Annual report of the Tufts University AS&E Faculty Committee on Athletics

This was a busy and exciting year for the Athletics Committee, since we were involved in two major activities: first, the selection of a new Athletics Director, and second, evaluation of the Provost's proposal to change the reporting lines for the Athletics Department.

The committee requested from the Provost that it be involved in the selection process for a new Director of Athletics. One member of the committee, Thomas Downes, was appointed a member of the search committee. Our committee also participated in a videoconference with the outside search firm that was coordinating the search, and was thereby able to contribute its sense of the qualities desirable in a new Athletics Director. And we were able to meet with one of the finalists (according to the Provost, it was not possible for us to meet with the other finalists because of confidentiality surrounding their visits). Finally, the committee chair had a fruitful discussion with the incoming Athletics Director, John Morris, once he had been chosen.

Athletics was one of five areas targeted by the Provost in his plan to reorganize reporting lines. The AS&E faculty insisted that the appropriate faculty committee look into each element of the plan. Accordingly, the Athletics Committee held several meetings in the fall semester at which we interviewed relevant members of the Administration and Athletics Department and endeavored to figure out the ramifications of several different reporting models. After making a preliminary report to the AS&E faculty on December 3, our committee was under considerable pressure to come in quickly with a recommendation, since, as the Provost insisted, the search for a new Athletics Director was in high gear and the candidates wanted to know to whom they would be reporting. Our committee had a difficult time discerning the financial implications of the several reporting models, and in the end, we came in with a recommendation that the Athletics Director report to the Dean of Arts and Sciences, with a dotted line report to the Dean of Engineering, since we were persuaded of the importance of strong lines of communication between the Athletics Department, the academic deans, and Student Services. Because of the time pressure, this component of the reorganization plan was considered separately from the other components, even though we felt that all the components were connected and should be considered together. At a meeting February 4, the faculty present voted to have Athletics report to the Provost's office. While this had not been the recommendation of the committee, we were reasonably comfortable with the decision because it seemed to be what the Athletics Department itself preferred.
After such a busy fall semester, the committee met only once near the end of spring semester (April 24). At this meeting we heard outgoing Athletics Director Bill Gehling’s thoughts on the future of the athletics program at Tufts, and talked to representatives from the Student Athlete Advisory Council about their proposal for a faculty mentor program for athletic teams. We also generated the following set of issues to work on next academic year:

§ In light of the fact that Athletics now reports to the Provost, draft bylaw changes to include the Provost or his designate as an ex officio member of the committee (and perhaps also the Deans of A&S and E or their designates). Also consider whether the student representatives to the committee should come from the Student Athlete Advisory Council rather than, or in addition to, the TCU Senate. Such bylaw changes would need to be taken, via the Executive Committee, to the floor of the faculty for approval.

§ Create a strong working relationship with the new Athletics Director.

§ Work with the Student Athlete Advisory Council on creating a faculty mentor program for the various teams. This will include such matters as the selection process, responsibilities of faculty mentors, and mechanisms for crediting this form of service.

§ Select a faculty representative to the NCAA

§ Meet with the Provost to discuss mechanisms for ensuring that Athletics continues to have strong connections to the Deans of A&S and Engineering and to Student Services (this was one of our major concerns about changing the reporting structure).

§ Set up a Dashboard to collect information annually about the academic and extracurricular activities of student-athletes, in order to better understand the overall impacts of participation in athletics and to detect trends and their meaning over time.

§ Consider whether club sports should be under the jurisdiction of the Office of Student Life or the Athletics Department.
On behalf of the Committee on Athletics,

Steven Hirsch, Classics, Chair

Behrouz Abedian, Mechanical Engineering
Thomas Downes, Economics
Mary Glaser, Mathematics
Kelly Greenhill, Political Science
Danilo Marchesini, Physics and Astronomy
Cristian Staii, Physics and Astronomy

Bill Gehling, Athletics
Branwen Smith-King, Athletics
Bruce Reitman, Student Services
Patricia Reilly, Financial Aid

Evan Cover, TCU Senate
Mary Maccabee, TCU Senate