

MODEL FACULTY ATHLETICS REPRESENTATIVE DOCUMENT ADDENDUM

DEFINING THE FAR IN THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS RELATING TO INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

The Model FAR Document developed as a result of the inaugural Division II FAR Advanced Leadership Institute in 2011 remains as the primary guideline for defining the FAR role as a liaison with the athletics department, advocating for student-athletes, assisting with institutional control, and communicating the benefits of intercollegiate athletics with internal and external audiences.

Participants at the second institute in 2013 developed this addendum to further explain the section in the Model FAR Document that encourages empowering FARs to “communicate about local, regional and national issues related to intercollegiate athletics as part of the athletics communication team and be willing to interact with the media when appropriate.”

FARs ARE VITAL IN AN INSTITUTION'S STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS CHAIN

- The relationship between intercollegiate athletics and higher education continues to be misunderstood by many external audiences.
- National attention devoted to Division I restructuring, high-profile court cases and increasing commercialization of big-time college sports has stirred a climate of criticism and exacerbated the standard suspicions of athletics as antithetical to the mission of higher education.
- FARs are uniquely positioned to articulate the benefits of intercollegiate athletics to faculty, the media and the public.
- FARs bring the academic perspective and priorities to the discussion, providing a fresh perspective to reporters and broadcasters who are accustomed to interacting only with athletics administrators and coaches.
- As such, FARs are advocates for Division II's mission of "Life in the Balance," as they champion student-athlete academic success and help ensure the quality of the athletics experience.

FARs ENHANCE COMMUNICATION WITH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AUDIENCES

- **Define the FAR role**

FARs are not employed by athletics but rather serve as independent liaisons between academics and athletics. They protect academic integrity by ensuring compliance and oversight, and don't "take sides."
- **Explain the student-athlete experience**

Division II student-athletes enjoy a highly competitive athletics experience and are able to participate in other activities the campus has to offer. Division II student-athletes graduate at rates higher than the general student body. They also have time to devote to community engagement, internships, seminars and other activities that help prepare them for life after graduation.
- **Express the DII mission and attributes**

"Life in the Balance" means athletics is not a full-time pursuit. Division II student-athletes balance their passion for playing sports with their commitment to success in the classroom and take part in servant leadership within their communities.
- **Promote the relationship between athletics and higher education**

Division II student-athletes through their athletics participation gain unique experiences in teamwork, leadership, self-discipline and time management. As the "front porch" to the institution, athletics promotes the institutional mission and values of higher education to external audiences.

FARs HELP BRIDGE GAPS WITH VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS

■ **Faculty**

While most faculty support the athletics mission, some exhibit indifference, annoyance, or even hostility toward athletics. Perhaps they view athletics as antithetical to academics, or perhaps they feel marginalized or crowded out by the prominent role athletics plays on campus. Other faculty may not be interested in sports in general, or they may disapprove of the values of competitiveness and the aggression that they perceive as the product of sport. As such, the FAR plays an important – and sometimes challenging – role in communicating the values of athletics to other faculty. A major role of FARs is to work to ensure both a quality student-athlete experience and student-athlete well-being.

■ **Athletics department/conference office**

FARs can help the athletics department communications team by updating student-athlete academic success, awards and achievements. FARs should at least occasionally attend athletics department staff meetings and interact regularly with the athletics director and senior woman administrator, among others (especially coaches) in the department. As for conference communication, FARs should establish relationships with FARs at fellow conference member schools and attend conference meetings when possible.

■ **Student-athletes**

As the Model FAR Document states, FARs should offer themselves as independent sources of support and advice to student-athletes, and be an advocate for student-athlete interests with the institution, the conference and the NCAA overall. As such, FARs should be accessible for student-athletes and be involved as much as possible. For example, ask to attend a team meeting in order to advocate for how student-athletes balance their athletics and academic success, attend a Student-Athlete Advisory Committee meeting in order to learn about student-athlete issues and concerns, or meet regularly with campus officials such as the dean of student affairs, the registrar and residence life personnel to advocate on student-athletes' behalf.

■ **Community**

With community engagement being such an important tenet for Division II, FARs can effectively and positively communicate the values of DII student-athletes on campus and throughout the community. FARs can provide valuable guest-speaker opportunities with Rotary Clubs, corporate sponsors, alumni groups, booster groups and other potential supporters of the institution's athletics program.

■ **Media**

FARs offer a unique perspective on student-athlete academic success for reporters and broadcasters who know only about the athletics side of the equation. In addition, FARs can be positioned as trusted, independent sources whose advocacy is less likely to be perceived as biased by members of the media. As such, FARs can help dispel common myths about the role of athletics within higher education, and in particular, distinguish Division II behaviors from the more high-profile incidents in big-time college sports programs.