

Standards for Safeguarding Institutional Governance of Intercollegiate Athletics at Michigan State University

Report to the Faculty Senate

Dr. Sue Carter, J.D.
Faculty Athletic Representative
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Last fall, the Big Ten asked its member institutions to share their policies and procedures that are designed to ensure that the core principles of intercollegiate athletics are properly aligned with the overall educational mission at each university.

The goal, simply stated, was to make sure that the 14 Big Ten universities were doing what they said they were committed to with respect to the governance of athletics and the lives of student-athletes. The Big Ten itself has adopted conference standards for integrity in intercollegiate athletics.

The request gave Michigan State, and the other universities, an opportunity to look at current policies and procedures. Going forward, it will also provide the opportunity to look at each others' best practices. Additionally, it lets the Big Ten Office of the

Commissioner know how conference members operate when it comes to safeguarding institutional governance of intercollegiate athletics.

At Michigan State, a committee that included the Athletics Director, the General Counsel, the Associate Athletics Directors of Compliance and Student Athlete Support Services, the Board Secretary and me met and gathered in the practices and documents that underscore Michigan State's commitment to aligning core athletic principles with our educational mission.

I note that the Big Ten action was motivated, in part, by actions of some of the universities in the conference that had not always demonstrated proper institutional control.

These were the areas the Big Ten wanted us to report on – and we drew upon our policies and practices that we have in place. The specifics:

1. We noted Michigan State University's commitment to help student-athletes, along with all students, achieve excellence and life success. Bottom line: the same standards that apply to the general student population are equally applicable to student-athletes.

2. The University's organizational structure – it was delineated from the Board of Trustees forward.
3. The roles and authority of the President, the Athletics Director, and others with athletic responsibilities were outlined.
4. Operational standards for athletes including Student Athlete Support Services – and the dual reporting lines to athletics and the Provost – explained.
5. All were asked, and we described how we handle academic issues for all students, not just student-athletes. Further - student disciplinary codes and rules, are applicable to all. There is no separate code for student-athletes.
6. The standards include information as to when there are University, conference, or NCAA violations.
7. Our admission policies – all students enter Michigan State University through the gateway of the Office of Admissions.
8. The Big Ten asked for team policies. Among others, we pointed to our Student-Athlete Drug Education and Testing Policy. The committee that oversees the education and testing is chaired by Athletic Council member, Dr. Beth Alexander.

9. Medical treatment of student-athletes, including inappropriate influence on the staff by coaching staff – here we establish barriers through the Division of Sports Medicine and Performance, and a staff that does not report to coaches.

10. Ways in which people inside athletics and out can relay their concerns – to the Office of Compliance that shares reports with the Vice President for Legal Affairs.

11. Annual reviews, led by the Faculty Athletic Representative, and internal audits.

At the end of the day, it was an important exercise in drawing together practices and standards we currently have into one document.

The values of this process? We were able to:

- * underscore our own core principles regarding athletics and academics

- * the way we conduct affairs reminds us of the relationships among the units in the University

- * highlight the current policies and practices that are in place

I will tell you that, as Faculty Athletic Representative, I came away with an appreciation of the levels of accountability at Michigan

State University. Ethics and oversight are strong underpinnings of athletics - and academics - at this University.