The meeting was called to order by Chair Scott Unruh. Members present were Bruce Elder, Aaron Estes, Bob Rycek, Neil Schnoor, Laure Smith, Janet Steele, Jane Strawhecker, and Nita Unruh. Members absent were Jon McBride and Josh Tolin.

Scott initiated a discussion of the Athletic Manual portion that was presented for review at the December meeting (Continuing Eligibility). Laure said that the Registrar’s Office certifies that student-athletes are on track to earn a degree, and added that UNK is one of a very few Division II schools to have the Registrar’s Office assume this responsibility. This is viewed in our favor as it demonstrates institutional control. A question was asked about the checklist at the end of the materials concerning continuing eligibility, and Laure said that was from “Compliance Assistance Internet” and shows the division of responsibility between the Associate Athletic Director and the Assistant Registrar.

Laure then distributed information concerning UNK’s Substance Abuse Policy and asked the committee to review these materials for the next meeting. Currently the NCAA randomly tests 14 football players and 4 athletes from other sports at all Division II schools. Additional random testing may take place at NCAA championship events. UNK currently tests for street drugs but will soon test 2 student-athletes per year for steroid use. This will require updating our compliance forms related to drug testing, which all athletes must sign to be able to participate. Student-athletes are asked to disclose any medications they are taking as some could lead to false positive tests. In addition, if a student-athlete admits to drug use prior to his or her first drug test, the student-athlete is given “safe harbor.” That is, he or she is advised to enter treatment with no further penalty. Currently student-athletes are advised to go to the counseling center on campus, but the committee recommended that off-campus facilities be contacted as possible alternative counseling sites. Laure said that the NCAA grants institutions permission to pay for these services (if the institution can afford to do so). If a student-athlete tests positive for drugs twice, he or she is suspended, and a third positive test results in removal from the team. Bob asked if a student-athlete can request “safe harbor” prior to testing positive for a third time, and the committee felt that the language should be clear that “safe harbor” is only permitted prior to the first drug test, not following any positive tests. Laure said that UNK randomly tests 10 student-athletes a year and the samples (oral swab) are analyzed by a lab in Scottsbluff. The lab is provided with a list of all UNK student-athletes and randomly picks the 10 that will be tested. Scott suggested that the procedure for gathering and packaging the samples be very clearly spelled out and documented so that all samples are collected in the same manner and there is no possibility that samples could be mixed up. The committee will discuss the Substance Abuse Policy further at its next meeting.

Finally, the committee examined the questionnaire that Aaron had developed. The goal is to sample the same student-athletes at three different periods in their careers (entrance, continued and exit) to observe trends and perhaps understand how student-athletes perception of the program changes over time. Bob suggested that many of the questions
be reworded to provide more discrete answers for statistical analysis while also providing the opportunity for open-ended comments. He also suggested using a 5-point scale for the questions (strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, strongly disagree). The committee suggested adding a section concerning substance abuse testing. This section would be answered only by those student-athletes who had been tested for drug use. The committee also discussed ways of encouraging (forcing) all student-athletes to take the questionnaire, but Bob said that no one can be forced to take a questionnaire; therefore, an option to not take the questionnaire should be provided that would still allow the athletic department to document that all student-athletes had accessed the questionnaire. Laure said that she appreciated the committee’s suggestions and that she and Aaron would work on a revision for the next meeting.

In closing, Scott mentioned the Student Attendance and Conduct Policies that were recently discussed in the Faculty Senate and distributed to the faculty by SVCAA Murray. The committee encouraged the athletic department to develop a standardized notification procedure concerning absences from class, emphasizing that the student-athlete is still responsible for discussing missed work with his or her instructor.

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, March 2 at 10:15. The change from Friday is because the RMAC basketball tournament will be the weekend of March 4-6.