

**SUBJECT TO COMMITTEE APPROVAL**

**OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY  
BOARD OF VISITORS ATHLETICS COMMITTEE  
Thursday, December 10, 2020**

**MINUTES**

A meeting of the Athletics Committee of the Board of Visitors of Old Dominion University was held on Thursday, December 10, 2020, at 11AM. Pursuant to Executive Amendment 28 to HB29 (2020), the Committee met by electronic communication means, without a quorum of committee members physically assembled at one location, to discuss or transact business statutorily required or necessary to continue operations of the Board and the discharge of its lawful purposes, duties and responsibilities.

Present from the Committee were:

Yvonne Allmond, Chair  
Carlton F. Bennett, Vice Chair  
Kay Kemper, Rector  
R. Bruce Bradley  
Robert Broermann  
Robert Corn  
Alton J. Harris  
Larry R. Hill  
Ross Mugler  
P. Murry Pitts  
Lisa Smith

Also present were:

John R. Broderick, President  
Wood Selig  
Austin Agho  
Alonzo Brandon  
Greg DuBois  
Eileen Graham  
Scott Harrison  
Donna Meeks  
Amanda Skaggs  
R. Earl Nance  
Randale Richmond  
Ron Mosses  
Carolyn Crutchfield  
Amy Lynch  
Bridget Groble  
September Sanderlin  
Kaleb Ford-Dement (student-athlete)  
Marlee McClendon (student-athlete)

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Yvonne Allmond called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Upon a motion made by Ms. Allmond and seconded by Mr. Harris, the minutes of the Athletics Committee meeting held on June 16, 2020 were approved by roll-call vote (*Aye: Kemper, Allmond, Bradley, Broermann, Corn, Harris, Hill, Mugler, Pitts, Smith, Nay: None*).

### **I. RICHARD RAHNE – ODU HEAD FOOTBALL COACH**

Coach Rahne begins each team meeting with a quote. It is usually a message he would like to get across or educate the players about the person quoted.

Football was cancelled on August 10, 2020. The coaching staff and the team handled the decision head on very well. Shortly following the announcement, Coach Rahne tweeted about his thoughts on the football season being cancelled. It was the right decision for ODU. The tweet was extremely well received. He stated that he, his staff, and student-athletes fully support and appreciate the decision to opt out of fall 2020 competition.

As far as preparation, the team lives by this mantra:

“If I had 6 hours to cut down a tree, I’d spend the first four hours sharpening the axe.” – Abe Lincoln.

The team focuses on getting better each day and preparing for next season.

Coach Rahne shared the team’s fall 2020 schedule. They lifted and practiced three days a week. The team also had a few intrasquad scrimmages, including one on Friday evening, November 13.

There are three pillars to the ODU football program:

- a. CARE: having a passion for each other, care about your own success in the classroom and in life.
- b. COMPETE: in every single thing we do. Set high standards every day.
- c. CHARACTER: recruit and hire men of great character.

Coach Rahne reviewed the following safety measures they took in regard to COVID in the following areas:

- Athletic training
- Sports performance
- Equipment
- Operations

Coach Rahne showed a video of how the team is followed COVID safety protocol when entering the LR Hill Sports Complex, at team meetings, workouts, cleaning equipment, and practice.

Players thoughts on not playing this season: Coach Rahne noted that the consensus amongst the players was that it would have been challenging to go through a season where games keep getting cancelled. They were in total agreement with the decision not to play. They were provided certainty when so many other teams face uncertainty almost daily this fall.

Questions and Answers:

Q. Effect of pandemic on recruiting?

A. It has been an advantage – we have kept recruiting regionally in Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina. Can hold onto players better. We have the youngest coaching staff in the country and being good at technology is a huge benefit.

Q. Will student-athletes lose a year of eligibility?

A. No

Coach Rahne’s closing thoughts on the team not playing in the spring of 2021: There will not be much benefit and too much risk competing this spring. The only teams we could play are 1AA teams, which would not be beneficial. The team wouldn’t be at full strength without seniors. A spring season would also be too close to playing in the fall of 2021.

## **II. RACIAL EQUITY TASK FORCE**

The Racial Equity Task Force was created to empower our student-athletes to take a leadership role in social justice initiatives. The goal of the task force is to educate, train, identify resources, and communicate a plan of action.

The task force is comprised of ODU Athletics coaches, administrators, faculty, and student-athletes. Randle Richmond, Associate Athletic Director for Sport Administration and Student-Athlete Welfare and Carolyn Crutchfield, Assistant Athletic Director and Senior Woman Administrator, serve as co-chairs. There are a total of 21 members on the task force.

Randle Richmond highlighted task force action items that have been completed:

- Social Justice Walk
- Social Justice Chairperson – a leadership position within the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC).
- First social justice educational speaker (Pastor Kevin Swann, former ODU student-athlete)
- Promotion of nonpartisan voter registration
- Athletics Diversity Initiative – made up of student-athletes from the Tidewater area colleges and universities.
- The creation of a class on sports, race, and civil rights (taught by ODU Athletics’ Dr. Ron Moses, Associate Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Academic Service and Chief Diversity Officer).

Kaleb Ford-Dement (football student-athlete) and Marlee McClendon (field hockey student-athlete) informed the group about future task force action items:

- Creation of a student-athlete task force video
- Free sports clinics for local underprivileged children
- SAAC #MonarchsUnited fundraiser

### Climate Survey

Dr. Ron Moses presented an overview of the climate survey that was created and administered to coaches, staff, and student-athletes to measure the racial climate within ODU Athletics. The survey had three areas of focus:

1. Does ODU Athletics promote a diverse and inclusive environment?
2. Has the respondent experienced or observed acts of racial discrimination?
3. How comfortable is the respondent serving as an ally and advocate?

### *Results*

There were 313 student-athletes (71%) and 86 staff members (69%) who responded. Initial results showed no significant statistical variances and a desire for allyship education.

Overall, the student-athlete responses were positive with 89% of student-athletes of the belief that ODU has a tolerance of free speech. Student-athletes believe they have programming to teach them effective conversation strategies, the history of racial inequality, and a space to share thoughts and increase confidence in this area.

The majority of staff responded positively with 89% of staff respondents noting that they have not witnessed discrimination within the team and/or the ODU Athletic Department.

### *Recommendations base on results:*

- The permanent continuance of the Racial Equity Task Force to implement additional policies and procedures regarding diversity and equity initiatives.
- The development of an ODU Athletic Department strategic plan specifically for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- Perform a diversity climate analysis for each team.
- Mandatory separate education sessions for coaches, staff members, and student-athletes.
- The development of additional affinity groups to address specific demographical issues.
- Reimplement the formalized system for reporting issues of discrimination.

## **III. COMMUNITY SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT**

Amy Lynch, Athletic Academic Advisor and Community Service Coordinator, reported on ODU student-athletes' community service and engagement:

- In the fall semester of last year (2019), ODU student-athletes finished with a little over 2,000 volunteer hours and by end of March had over 2,700 hours ranking 40<sup>th</sup> in the country for all Division I schools for amount of time contributed to community service. Five of our teams were in the top 10 nationally for their sport: men's swimming, wrestling, women's volleyball, rowing, and lacrosse.
- This past fall (2020), the current total of community service hours is 1,011. The goal is 1,000 hours, half of what was accomplished last year as there are limitations on in person volunteering because of Covid restrictions by the state of Virginia. The student-athletes have been creative so they can still contribute and make an impact on the community while staying safe from possible exposure.
- This fall, student-athletes were involved with 23 events with 60% of student-athletes participating. The goal is to create a passion amongst the student-athletes for vocation and service that will remain throughout their lifetime.

Amy thanked all the coaches, administrators and the student-athletes that donated their time to make these events happen.

Highlight of events this fall:

- Virtual reading campaign supporting Norfolk Public Schools (NPS). NPS is all online this semester. One student-athlete from every team was filmed reading a scholastic book. Student-Athlete Academic Services (SAAS) highlighted a few readers every couple of days via Instagram including Jason Wade (men's basketball) and Nick Rice (football).
- Men's Basketball was integral in the "*Get out the Vote*" campaign walking around campus to inform students about voter registration.
- Sailing was involved with red cross blood drives and supporting our local "*Girls on the Run*" chapter.
- Swimming held a very successful Thanksgiving food drive.
- Lacrosse also held a food/can drive in the Larchmont neighborhood for needed Thanksgiving food items and hosted a 9/11 dinner for our local firefighters.
- Field hockey, baseball and volleyball attended the ODU veteran's day celebration via Zoom to support our veterans and our university community engagement campaigns.
- Pen Pal Programs: Women's volleyball is exchanging letters with students at JaCox Elementary School and SAAC student-athletes are writing to our ODU Kids Club members.
- Football started a youth mentoring program.
- Men's Soccer worked with the *International Coastal cleanup* and *Keep Norfolk Beautiful* campaigns
- Women's soccer worked two consecutive weekends for the Virginia Food Bank bagging 2,000 weekend food bags for students at Norfolk Public Schools. Important to note that these students ordinarily receive free breakfasts and lunches.

#### **IV. COMPETITION UPDATE**

Dr. Selig reviewed the first dates of competition for each ODU sports programs for spring of 2021, beginning in January. Thirteen of seventeen teams will be competing in the first month. This is unprecedented. There are times when there will be five events in one day. It will be both exciting and challenging with a busy month of competing and COVID-19 testing.

Dr. Selig addressed the question he receives often: Why is ODU competing in the spring when they didn't compete in the fall? He provided several reasons:

1. This past August, we were trying to bring back our student-athletes and 18,000 other ODU students while there was a spike occurring nationally with the virus. There were a lot of unknowns. All students have now departed campus and have been gone since Thanksgiving and not returning until mid-late January. We have a "bubble" for our student-athletes for the next several months. This gives us a better chance against outside influences; one we did not have in the fall.
2. Testing protocol and procedures have improved. We are committed to the gold standard PCR test (deep nasal swab). We know more about what works, frequency of tests needed, and have determined level of contact with each sport. There is a better handle on testing nationally. ODU has enhanced testing with all testing conducted in house with no third party which all put us in much better position than this fall.
3. There is more information now about the virus and a vaccine is on the way.
4. Student-athletes know what is expected when it comes to safety protocol and their responsibility to protect themselves and their team.
5. The student-athletes are safer being on campus. Their behavior can be better controlled and coaches can set and monitor expectations.
6. Mental health is vital to our student-athletes. Finding a way to operate this spring is critical for the overall mental health of all ODU student-athletes.

Dr. Selig closed the meeting by thanking the entire Board for their enduring support.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 12:01 p.m.