Senate Reference No. 26-9

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Fort Wayne Senate

FROM: Michelle Parker, Faculty Athletics Representative
Chair, Mastodon Athletics Advisory Committee

DATE: October 23, 2026

SUBJ: 2025-2026 Annual Report of Faculty Athletics Representative Activities

Annual Report of FAR Activities

2025-2026

As set forth in the Purdue University Fort Wayne Faculty Athletics Representative position description, this is the annual report of the activities of the Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR) for the Academic year 2025-2026 reflecting all of the activities that I have been involved in during the academic year.

The main issue that continues to impact our NCAA Division 1 student athletes on campus is the lack of an excused absence policy for university sponsored business. Each semester, student athletes need to have a missed class worksheet filled out to communicate class periods that will be missed only due to travel and competition (not practice). Most of the impacts come from a course only being offered once a year and only at one time where the athlete doesn't have a choice to take it at a time that would minimize missed classes for travel and competitions. I have continued to work with the MAP Center and Jason Baldwin, Assistant Athletic Director for Mastodon Academic Performance (MAP) Center, on using Navigate to send travel letters to faculty who have a student athlete that will be absent from class due to travel and/or competition. Each coach submits the travel roster to the MAP center which then generates the travel letter that goes to the faculty member outlining the exact dates and times that a student athlete will be away from campus. These letters were initially piloted in the Spring 2025 semester, and this was the first full academic year that we used them. We have had positive feedback from professors that appreciated being reminded when the student athlete would be absent from their class and that it helped them coordinate alternate arrangements. If a situation arises with the student athlete absent, I will provide options on how to mitigate the absence. Possible alternatives for professors are that I will proctor exams for them and our busses are equipped with mobile hot spots so student athletes can Zoom into the classroom while traveling. Due to the medical excused absence policy that was implemented, our student athletes didn't need any assistance from me to help them with missed classes and assignments due to injury, medical procedures or hospitalization as the Office of Student Conduct and Care in conjunction with the athletic training staff handled the communication with the faculty. After doing some research, we are 1 of only 2 institutions in the 12-member Horizon League that does not have an explicit excused absence policy for students representing the university (i.e. academic conferences, performances, student athletes).

Progress Reports and Grade Checks continue to be an essential tool in monitoring our student athlete's performance in the classroom. Since the university has instituted these reports through Navigate, any alert that is entered is automatically seen by the MAP Center and their advisor will reach out to them immediately. One of duties of the FAR is to ensure that student athletes are being treated the same as other students on campus. This means that they are not being given any extra benefits/advantages not available to other students or not permitted by NCAA policies. Whenever there is a grade change submitted for a student-athlete that could impact their eligibility, I ensure that the grade change was not on the basis of their status as a student athlete. All grade changes submitted for student athletes and all changes were due to either a miscalculation or an incomplete that was resolved with a final grade.

With the budget cutbacks and the RIFs that occurred in May 2025, my role within the Athletics Department has increased significantly as I stepped in to help/assist in areas where needed. I was happy to help where I could to make sure that the student athlete experience remained at a high level and that we kept our focus on maintaining the student athlete well-being.

Conferences Attended:

Faculty Athletics Representative Association (FARA) Annual Conference. November 2025. This conference is an annual meeting of all Faculty Athletic Representatives. The meeting includes training, education, and information for FAR's on topics from the NCAA, legislation, mental and physical health of athletes. I was nominated for the 2025 FAR Newcomer of the Year award and was also asked to present at a session on the Don Zone training that I created and conducted on our campus.

Horizon League Meeting. May 2026. This meeting brings together FARs, Athletic Directors, Senior Women's Administrators (SWA) and student athlete representatives from all of the Horizon League institutions. During the FAR breakout session, we review all potential changes in the league to make sure that the student athlete's well-being is taken into consideration. During the larger group meetings, we were introduced to the new Commissioner Jill Bodensteiner, discussed Horizon League initiatives and had in depth discussions with our student athletes.

Athletic Travel:

As FAR, it is important that I travel with at least 1 team each year to experience the demands of our student athletes while away from campus on an extended road trip.

Men's and Women's Indoor Track and Field – February 2026 – Youngstown, OH. I accompanied our Men's and Women's Track and Field teams to the Horizon League Indoor Championship. While on this 3 day trip, I helped with shuttling student athletes from the venue to the hotel as the days were very long and many student athletes were competing on multiple days. I was also available at the hotel in the evenings if there was anything academically that was needed. I witnessed many student athletes studying on the bus or even during the track meet so that they stayed up to date on their classes. Student athlete's well-being was being met with their overnight accommodation, food and transportation.

Committee Work:

The following are committees that I am a part of representing the role as the PFW FAR:

Student-Athlete Leadership Team (SALT). This meeting is held monthly and I am one of the co-advisors with Jason Baldwin. SALT has at least 2 student-athlete representatives from each of our athletics teams. In the meeting they coordinate athletic and service events as well as matters of importance to student-athletes. Events that SALT coordinated were First Responder Day where they delivered cupcakes to fire stations on 9/11, Track or Treat, several bake sale fundraisers to raise funds for Nothing But Net and Special Olympics, Reading with the Dons, You Can Crush Hunger food drive, pen pals with Holy Cross Elementary school, and the Masty Awards. SALT received the Outstanding Student Organization for 2025-26.

Student Athlete Services (S-AS). This committee holds monthly meetings to coordinate student-athlete issues and includes representatives from the Mastodon Academic Performance Center, the Registrar's Office, Financial Aid, and the Compliance office.

Compliance Committee. This committee meets three times per year. The committee is composed of representatives from different areas of campus that affect student athletes (Chancellor, Registrar, Bursar, Compliance, Athletics, Student Affairs, Financial Aid, Institutional Equity, Office of Student Conduct and Care, etc.). The group coordinates to make sure there are no compliance issues with student athletes or the Athletics department.

Faculty Senate Mastodon Athletics Advisory Committee (MAAC). The committee which was formally a sub-committee of the Faculty Senate Student Affairs Committee, was renamed as an Advisory Committee under PFW Senate due to Purdue WL's update on Faculty responsibilities. The committee is no longer charged with setting policies for athletics as these policies are governed by NCAA and Horizon League. I am the chair of MAAC committee that meets once each semester and any necessary meetings that need to be held. The committee provided advice and guidance to the Athletics department on several topics. Its purpose can be found in the Senate Bylaws section 5.3.4.3.2. The committee this year updated the roles and responsibilities to more accurately reflect the advisory capacity of the committee.

Mastodon Athletics Advisory Board (MAAB). I serve as a member of the MAAB. This committee meets twice per semester and is primarily composed of community members that are supportive of athletics. They discuss and advise the Athletics department from a community perspective.

Mastodon Coaches Committee. This committee meets once each month to communicate information to all coaches about academics, budgets, academics, financial aid, compliance and equipment/facilities. This is a good opportunity for me to keep in the loop on what is going on in Athletics and be available for coaches to be able to ask me any questions they may have.

Faculty Involvement in Mastodon Athletics (FIMA). This is a committee that I created and chaired as part of my role as FAR. While I am tasked with maintaining the well-being of the student athlete, I also want to continue to increase the awareness and involvement of faculty with our athletes and athletic department. This year we had a Very Important Professor Night with Women's Soccer and recognized 3 professors who received on field recognition and a gift. This event has transitioned to Honorary Coach which is facilitated through the MAP Center now.

Athletic Attendance:

While most of my work is focused on the student side of the student-athlete, I believe that it is also very important to support the athlete side as well. I attend athletic events to support our student-athletes and ensure their experience is a positive one. I tried to attend at least 1 competition for each sport this year, the only teams that I was unable to attend was Men's and Women's Golf in the spring as their tournaments were not local. I did attend:

Sport	Attendance
Men's Volleyball	6 home matches
Women's Volleyball	1 home matches
Women's Basketball	8 home games and all Horizon League 1st round, quarterfinal and semi-final games
Men's Basketball	4 home games
Women's Soccer	2 home matches
Men's Soccer	4 home matches and the Horizon League Championship game
Men's & Women's Cross Country	1 home race and the Horizon League Championships
Men's & Women's Track & Field	1 home indoor invitational & the Horizon League Indoor Championship meet
Men's Golf	Did not attend
Women's Golf	Did not attend

Student Athletes:

There are several situations where I work directly with student-athletes one on one. To protect their anonymity, I will use generalities and not use any names.

Student-Athlete Missed Class Worksheets. These worksheets are given to student-athletes at the beginning of each semester. The worksheets have the days of class that the student will have to miss for athletic events that are officially sanctioned by the university. The student-athletes work with the faculty member to come to an agreement and the faculty member signs the form. If there is a complication with a worksheet, or if faculty have concerns

about the days the student athlete may miss, I am called on to mediate between the faulty member and the student-athlete regarding what can and cannot be missed as well as how it can be made-up. My goal is to help both the faculty member and student athlete arrive at a solution that is acceptable while protecting the academic integrity of the course and the students learning. This year there were 2 situations that I was involved in by proctoring exams for the student athlete. Overall, the majority of faculty work proactively with the student athletes to make alternative arrangements with the student athletes without compromising the academic integrity of the class. In addition, during the Spring 2026 semester, the Horizon League Outdoor Track and Field Championships were scheduled during Final Exam week. We do not have control over when these championships are scheduled and it couldn't be avoided. Along with the Mastodon Academic Performance (MAP) Center, we identified all student athletes who had conflicts and proactively worked with those faculty members to have those final exams taken before they left for the championships. I personally proctored 3 exams to alleviate the extra time burden for our faculty and protect the academic integrity of the exam. During the academic year, I also proctored 7 quizzes/exams for student athletes who had to make them up due to travel requirements.

Advising. The student athletes have academic advisors in Athletics (MAP Center) as well as in their major areas so I do not directly advise them for their majors and coursework. As the FAR, they occasionally come to me for advice on interacting with faculty and for career advice. Additionally, I also work with the student athletes on establishing better time management and study habits.

Appeals. If a student-athlete has a conflict with a coach or someone in the athletic department and wishes to appeal a decision that has been made, a committee is formed with members from the Athletics Advisory Sub-committee. There were no appeals this academic year.

Top 50/Exemplar Scholars. This year I encouraged many of our eligible student athletes to apply for the Top 50 award and wrote recommendation letters when asked. 13 deserving student athletes were selected for this award and 3 student athletes were named Exemplar Scholars.

Compliance Department:

The Compliance Department serves to ensure that all NCAA and legal rules are followed by the Athletics Department and that student-athletes stay within the rules to stay eligible. If there are violations the Compliance Department reports them and works though any steps to correct the issue. Whenever there is a violation of NCAA rules and policies, I am required to review the case and sign off before submission and then review the NCAA decision on any actions or consequences of the violation. This year there were 6 minor violations, and 0 major violations. Each of these minor violations resulted in additional rules training for the parties involved. It is expected that all institutions report some minor violations each year and this was within normal range of minor violations.

Academic Eligibility Certification:

Three times per year, the Certification Team (Compliance, Registrar, Mastodon Academic Performance Center, and FAR) are required to certify that student athletes did or did not maintain their athletic eligibility. This is determined by evaluating their GPA and percentage towards degree (PTD), where each student-athlete is required to hit benchmarks in their degree program, and GPA requirements each semester. After the fall and spring semesters, we meet together for **two to three full days** and after summer **one to two full days** to review the academic record of each student athlete, their grades from that semester, certify that they have met the benchmark progress requirements and are eligible to play their sport. Each student must be certified individually ensuring that all of their coursework

from that semester has been accounted for. With over 290 student athletes, this is an intensive process but necessary process. In addition, we also validate that incoming transfer student athletes will be eligible to compete upon their arrival at PFW.

Through eligibility certification, we have exposure to look at many degree program's myBluePrints. I worked with Terri Swim and Christa VanDeWeg to address some issue (i.e. credits being used in multiple blocks) we faced with a couple of the myBluePrints without impacting the academic departments ability to certify for graduation and academic advisors' ability to advise. These modifications helped streamline certification and ensure that we have accurate reflections of student athlete percent towards degree calculations.

Each semester, the NCAA requires each team to submit a squad list and eligibility checklist. Compliance creates these forms and I review each student athlete to make sure all data is correct and then sign the forms to certify that everyone is eligible to compete for that semester.

Athletics Department:

I meet regularly with the Athletic Director, Kelley Hartley Hutton, to consult on academic issues and ensure that there is a faculty voice in athletics decisions. The Athletic Director is very open to input and proactively seeks ways to improve communication and collaboration between Athletics and Academics.

I also have the opportunity to work with the coaches of the different teams. I have met with some coaches on a one-on-one basis to answer questions or address any issues that they may have. All of the coaches that I have met with actively promote academic excellence on their teams. This year, many of the head coaches scheduled appointments (14 total) with me to meet with prospective student athletes to discuss the support that is provided by the FAR and answer any questions about the academics at PFW that they may have.

I also work very closely with the Mastodon Academic Performance Center (MAP). This year, I continued to hold office hours 2 days a week in the Study Tables room for a total of 6 hours a week. These on-site hours make me available to student-athletes who have questions, but also allow me time to discuss topics or answer questions with the athletic academic advisors. These office hours have proved to be very beneficial in establishing a strong relationship and flow of information with the MAP Center. The MAP center advisors notify me of any academic problems or challenges with student-athletes and we work collaboratively to come up with a solution. I continue to work to make sure that university academic policies are being followed and that advising policies are in the best academic interests of the students. The MAP advisors are very open to my feedback and actively seek my input for policies and procedures as well as day to day issues. Together this year, we were able to improve communication of missed classes due to travel/competitions by sending out travel letters via Navigate to the student athlete's professors. This was in addition to the missed class worksheets that are filled out at the beginning of the semester which helped remind faculty of an upcoming date and provide verification that they would be travelling.

All student athletes are required to take a 1 credit HPER16300 course which serves as a first-year introduction to the university and athletics. This year I presented a classroom session on How to Effectively Communicate with Professors in all 3 sections of this class. I also worked closely with Jason Baldwin from the MAP Center, we created a 1 credit senior level HPER46300 course for our senior student athletes. We partnered to develop a curriculum which will focus on the skills they will need to succeed as they transition from being a college student/student athlete to their post-college life. This course is planned to launch in the Spring 2027 semester.

As part of the process of monitoring eligibility, each day I (as well as the advisors in MAP and Compliance) receive a report of the enrollment and status of student-athletes to ensure that student-athletes are enrolled full time. I worked with the Advisors and Compliance to revise this report to further refine it so that it was accurately reporting those students who are below full time. Reasons why a student would be below full time would be the last semester of their degree program or they are a graduate student. We added criteria to the report that it would not list Graduate students who were enrolled in 9 hours on the report and added a column to the report to show their student level (GR/UG). This helps Compliance to be able to detect any issues quicker.

I also participated in multiple events within the Athletics this year. At the beginning of the Fall semester, I participated in the mandatory student athlete meeting to go over important policies and rules. I presented the role of the FAR and talked with the student athletes about the dangers of using AI for cheating and plagiarism. I attended the academic recognition dinner in both the fall and spring semesters that recognized our student athletes who had above a 3.2 GPA in the previous semester. At the end of the Spring semester, I attended the Masty's which is the student athlete awards ceremony. During the summer, I attended 3 New Student Orientation (NSO) to present to introduce myself and the resources I provide as FAR to the Freshmen and transfer student athletes.

Part of my duties include being made aware of any concussions. I am notified by the athletic trainers when the concussion is diagnosed and when the student athlete is cleared to return to academics and athletics. Office of Student Conduct and Care, ensure that faculty in the classes of the affected student-athlete are aware of the injury and of the status of the student. In all existing cases, protocols were followed and the student-athlete was not allowed to compete until completely cleared by the proper medical professional.

The NCAA requires that each institution provides mandatory training on a variety of topics. This year, I developed an online Brightspace training module for the student athletes on Sexual Violence Prevention that included 2 videos and a quiz that every student athlete needed to complete.

The Fuel Station is an area where student athletes can grab a quick snack after a practice or lift before they head to class. Once a month I cooked a special treat for them (grilled cheese and soup, breakfast sandwiches, breakfast tacos and walking tacos). In addition, I made lunch meat sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs as an added protein option. One of my favorite activities to do with the student athletes is make Protein Balls. This is a favorite snack of the student athletes and every 2 weeks a different team comes in and volunteers 1 hour to make these protein ball with me. I get to teach them how to make them at home and they also have a little sweat equity in the Fuel Station. Athlete nutrition is important part of a student-athlete's well-being and I want to make sure that they don't go to class hungry and are properly fueled for performance.

Chancellor:

I meet the Chancellor at least once per semester to discuss the academic progress of student-athletes and give input/answer questions on issues that affect athletics and academics. I work with the Chancellor, Athletic Director and Compliance to collect data and create the Chancellor's Report on Athletics which I presented to Senate in late Fall. I brought up to Senate that this report is outdated and we administered a survey to all faculty to gain insight on what they would like to see in this report. Last year it was passed by the Faculty Senate to remove outdated questions and to move the presentation of the report to the Spring semester so that the most recent EADA data can be included in the presentation.

Horizon League:

As a member of the Horizon League there are several duties and functions performed by the FAR. At the end of each of the Horizon League's 14 sponsored sports seasons, the FARs' of the league are sent the names and dossiers of the nominees for academic all-conference awards within that sport. We are required to read over each dossier (about 20-24 athletes per sport) and then vote on those that we feel based on their academic and athletic performance deserver that honor. During our Summer Horizon League meeting, we decided to change the name of this award to the Scholar Athlete All-Conference award and also add a Commissioner's award for any student who has a 3.9 or higher cumulative GPA. In the Fall, Winter and Spring sports season, the FARs also vote on the Scholar Athlete of the Season award.

The Horizon League awards the Cecil N. Coleman Medal of Honor which honors a male and female Horizon League student athlete who best exemplifies the dignity and high purpose of the Horizon League and its membership. Each institution nominates 1 male and 1 female student athlete who demonstrate outstanding achievement in academics, athletics and extracurricular activities. Each Horizon League FAR evaluates their dossier and then ranks each of the nominees for this award.

The Horizon League FAR's hold a video-conference call once per month to meet and discuss legislative and procedural issues impacting academics and student athlete well-being. I read the prepared documents and policies and attend and participate in these meetings. I was elected to serve as Vice-Chair of the Horizon League FAR committee for a 3-year term from Fall 2024-Summer 2027 and then will serve a 3-year term as Chair from Fall 2027 – Summer 2030. I have worked with my fellow FARs on sharing our Don Zone training as they felt it would be beneficial on their campuses as well. I worked on creating a document of all of the Horizon League institutions Excused Absence Policies as well as a contact list of our FARs.

NCAA:

I was asked by the NCAA to speak on a panel at 2 different conferences on the role of the FAR "Bridging the Gap Between Athletics and Academics" at the 2025 NCAA Regional Rules Conference and the 2025 NCAA Accelerating Academic Success Program.

I was selected by the NCAA to serve as the FAR on the NCAA Men's and Women's Golf Oversight Committee. This committee meets once a month to review rules and procedures that impact both the Men's and Women's golf. I was asked to be the site representative at the NCAA Women's Golf Regionals that were held in Louisville, KY from May 9-13th, 2026. I was responsible for reviewing the rules and regulations at the coaches meeting, making sure that the course was set up properly, monitoring the starting tee, ensuring coaches received their daily wristband, clearing student athlete participants off the practice green and driving range at the end of the allotted time and presenting qualifying teams and individual players with their NCAA Championship packet and the commemorative pin flag.

Since I serve on this committee, I also serve of the NCAA FARs in D1 Governance Committee. This committee meets once a month and we discuss the issues that come up in each of our governance committees. This has been an important committee as we are the only group that serves across all of the committees and can compare what is happening. From these insights, we drafted a letter to the NCAA D1 Cabinet with our observations and recommendations.

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