Minutes of the Faculty Senate Athletic Committee Meeting  
10:00 am October 8, 2004, Zikmund Conference Room

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

Laure led a discussion of the current portion of the Athletic Manual that focuses on transfer eligibility and eligibility forms. Laure told the committee that our campus does have a committee that hears appeals concerning eligibility, and that committee is designed in a manner similar to the committee that hears financial aid appeals. All members of that committee come from campus but outside the athletic department. Scott proposed a situation about a fictitious student-athlete who wishes to transfer to UNO to help the committee better understand the process. Laure said this student-athlete would have to request his or her release, and the student-athlete could be granted or denied (in writing) release. What might constitute a justifiable reason for denial would be, for example, a request to transfer to a school within our conference or another school against which UNK regularly competes, or the student-athlete not being completely truthful about the coach during the recruiting process concerning his or her likelihood of staying at UNK. If the student-athlete is denied release, the student-athlete may appeal this decision. Bruce said that appeals are rare and that we have had only 2-3 in the last 10 years. If the student-athlete is granted his or her release, that student-athlete may play right away. If denied, the student-athlete may transfer but will have to sit out a year, and those two semesters count toward the 10 semesters of eligibility the student has. If a student-athlete wishes to transfer to UNK, Laure said she contacts the school for permission to talk to the student-athlete. Laure asked the committee to review the transfer eligibility policies and paperwork for discussion at the next meeting. Bruce cautioned that the process must be feasible so all steps are doable without becoming a potential burden.

Scott next handed out a copy of the questionnaire mailed to all student-athletes following completion of their last season of eligibility. Nita asked what the return rate was, and Laure estimated it to be 20-25%. Bruce said this questionnaire was developed around 1996 and is based on questionnaires from UNL and ASU. Bruce said personal exit interviews were conducted at one time, but the committee found these interviews to be very labor intensive. While getting the questionnaires to student-athletes in fall or winter sports in a timely fashion isn’t a problem, it is difficult to get the questionnaires to student-athletes in spring sports that may not end until after the spring semester is finished. Bruce said that formal write-ups of the results of the questionnaires have been done on occasion, but most recently the committee has simply read through and discussed the questionnaires. Scott asked what the athletic department wished to gain from the questionnaires. Jon said it would be helpful to know how student-athletes’ expectations change during their career, not after it is completed. Nita said it would be useful to know the expectations of incoming freshman and red-shirt student-athletes compared to upperclassmen with playing experience. Bruce said that NCAA I schools are required to
conduct exit interviews with all student-athletes who leave the program early. He also said that classes are evaluated every year, so it would not be unreasonable to have student-athletes fill out questionnaires every year. Bob suggested an on-line questionnaire would be useful for tracking student responses over time. A student-athlete could use any computer on campus and his or her responses tracked using their PIN. He also said many of the open-ended questions should be revised and those with scales should have the scales expanded. Since this is an internal questionnaire, IRB approval is not necessary. Scott said that Darren Addy would be the person to contact about setting up such a questionnaire.

Scott next led a discussion about how the athletic department should best notify professors concerning student-athlete absences and interpretation of the excused absence policy. Scott said that he and Jon had requested information concerning this policy from SVC Murray. The policy was adopted by the Faculty Senate about 15 years ago, but apparently not all faculty are aware of the policy. The policy is in the student handbook and on the UNK web site and covers absences for any UNK sponsored activity. Nita wondered if this policy shouldn’t be covered during new faculty orientation to avoid future problems and misunderstandings. A general discussion followed concerning how to best help student-athletes make up work without providing them benefits not available to other students who are absent for legitimate reasons. Bruce mentioned that he has learned it is becoming increasingly common for professors to include a number of grades that are “dropped,” and any absence, for whatever reason, is one of these dropped grades. Discussion followed as to whether this type of policy was in any way prejudicial to student-athletes.

As committee members, including Scott, had other commitments, the meeting adjourned and the committee will pick up this discussion at its next meeting scheduled for 10:15 am Friday, November 5 in the Zikmund Conference Room.