REPORT TO THE AS&E FACULTY BY THE ATHLETICS COMMITTEE REGARDING THE PROVOST’S REORGANIZATION PLAN

The Athletics Committee met four times this semester. The first meeting was organizational and directed at the first iteration of the Provost's reorganization plan. The second meeting was concerned with the imminent search for a new Athletic Director. The third and fourth meetings were devoted to a review of the most recent version of the Provost’s reorganization plan.

The Athletics Committee’s review of the Provost’s reorganization plan as it involves Athletics, has been something of a moving target. The original September proposal was that the Athletic Director (AD) report to a new position of university-wide Vice-President of Student Services; the October 4th revised proposal stipulated that the AD report to the Dean of Undergraduate Education, Student Affairs, and Student Services in Dowling Hall. Provost David Harris and Vice Provost Kevin Dunn met with our committee Monday, November 12th, and made their case for the AD reporting directly to the Provost. This is the proposal now on the table. We then talked to Dean of Undergraduate Education, Student Affairs, and Student Services John Barker and Paul Stanton. Tuesday, November 25th we met with Dean of Arts and Sciences Jim Glaser and Dean of Engineering Linda Abriola, as well as the Athletic Director, Bill Gehling, then formulated several questions to which all committee members were invited to respond in writing.

What follows is a compilation of those responses. We did not try to reach a consensus recommendation, thinking it would be of greater utility to the faculty to lay out the pros and cons of the six different reporting models that have been discussed. If the faculty would like the committee to make a concrete recommendation, we will need more time to discuss these issues.

The six reporting models are as follows:

1) the AD reports to theProvost
2) the AD has a solid reporting line to the Dean of Arts and Sciences and a dotted line to the Dean of Engineering
3) the AD has a solid reporting line to both the Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Dean of Engineering
4) the AD reports to the Dean of Student Services
5) the AD reports to the Dean of Arts and Sciences (the current structure)
6) the AD reports to the (currently nonexistent) university-wide Vice President for Student Services
The last two models are, for all practical purposes, off the table. There was a consensus on the committee that the current structure, in which the AD reports solely to the Dean of Arts and Sciences, is unsatisfactory because it excludes the School of Engineering altogether, even though there are many engineer-athletes. A university-wide Vice President for Student Services is, presumably, not a viable option, given the strong initial faculty resistance to the creation of a new administrative position. However, several members of the committee saw various benefits to this approach. This is the structure at many peer schools, and it has the advantages of giving Athletics more visibility across the institution by reporting to a high-level administrator who, at the same time, is primarily concerned with student services and activities.

The questions posed to the committee members were:

1) What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the Provost's plan to have the Athletic Department report directly to the Provost's Office?

2) What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the several other possible reporting models: a) Athletics reporting with a solid line to the Dean of Arts and Sciences and a dotted line to the Dean of Engineering; b) Athletics reporting with a solid line to both the Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Dean of Engineering; c) Athletics reporting to the Dean of Student Services?

3) Which of these four models do you see as the best arrangement, and why?

Before laying out the aggregated responses of committee members, it should be said that we do not have a very clear sense of how the budget for Athletics is currently constructed, nor how this would work under any of the models under consideration, which necessarily impedes our ability to judge the efficacy of any given arrangement. It should also be said that we were made aware that the personalities and predilections of administrators often play an important role, and that the Athletic Department is best served when the administrator to whom they report has a good working relationship with the Athletic Director and a commitment to the value of athletics as part of the college experience. Given that the identity of the relevant administrators is bound to change over time, we confine ourselves to looking at structural aspects, but we want to stress the importance of good communication to the success and well-being of Athletics within the larger university structure.

If the AD reports to the Provost
STRENGTHS:

Tufts would have a reporting structure similar to other peer institutions. Tufts is more complex than our peers, and the Athletic Department should embrace both A&S and Engineering. Having the Athletic Department reporting directly to an entity above both schools guarantees evenhandedness between the schools.

Reporting to the Provost may increase the visibility and importance of Athletics to the university as a whole, alums, and the outside world. This places the AD closer to the President, who has the ear of alumni and ultimate responsibility for athletics in the eyes of the NCAA. The higher-level report may also help with recruiting the AD now and in the future.

Athletics could benefit from this structure from a financial perspective. It’s likely to involve the AD more directly in budget and development discussions. It may provide a more appropriate structure for fundraising activities. According to the job description, the new AD will be involved more with the Development office, and outgoing AD Gehling will be working on this inside Development.

WEAKNESSES:

Given that the Athletic Department has relatively little to do with the other schools and primarily serves the two undergraduate schools, A&S and E, the interaction of athletics with academic and other aspects of student life might be weaker due to the higher-up reporting structure. The Provost would be less likely to help with smaller issues that the Athletic Department currently turns to the Deans to mediate, such as student-athletes caught between academic and athletic obligations. This option might weaken the existing strong working relationship between the AD and the academic deans. Those who deal with Athletics on a routine basis have universally noted the importance of regular school-level interactions and communications between the AD, the Deans, Student Affairs, etc. What structures would be put in place to institutionalize and regularize these interactions should the reporting line go directly to the Provost?

Concerns about whether the Provost’s Office should be setting the priorities for spending at the school level, when the schools have to pay for these decisions. There is a lack of clarity about how the budget will be created and what that means to the schools. What level of budgetary control, if any, would remain with the Deans of A&S and E?
Concern that the higher the position the AD reports to, the less freedom the AD might have in making decisions, and the more susceptible the Athletic Department might be to pressure, coming from trustees, alums, etc., in the making of certain decisions, like hiring or changing coaches.

**If the AD has a solid reporting line to the Dean of Arts and Sciences and a dotted line to the Dean of Engineering**

**STRENGTHS:**

As compared to the current system, this would give Engineering a voice. Regular meetings and consultations between both Deans, the AD and Student Affairs would be necessary and appropriate.

**WEAKNESSES:**

There should be equal balance between the Schools of A&S and Engineering. It is not clear how the Dean of Engineering could enforce policy or be represented at the decision-making level.

**If the AD has a solid reporting line to both the Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Dean of Engineering**

**STRENGTHS**

The deans can share authority and prioritize activities; both A&S and Engineering have equal representation. The current deans of A&S and E feel that they can work well together. If there were disagreements, they could be mediated by the Provost.

**WEAKNESSES**

Two solid line reports to people of equal rank is a difficult reporting structure, creating the possibility of conflict. It would be time-consuming for the AD. It might also look unattractive to a candidate applying for the AD position.
If the AD reports to the Dean of Student Services

STRENGTHS:

The Dean of Student Services is closer to student and academic life than the Provost. It’s important for Athletics to have good lines of communication with Dowling.

WEAKNESSES:

Concern that this position is too low in the organizational structure. It is not clear to the committee how the Dean of Student Services reports to the academic deans or provost, and therefore what his/her role would be in decisions about budgetary allocations and policy decisions.

Academic oversight on the AD should be a requirement, because of the importance of coordinating the relationship of athletics to academics, yet in the current configuration of Dowling the Dean is not an academic.

Best Model

Members of the committee were split in their preferences. Some representative quotes:

“I think reporting directly to the provost or reporting to both deans with solid lines are the best (and equally good) arrangements. In each of these two models strengths outweigh weaknesses.”

“Best arrangement in my opinion: report to the Provost if they truly have time with dotted line to Deans of A&S and Engineering.”
“I weakly prefer the Provost's plan, primarily because it aligns Tufts with our peers. I think academic considerations may get more weight if 2(a) is chosen, but I also think that Athletics is more likely to be short-changed on budget under that arrangement.”

“My preference would probably be for Athletics reporting with a solid line to both the Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Dean of Engineering.”

“Athletics reporting with a solid line to the Dean of Arts and Sciences and a dotted line to the Dean of Engineering.”

“I think the best is for there to be a new position in the Provost's Office or elsewhere if more appropriate of something like "Vice President for Student Development" to which Athletics (and the other components in the Provost's proposal) would report.”

In sum, because each model has both strengths and weaknesses, it’s hard to calculate which approach will bring the greatest benefits. Simply put, having the AD report to the Provost brings greater visibility to Athletics and, perhaps, a bit more leverage in discussions of resource allocation. Having the AD report to the Deans of A&S and E, in either of the two configurations, probably ensures better day-to-day communication and collaboration.

Submitted on behalf of the Athletics Committee,

Steven Hirsch, Chair