January 30, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: President Lou Anna K. Simon
Ron Mason, Athletic Director
Michael Kasavana, Chairperson, Athletic Council
Athletic Council Members

FROM: The Executive Committee of Academic Council

SUBJECT: Athletics and Athletic Council Procedures

We are pleased to have the opportunity to meet with you at our Executive Committee meeting on February 7, 2006. First, let us outline what we understand as the context for this meeting; then provide some suggestive questions to begin our discussion and then some goals for the outcome of the meeting.

The Context for the Meeting

The Executive Committee of the Academic Council is comprised of the chairs of the Council’s Standing Committees, representatives from COGS and ASMSU, and four At-Large Faculty members. It meets monthly with the Provost and members of the Provost’s staff. Among its regular agenda items are discussion of the processes and policies of the various Standing Committees and how those Committees, and the University at large, is responding to concerns of the University community. Thus, its members are well aware of what goes on within the various Standing Committees.

On the other hand, given this structure, there is little contact between the University governance system and the Athletic Council. The ECAC has little knowledge of what the Athletic Council does, how it operates and how it responds to concerns of members of the University community. The annual report to the Academic Council by the Athletic Council Chairperson can only provide the barest of insights. Little discussion ever follows it. Some additional information can be inferred from the University Bylaws and the Athletic Council’s website (www.msuathleticcouncil.org), especially from the names of the subcommittees and some of the resource material available to Council members. Still we are in a quandary about the dynamics of the Council and assume that Athletic Council members might also wonder about things going on in the Governance system that might be relevant to them.
Suggestive Questions

So we would like to start there: Are there any actions that have been taken by the Academic governance system that Athletic Council members wished they had known more about earlier or been more involved in? Are there issues where the Athletic Council would be better served if it were more intimately tied to the governance system (e.g. being aware of when there are major curricular changes or admissions or graduation requirements under consideration)? If so, do Athletic Council members have any suggestions of structural changes that might facilitate acquiring such knowledge or providing such input?

From our end, we would like to hear Council members expound on how the Council operates. Who sets the agenda for Athletic Council meetings? Can you provide some examples of student or faculty concerns brought to the Council by members of the Council and how those issues were addressed? Does the Council or its subcommittees hold hearings or open meetings attended by non-members? If so, can you give us some examples of those and how they worked or didn’t work? How often does the Athletic Council actually meet? How good is attendance from the various constituents? How often are extra sessions held? Are issues handled by votes or does consensus reign? How do the views of faculty, students and alumni differ on the various issues taken by the Council? Can you give us some examples? What roles are played by the various ex-officio members?

Goals for the Outcome of the Meeting

We hope to jointly figure out a way for better ongoing communication between the Athletic Council and the Governance system. We hope to ascertain ways for greater student and faculty input in the academic aspects of intercollegiate athletics (perhaps through some sort of periodic public forums or Athletic Council representation on the ECAC or Academic Council).

cc: Executive Committee of Academic Council