Guidelines for Faculty Interaction with Student-Athletes

The University Athletic Advisory Committee (UAAC) wants each faculty member to be aware of issues surrounding faculty interactions with student-athletes. Because athletes are governed by standards in addition to those in place for all students at Brigham Young University (i.e. NCAA regulations), and because student-athletes are often the most visible representatives of the University, some faculty may be unclear whether their responsibilities to student-athletes differ from their responsibilities to other students. The short answer is an emphatic 'No'.

Article 2.5 of the NCAA Division I Manual states the policy quite clearly:

“The admission, academic standing and academic progress of student-athletes shall be consistent with the policies and standards adopted by the institution for the student body in general.”

When a question arises whether a faculty member should extend extra academic help to a student-athlete, the faculty member should ask the question; “What is the written university and/or department policy on the matter?” If the university/department policy permits it then the next question to ask is, “Do I extend this same assistance to any student seeking similar help?” If the answer is yes, the faculty member should feel confident the NCAA concurs. However, if help is given to a student-athlete that is not available to any student in the class, you can be sure that you are in violation of NCAA regulations. This standard also applies to all student-athlete requests for accommodations. Accommodate the same way you would with any other student in similar circumstances. A best practice recommendation for faculty members and their department is to document all accommodations provided to both athletes and non-athletes. These records can demonstrate that the same courtesies are being equally extended to all students.

Similarly, if a professor or other staff member has a negative academic situation arise with a student-athlete, again ask the question; “What corrective steps do I take with a non student-athlete?” Those are exactly the steps that should be taken with a student-athlete.

That being said, a great deal of academic support for student-athletes is offered through the Student Athlete Academic Center (SAAC) housed in the Student Athlete Building. Again, this support is mandated by the NCAA under Bylaw 16.3.1.1:

“Member institutions shall make general academic counseling and tutoring services available to all student-athletes.”

Each student-athlete is monitored and offered services through the SAAC according to the student’s need. Hence, a faculty member may receive a phone call, grade
check, email, or a drop-in visit from a member of the SAAC to check on the progress of a student-athlete. The purpose of these progress checks is not to treat student-athletes differently, but to appropriately offer academic support as required by NCAA bylaws.

Ultimately, the goal of the SAAC is to support the resources available in the classroom and maximize those resources for student-athletes outside of the classroom. The SAAC and BYU faculty members alike recognize a constant need to balance academic support with proper academic integrity. When student-athletes use SAAC resources, they are instructed to obtain from the professor the expected boundaries that should be in place on particular assignments or tests. The expectation is that employees in the SAAC will be proactive in obtaining these boundaries from the faculty. If you have any reason to believe that appropriate boundaries are not being enforced in the SAAC, please contact Trevor Wilson, Director of the SAAC, ext. 2-5305, immediately.

Should any of you as faculty members ever feel uncertain about how a particular situation should be handled, please feel free to contact Chad Gwilliam, Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance, ext. 2-1875, at any time. Thank you for all you do to help all of our students here at Brigham Young University.