is merit to allowing individuals to stand on their own strengths
- Recognition that advising and mentoring should take into account the “whole student” and consequently discussions should take place about co-curricular involvement and/or demands
- Continuance of process that requires faculty to approve the athletic schedules
- Sponsorship of Faculty Summer Workshop that looks at topics such as Advising & Wellness or Integration of Athletics on a Liberal Arts Campus
- Desire for sharing spaces (art and theatre department)
- Continued dialogue about expectations for and consequences of absences from class due to athletic contest; students expressed that policies are inconsistent; compose sample language faculty could use for syllabi about policies for athletic absences, much like there is sample language for other things; include as talking point for new faculty orientation
- Visibility of faculty at athletic events (student-athletes appreciate faculty showing their support)
- Incorporation of sport into more courses (e.g. economics of sport, sport across cultures, sociology of sport) and support of junior faculty energy to creatively think about course topics
- Taking advantage of Faculty-to-Faculty advising program

- Physical Education professors partnering with tutorial professors to teach courses

Phase I (Part b): Members of the PE Committee met with representatives from Student Affairs. In attendance were the VP for Student Affairs, the Dean for Academic Support and Advising, and the Dean of Students. Below are the notes from the meeting.

Residential Integration:

- 95% of college is residential
- There is no athlete-specific housing
- Some attention to student-athlete residence is considered in residence life coordinator placements

Departmental Interaction:

- A member of the physical education faculty attends the weekly students of concern meeting held by Student Affairs.
- A member of the physical education faculty attends the bi-weekly meeting to discuss students who are of academic concern
- Last fall the VP for Student Affairs and the Dean of Students met with the members of the physical education department to discuss alcohol culture; the wellness coordinator is on the Student Affairs' Alcohol Task Force
- Student Affairs feels they have a much stronger relationship with Athletics than ever before. Their staff reaches out to coaches on issues and they are trying to be pro-active rather than reactive. Student Affairs feels a bridge has been built to Athletics and they would like to make that bridge wider and stronger

Student Affairs Role in Academic Monitoring, Progress & Advising as it Relates to Athletes:

- The best advising is when faculty advisors see the entire student and consider that in their advising; Student athletes need to carefully consider their course load.; Student athletes need to carefully consider their course load.
- Discussion ensued about the missed classes issue and the discrepancy between the coaches understanding that the faculty approval of the sports schedule means class absences are approved, and the principle of the autonomy of faculty in the classroom.
- Requests for special tutoring sessions of athletes have been made; response has been limited due to the fact that there are already so many academic support services in place.
- Suggestion that GPAs of athletes be shared with the coaching staff each semester

New Student Orientation and the Student-Athlete

- Student Affairs is considering some sort of orientation for new student athletes who arrive early in the fall. Without some interaction with Student Affairs, these new students are being acculturated into a particular sub-culture of the college which may not be representative of the college as a whole.
- Student Affairs has involved upper class student athletes (football, men's & women's soccer) in the move-in process with new students since they are on campus
- Another idea was taking advantage of team captains in doing intentional leadership development

Wellness

- Student Affairs feels their more successful programs are those where they have partnered with the wellness coordinator.

- Some athletes' wellness is a pendulum from being extremely fit and wellness-conscious in-season to substance abuse, sleep deprivation and eating disorders out-of-season.

Phase I (Part c): Questions and responses from Dean of Admission and Financial Aid.

Athletic participation – recruitment and application decision

- *What role does/ should athletic participation play in the recruitment and application decision for student-athletes?*
 - We strive to recruit and enroll an academically able, talented and diverse student body and athletic skill and potential is one of the traits we seek to include in the incoming class.
 - In order to field successful teams we have certain enrollment goals to bring in a minimum number of scholar-athletes which will afford our teams the opportunity to realistically compete against other teams.
- *Does the value of concepts taught through athletic involvement get communicated in the recruiting process?*
 - Given Grinnell's emphasis on active education and participation, an apprenticeship model, and close student-faculty interaction, there are powerful parallels to draw between what it takes to be a great athlete and what it takes to be a successful student at Grinnell. Each inform the other.
- *How does athletic involvement affect (positively/negatively) student success?*
 - Successful scholar-athletes must also be good time managers, understand how to set and achieve goals, understand the value of mentoring, understand the transformative power of practice, are surrounded by peers in a challenging and supportive environment, and learn how to manage defeat or disappointment and ultimately succeed.
 - On the negative side there may be over reliance on one's teammates at the expense of developing bonds with other students. The time commitment of athletic involvement may also curtail branching out into other pursuits offered at the college.