

History of Faculty Involvement in Collegiate Athletics

This history was prepared by Dr. Carol Barr, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, for inclusion in *The Faculty Athletics Representative: A Survey of the Membership* which was initially published in 1999. It was edited and reprinted in the 2008 report on the FAR survey which was prepared by Dr. Daniel Fulks of Transylvania University. A brief coda prepared by Michael A. Miranda of the NCAA provides updates on FAR activities since the publication of the initial report.

Shortly after the birth of collegiate athletics in 1852, college and university faculty members attempted to exert influence over collegiate athletics events. Concerned by the failure of student-athletes to control their increasingly visible and powerful athletics programs, faculty members began to express their desire to become involved in this quickly evolving institution.

In the 1870s, the tremendous growth of intercollegiate athletics became a major source of pride for students on campuses, and, in the minds of some members of the faculty, the enthusiasm of student-athletes for their athletics programs had greatly surpassed that of their academic pursuits. Faculty began to take steps to engineer a greater degree of control over athletics, as student-controlled athletics began to disrupt academic pursuits. In 1874, a quarter-century after the first intercollegiate athletics event and a full 32 years before the formation of the NCAA, President McCosh of Princeton University reported the problems that pervaded intercollegiate athletics to the Princeton Board of Trustees (Smith, 2003). “It is a nice question,” stated McCosh, “whether evils may not arise from sports in no way under control of the College authorities” (Smith, 2003).

Symptomatic of the inability of faculty to wrestle control of athletics from student-athletes, it took years for the Princeton faculty to generate enough support and momentum to gain control of an athletics department they felt was quickly spiraling out of control. Princeton was finally able to take action in 1881, forming the first faculty athletics committee (Smith, 2003). Harvard formed its faculty athletics committee the following year (1882).

The formation of faculty athletics committees was a direct result of the vast amount of time faculty found themselves devoting to the discussion of issues regarding intercollegiate athletics. Faculty athletics committees, staffed by faculty members, were a practical system for addressing emerging athletics problems such as the number of days student-athletes were spending away from campus, the use of professional athletes in contests and betting by athletes on their own games. The development of faculty athletics committees led to the introduction of the position of faculty athletics representative.

Before the turn of the century, nearly every institution had formed an independent athletics committee comprised of faculty members. At the time, some faculty members thought it frivolous to be involved in the effective administration of intercollegiate athletics. “Busy faculties have neither the time nor the inclination to form and hold a consistent policy in regard to athletics,” wrote Harvard historian Albert Bushnell Hart in 1890 (Hart). Most athletics committees were comprised solely of faculty, but committees at a small number of institutions, such as Yale, that believed in preserving student control of athletics, were staffed by current student-athletes and alumni. These committees were formed to respond to any issue directly involving the athletics department. But the varying rules imposed by the various faculty athletics committees began to give significant advantages to some institutions, signaling a trend towards inter-institutional regulation of collegiate athletics. Despite the reforms, there had been no initiatives to create an institutional policy applicable

to each of the leading Eastern colleges.

But this was not the belief of Harvard President Charles W. Eliot, who had voiced his support of inter-institutional control of athletics in a letter to other New England college presidents in 1882. Yale faculty responded by continuing their tradition of inaction, maintaining the structure and administration of their powerful collegiate athletics program. The Harvard Athletic Committee, largely in response to Yale's efforts to resist inter-institutional control, called to order a meeting in December of 1883 to be attended by the faculty athletics representatives of eight institutions: Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Columbia, Penn, Trinity, Wesleyan, and Williams. The faculty athletics representatives who attended developed eight specific resolutions that were sent to 21 different Eastern institutions for approval. Only Harvard and Princeton voted for the resolutions, as schools still favored self-control of their own departments. "The management of athletic sports might wisely be left to the students," said Yale's E.L. Richards, summarizing the views of many faculty (Richards, 1884).

As "professional" coaches began to be hired and student-athletes continued to accept various forms of payment for their services, the faculty, alumni and students of several colleges met yet again in February of 1898 in an attempt to address a myriad of concerns. The seven present-day members of the Ivy League, minus Yale, met in Providence, Rhode Island, for the Brown Conference of 1898. A Brown professor, Wilfred Munro, chaired a faculty committee formed during this conference. This committee met several times throughout the spring of 1898, publishing the 1898 Report on Intercollegiate Sports (Smith, 2003). However, the 20 suggested proposals of the Brown Conference were not accepted by the vast majority of schools across the nation, nor were there suggestions of yearly conferences to debate the issue.

The proposals from the Brown Conference met opposition from many faculty who viewed athletics as activities that should be left to the students' control. But in December of 1905, facing a disturbing increase in the number of serious injuries and deaths resulting from student-led football contests, Chancellor Henry McCracken of New York University called a meeting of faculty athletics representatives from Eastern colleges. Though his first attempt proved unsuccessful, McCracken called a second meeting on December 28, 1905, that drew representatives from 68 universities. The group voted to form a national athletics body called the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS). Seven years later in 1912, the name was changed to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and the goal of a national governing body for intercollegiate athletics was realized.

The formation of the NCAA and the founding of numerous faculty-led athletics conferences marked a high point for faculty control in intercollegiate athletics, as the organizations served as a call to action for faculty to correct widespread abuses of power. "The number of conferences and associations increased rapidly after 1906 ... and the power of the NCAA grew steadily because of the injection of a kind of crusading spirit directed to the spreading of the gospel of 'faculty control,'" wrote Howard J. Savage in the 1929 Carnegie Report on "American College Athletics" (Savage, 1929).

In the period between 1895 and 1914, eight major conferences or athletics associations were formed, including the precursors to the modern-day Big Ten, Southeastern, Missouri Valley, and Western Athletic Conferences (Savage, 1929). The conferences were comprised of the faculty athletics representatives from member institutions. The representatives met, discussed how to better govern themselves, and passed legislation that bound the institutions by rules passed for the betterment of intercollegiate athletics. "Gradually the central offices acquired powers to enforce regulations by the imposition of penalties and assumed certain of the functions of investigating agencies," wrote Savage (1929).

The faculty athletics conferences were driving forces for faculty control of athletics. A requirement of admittance into the Big Ten was that "only institutions having full and complete faculty control of athletics may hold membership in the Conference" (Marco, 1960). The faculty athletics representative could not be anyone who received pay for serving in any position directly related to the athletics department. The Rocky Mountain Conference (now Western Athletic Conference) also stipulated that membership in the conference

was excluded for anyone “whose duties include those of a coach or manager” (Savage, 1929). The Southern Conference (now Southeastern Conference) also insisted that “faculty members of the athletics committees in the different institutions of the Conference must constitute a majority and must assume the full responsibility for carrying out the eligibility rules of the Conference” (Savage, 1929).

But forces were already wresting control away from the faculty athletics representatives. Institutions began to hire directors of physical education, the precursor to the position of director of athletics. These directors were responsible for the school’s athletics department and the department of physical education, which often included many student-athletes. In 1922, the Directors Conference was formed by athletics directors and coaches to help unite them in their fight to gain control of their athletics programs (Savage, 1929). The directors immediately began assuming duties that were expressly stipulated in the conference handbooks to be the responsibility of faculty athletics representatives. “Directors and coaches have taken upon themselves some of the duties and prerogatives of the academic members,” wrote Savage in 1929. Presidents were designated as bastions of power by the faculty athletics representatives in each conference, but the presidents were divided, unorganized and failed to unite as a group. The Directors Conference provided the structure that the coaches and directors needed to unite and seize control of major duties and activities related to the conferences and their individual institutions. “Academic teachers, although vouchsafed theoretical control, do not actually control the athletics of their institutions,” Savage reported (1929).

Faculty athletics representatives remained a diverse group, while organizations such as the College Football Coaches Association helped to unify coaches and athletics administrators. The position of faculty athletics representative was still loosely defined by a wide variety of job descriptions penned by institutions and conferences with varying sets of expectations. There was no formalized handbook or national organization for faculty athletics representatives, nor was the position defined specifically on a national level. Faced with these challenges, former NCAA President Earl Ramer initiated a national study to gather information about the position of faculty athletics representative and the role of athletics committees in intercollegiate athletics. The aforementioned study, begun in 1977, was endorsed by the NCAA Research and Executive Committees, and had hoped to shed some light on the nature of the position of faculty athletics representative, including the position’s inherent functions, activities, and problems. The two-year study, in the words of Ramer, “originated in the feelings shared by hundreds of faculty athletics representatives that too little is known, generally, about their own positions and about institutional athletics committees” (Ramer, 1980).

The study revealed that, among the 723 NCAA member institutions, 108 still did not have a designated faculty athletics representative. The vast majority of these institutions were in Division II and III and employed athletics directors or prominent coaches who were also members of the faculty (Ramer, 1980). In addition, the study found that more than half of NCAA institutions had a designated faculty athletics representative position for over 25 years (Ramer, 1980). Ramer concluded that, in the typical case, the faculty athletics representative was a position chosen by the president of the institution to assist both members of the faculty and the athletics department in the interpretation of NCAA and conference regulations; certify the academic and athletics eligibility of student-athletes; serve as a representative for the conference and/or the NCAA; and advise the athletics department on matters related to athletics (Ramer, 1980). More generally, the faculty athletics representative was charged with promoting understanding of the relationship between athletics and the overall institutional goals of academic integrity and responsibility. Ramer also offered several recommendations for the future operation of the position of faculty athletics representative. He recommended a broader sharing of information about the position to develop a better understanding of its functions and practices, and how they vary by institution. Ramer also suggested official recognition of the position in NCAA publications and the promotion of ethical decision-making among faculty athletics representatives.

The exhaustive study not only uncovered meaningful information about the position of faculty athletics representative, but more importantly, it served as an impetus for change. The NCAA, responding to one of Ramer’s recommendations, produced the first Faculty Athletics Representative Handbook. This handbook

included specific recommendations for prescribed duties and responsibilities of faculty athletics representatives on each campus. The handbook also included suggestions that individual institutions develop a position description, commit institutional resources to the position, and insist the significance of the position is recognized by both the president and faculty governance structure of the institution (Hagwell, 1994).

The Ramer Report and the corresponding response from the NCAA provided needed momentum for faculty athletics representatives on a national scale. Faculty athletics representatives convened in a special meeting at the NCAA Convention in 1985 to discuss issues related to the position and to the formation of a national organization of faculty athletics representatives. In 1987, a task force of faculty athletics representatives was formed to facilitate feedback on the newly formed NCAA Presidents Commission (Hagwell, 1994). This task force participated in other activities including the review of pending NCAA academic legislation. Two years later in 1989, this task force ratified by-laws that formed the basis for the first national organization of faculty athletics representatives, the Faculty Athletics Representatives Association (FARA).

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, heightened criticism was evident surrounding the recruiting and academic abuses taking place in collegiate athletics and the need for reform. The faculty's involvement, or lack thereof, was a major part of these criticisms. "The recent sports scandals suggest at least two significant issues relating to the faculty's role in athletics. First, why did not faculties assume a greater oversight role over the deteriorating conditions of big-time sports? And second, can we expect a better faculty performance in the future?" commented Weistart in an issue of "Academe," a bulletin of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) devoted to collegiate sports (Weistart, 1987). Faculty were called to take a more active role, becoming "the most - rather than the least - involved of constituencies" (Strohm, 1987). On October 19, 1989, the trustees of the Knight Foundation created the Knight Commission and directed it to propose a reform agenda for intercollegiate athletics ("Keeping Faith with the Student-Athlete, 1991). A message to the faculty was included in the first report of the Knight Commission stating, "The evidence presented to the Commission indicates that some faculty athletics representatives have not fulfilled their potential as guardians of the academic interest. Your task is to help insure that our institutional representatives to the NCAA are not confused about their purpose" ("Keeping Faith with the Student-Athlete", 1991).

One of the driving forces in the development of the Faculty Athletics Representatives Association (FARA) was a desire to enhance the role of the faculty athletics representative in the governance of intercollegiate athletics. The formation of FARA helped to realize long sought-after goals of cohesion among the diverse group of faculty athletics representatives across the nation, as well as helped to ratify specific NCAA legislation relative to faculty athletics representatives. In January of 1989, the NCAA formally adopted legislation requiring each NCAA member institution to designate a specified faculty athletics representative (Bylaw 6.1.3). "The faculty athletics representative shall be a member of the institution's faculty or an administrator who holds faculty rank and shall not hold an administrative or coaching position in the athletics department" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 1997). In 1992, FARA made the important decision to draft and adopt guidelines for the duties and responsibilities of faculty athletics representatives, "A Statement of the Role of the Faculty Athletics Representative" (Hagwell, 1994).

Despite increased knowledge about the FAR position, the formation of a national association, and the standardization of many functions and practices of faculty athletics representatives, faculty involvement continues to be one of the more controversial issues in intercollegiate athletics. Some faculty athletics representatives are given significant influence or control by their presidents or chancellors over institutional athletics matters and activities. Other faculty athletics representatives report directly to the CEO of the institution with recommendations or information, and the CEO then utilizes this information to make his or her own decisions on matters related to the department of athletics. Similarly, some faculty athletics representatives are given considerable amounts of institutional support to conduct their duties, others are not, while still others may have little need or interest themselves in such support.

Over the nearly 150 years of collegiate athletics, faculty athletics representatives have proved to be an im-

portant resource in the development of a collegiate athletics program that is a significant part of the overall educational experience. It is important that these faculty athletics representatives are informed of the role that they are to fulfill, are provided with appropriate resources and support on behalf of the institution, and are recognized both within their institution and externally by the NCAA and other associations involved in the governance of intercollegiate athletics.

*Dr. Carol Barr
1999*

In the thirteen years since Dr. Carol Barr first published this history of faculty involvement in intercollegiate athletics, there have been a number of noteworthy developments.

In 1997, Division I instituted a series of changes to their legislative process, moving away from the one-institution, one-vote system of casting ballots at the NCAA Convention. In its place was a system of conference-based voting on legislative proposals. Over time, some Division I FARs came to believe that their opportunity to contribute to the discussion on legislation had been compromised. Thus, in 2004, at the FARA annual meeting, a group of Division I FARs who represented institutions in the 1-A subdivision (now known as FBS) met to discuss strategies to ensure their voice was heard. From that meeting and subsequent meetings in 2005, the 1A FAR group was established with the specific intent of creating a forum for discussion of issues and legislation of importance to them (Johnson, 2004). The 1A FAR group has since gone on to hold meetings in conjunction with the FBS athletic directors meeting on an annual basis.

In 2010, the NCAA Division I Board of Directors endorsed a recommendation that calls for greater involvement of FARs within the Division I governance system. While not a legislated directive, the recommendation seeks to ensure that 20 percent of positions on Division I committees are filled by FARs. The NCAA governance staff and the Division I athletics conferences who nominate representatives to serve on those committees continue to work toward that goal.

In order to foster greater involvement of Division II faculty athletics representatives, in 2005 Division II held the first Faculty Athletics Representatives Fellows Institute. Endorsed and financially supported by the divisional governance structure, the intent of the Institute was to “provide an intense developmental opportunity for a core group of FARs to enhance their ability to perform the critical functions of Division II FARs.” (Division II Model FAR Document, 2012). In 2010, Division II set out to plan an Advanced Leadership Institute which would allow for more experienced FARs to further engage on issues of importance to the division. The inaugural Division II Faculty Athletics Representative Advanced Leadership Institute was held in 2011. The result of that Institute was the Model Faculty Athletics Representative Document which lays out a framework for FAR engagement at the campus, conference, divisional and association level.

Both Division III and Division I have established Institutes in recent years that follow the Division II model but are tailored to the needs of the specific divisions. The Division III Institute held its inaugural meeting in 2009 and Division I followed in 2011.

While faculty involvement in the administration of intercollegiate athletics will likely never return to the days of the NCAA’s founding, committed and engaged faculty will continue to play a significant role in NCAA affairs.

*Michael A. Miranda
2012*