

# Annual Report on Activities of the Athletic Council and Faculty Athletics Representative to University Council/Faculty Senate

2024-2025

Submitted by Chris Melde, Ph.D., Faculty Athletics Representative

## **Introduction**

The Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR), in conjunction with the Athletics Council, provides periodic reports to the University Council and Faculty Senate. At minimum, Athletics Council reports to University Council once per year, while the FAR, in consultation with the Athletics Council, produces a semi-annual report to the Faculty Senate on the academic performance and well-being of student athletes. Included in the FAR report will also be a complete list of their duties.

## **Background and Table of Contents**

The focus of this report is on the activities of the Athletics Council during the 2024-2025 academic year and the academic performance and well-being of student athletes. A verbal report consistent with these themes was presented to the Faculty Senate on April 15, 2025 in an abbreviated format. The following report includes multiple sections describing the activities of Athletics Council and Faculty Athletics Representative, along with metrics associated with the academic performance and well-being of our student athletes. These sections include:

1. Student Athlete Participation at MSU
2. Overview of activities of the Athletics Council during the 2024-2025 academic year
3. Student Athlete Academic Performance
4. Student Athlete Well-Being
5. Description of the FAR's Activities/Role of the FAR
6. Roster of the Athletic Council
7. Complimentary Ticket Use of the Athletics Council

### **1. Student Athlete Participation at MSU**

To better contextualize the size and scope of MSU Athletics, the following figures report on athletics participation at MSU among men and women athletes, both in total and by individual sports. There are 11 men's and 12 women's varsity sports at MSU. While total participation in varsity sports varies from year to year (see Table 1), the proportion of women to men participating in varsity athletics in the last five years has remained around 47%. This figure,

however, represents the unduplicated participation rate across athletics teams. That is, some athletes appear on multiple varsity rosters, with some sports having multiple rosters across spring and fall seasons.

<b>Table 1: Total Student Athlete Participation and Participation for Women and Men</b>					
<b>Year</b>	<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Total Unduplicated Student Athletes*</b>	<b>Total Men</b>	<b>Total Women</b>	<b>Proportion of Women to Men</b>
<b>2020</b>	<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>48.63%</b>
<b>2021</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>713</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>47.41%</b>
<b>2022</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>46.79%</b>
<b>2023</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>676</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>48.22%</b>
<b>2024</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>704</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>47.87%</b>
<b>2025</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>45.90%</b>

Notes: \*Some sports have separate fall and spring rosters that can comprise the same student athletes. This figure does not duplicate a student athlete across multiple seasons.

Table 2 provides information on participation in varsity sports by individual sport. Here, we see there were 432 male members of varsity athletics rosters across the 11 sports, while there were 450 females rostered across 12 varsity sports. When counted this way, female athletes represented nearly 52% of the total roster spots across all varsity teams, with men totaling 48%. For comparison purposes, in the fall of 2024 there were 41,234 undergraduate students at MSU. Women represented 52% of the undergraduate student body, while men were 48% of the total. This suggests a high degree of consistency between the gender breakdown in varsity athletics and university enrollments.

## **2. Overview of activities of the Athletics Council during the 2024-2025 academic year**

Over the course of the 2024-2025 academic year, Athletic Council (AC) convened on six occasions. While the AC was scheduled to meet once per month, there were no monthly meetings for November, December, and February. Below is a summary of each meeting, describing the themes covered and discussed on each occasion.

September 2024

Chairs of the AC, Knutson and Kaplowitz, who served as the Faculty Athletics Representatives for MSU, described the charge of the committee and its role in relation to the Athletics Director

(AD). AD Haller then provided an overview of the academic achievements of Spartan Athletes over the course of the 2023-2024 academic year.

Table 2: Title IX Participation Count - 2024-25		
Sports	Male	Female
Baseball	36	
Men's Basketball	16	
Women's Basketball		16
Men's Cross Country	33	
Women's Cross Country		51
Field Hockey		24
Football	119	
Men's Golf	9	
Women's Golf		10
Gymnastics		19
Ice Hockey	27	
Rowing		88
Men's Soccer	31	
Women's Soccer		38
Softball		23
Men's Tennis	10	
Women's Tennis		10
Men's Indoor Track	53	
Women's Indoor Track		77
Men's Outdoor Track	51	
Women's Outdoor Track		71
Volleyball		23
Wrestling	38	
Total	423	450
Percent of Total	48.45%	51.55%

There were two significant themes discussed during the meeting. First, AD Haller provided an update on the House Settlement and the major components of the case that had implications for Spartan Athletics. He described what revenue sharing was, where the money for revenue sharing would come from the Athletics Department budget, and how potential back pay for former student athletes may impact future budgets.

The second significant discussion involved new membership on the University's Drug and Alcohol Policy and Testing Committee. Current and former members of the committee discussed the role of the committee in monitoring drug and alcohol testing and producing an annual report. Two new members of the committee were identified from the AC, Dr. Chris Melde and Travis Key.

#### *October 2024*

The primary theme of the October meeting was student athlete health and wellness. Dr. Kovan, Director of Sports Medicine and Performance brought several staff to the meeting to discuss MSU's efforts to support both physical and mental health among student athletes. They

discussed staffing across the different facets of player health and wellness, including physical health (e.g., athletic trainers, physical therapist, physicians), mental health (e.g., dedicated counselors), and sport performance (e.g., sport psychologists). They discussed utilization rates, student athlete feedback on services, and how they interact with other universities in the Big Ten and beyond.

We also heard from a player and head coach of Women's Soccer, who had just returned from their first trip to the west coast as part of the expanded Big Ten conference. We discussed the challenges of that trip for the athletes and coaches. We also spoke briefly about how the transfer process is going for student athletes and teams at MSU.

### *January 2025*

Between the October 2024 and January 2025 meeting there were new rules passed through academic governance that had implications for the AC. First, the FAR(s) would no longer serve as AC chair, but would serve solely an ex officio role on the committee. As a result, a primary discussion point in the January 2025 meeting was the need to elect a new chair of the AC. The process for electing the new chair was discussed.

Second, Todd Edwards, Director of Student Athlete Support Services (SASS), discussed the role of SASS and the academic accomplishments of MSU student athletes during the fall 2024 semester. We also discussed issues of importance for student athletes, especially as they relate to the transfer process. Director Edwards described how increased use of student athlete transfers has impacted his unit's and university resources around transfer reviews and student athlete eligibility. We discussed the transfer process including timing and credit review, along with standards for eligibility for student athletes, including GPA requirements and the 40/60/80 Rule for progress towards degree to remain eligible.

Lastly, AD Haller asked for advice concerning ticket pricing moving forward and the opportunity to host the last football game of the year in Detroit. The AC provided feedback on these issues.

### *March 2025*

The March meeting focused on the role of Compliance in the Athletics Department, including a presentation by Jennifer Smith, Head of Compliance and Senior Women's Administrator at MSU. She shared that the internal audit was above expectations for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row. MSU conducts an internal audit every year, even though we are only required to do so every 5 years. She discussed trends in compliance issues, including the difference between minor infractions and more major events. We also briefly discussed how compliance rules and regulations would likely change if the House settlement was passed.

AD Haller also provided updates on academic successes of the athletics program and the facilities upgrades that were approved by the Board of Trustees. This included both renovations of the football stadium as well as a completely new facility for women's sports and men's wrestling.

Newly elected chair Rebecca Malouin discussed an initial meeting between her, the newly hired Faculty Athletics Representative Chris Melde, President Guskiewicz, and AD Haller. FAR Melde highlighted a potential opportunity for the AC to review how transfer athletes are impacted academically and the infrastructure needed to better welcome new athletes to MSU.

### *April 2025*

The April meeting took place in Jenison Fieldhouse. We first heard from a student athlete who shared their experience with the transfer portal and how internal decisions on transfer credits impacted their ability to maintain their major from their previous institution. The theme of the day was on facilities, where we heard from Dylan Martinez on the state of Jenison Fieldhouse and the plans for the new sports facility to house volleyball, gymnastics, and wrestling. After this presentation, we took a tour of Jenison Fieldhouse, led by Sarah Brushaber and Kasey Carter.

### *May 2025*

With the departure of AD Haller, Jen Smith, who was serving as the Interim AD with Tom Izzo, provided an update on the state of athletics at MSU. Most notably, she shared how MSU was preparing for what was believed to be the imminent approval of the House Settlement, including an overview of NIL GO, and how student athlete NIL deals would be reviewed and monitored. We also discussed how \$2.5 million worth of scholarships work against the \$20.5 million salary cap in revenue share.

We also discussed the search process for the new AD, which was run by the outside search firm Turnkey.

Lastly, the AC discussed the possibility of new Bylaws and rules for the council to follow in selecting a new chair.

## **3. Student Athlete Academic Performance**

For the 2024-2025 academic year, MSU student-athletes achieved all-time highs across several dimensions of success. With respect to cumulative GPA, after the fall 2024 term the all-sports figure was 3.4324, which was an all-time high for MSU athletics. Then, the fall 2024 record was eclipsed in the spring 2025 semester, when the cumulative GPA for all athletes was 3.4716. It was also the first time ever that all varsity teams surpassed a cumulative GPA of 3.0 in both semesters in an academic year. Teams with their highest cumulative GPA in program history included Men's Basketball, Women's Basketball, Field Hockey, Football, Hockey, Rowing, Men's Soccer, Women's Soccer, Men's Track & Field, Women's Track & Field, and Wrestling. Similar success was also achieved in semester GPA figures, where the combined semester GPA for all athletes was the highest ever in the fall of 2024 at 3.4616, and the spring semester was the second highest ever at 3.4173. Teams posting their highest semester GPA in program history included Men's Basketball, Women's Basketball, Men's Cross Country, Field Hockey, Football, Hockey, Women's Soccer, Men's Track & Field, and Women's Track & Field.

MSU student athletes achieved historically high marks as measured by graduation rates as well. With respect to the Federal Graduate Rate<sup>1</sup> (FGR), the 2024-2025 Spartan athletics four-year rate (2014-2017) was second all time at 80%. This represented a figure that was eighth among all schools in the Power 5 conferences, and fourth highest among all public schools on that list. Three sports, Women's Soccer, Men's Tennis, and Volleyball posted a perfect 100% four-year rate. Four sports were among the top five in their respective sports across the Power 5 conferences, with Hockey rated 3<sup>rd</sup> overall, Women's Cross Country and Men's Soccer ranked 4<sup>th</sup>, and Wrestling ranked 5<sup>th</sup>. For Graduation Success Rate (GSR), academic year 2024-2025 was the fourth highest all-time for MSU at 91%. For reference, the all-time high was 92% set on three separate occasions. Eight sports boasted a perfect 100% GSR, including: Women's Cross Country/Track & Field, Women's Golf, Gymnastics, Women's Soccer, Men's Tennis, Women's Tennis, and Volleyball.

Finally, the NCAA also calculates an Academic Progress Rate (APR)<sup>2</sup>. Teams must earn a four-year average APR of 930 to be eligible to compete in NCAA championships. The overall athletics department average APR is 991, which ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the Big Ten in 2024-2025. We had several sports earn recognition in their sport for being in the top 10 nationally, including: Men's Cross Country, Field Hockey, Men's Golf, Women's Golf, Gymnastics, Men's Soccer, Softball, Men's Tennis, Women's Tennis, and Men's Track & Field.

#### **4. Student athlete well-being**

##### *Athletic Training, Sports Medicine, and Performance*

MSU Athletics employs a large number of athletic trainers, nutritionists, and physicians to support student athletes' physical well-being. Under the direction of Jennifer Wilkinson, Director of Athletic Training, each varsity sport employs at least a full-time athletic trainer dedicated to the sport, with larger teams (e.g., football) employing additional trainers as needed, including athletic training interns. In addition to athletic training and nutrition staff, and under the direction of Dr. Jeff Kovan, Director of Sports Medicine and Performance, MSU also employs seven team physicians and two team physician assistants through the Sports Medicine department at MSU Health Care. Athletic training facilities are located throughout a number of athletics facilities on campus, with a fuller description and photos available at <https://msuspartans.com/sports/2019/9/19/michigan-state-athletic-training>.

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<sup>1</sup> How the NCAA calculates graduation rates can be found here: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/research/gradrates/data/2018RES\_Codebook6-DIINationalAggregationOverall.pdf

<sup>2</sup> For an explanation of how the NCAA calculates the APR see: <https://www.ncaa.org/sports/2015/5/19/academic-progress-rate-explained.aspx>.

### *Mental Health and Sport Performance Services*

MSU has a full-time staff devoted to student athlete mental health and well-being. Housed in the Duffy Daugherty Building/Skandalaris Football Center, the MSU Student-Athlete Wellness Center provides student athletes with support dedicated to mental health and sport performance. Student athletes can sign up for these resources using an online scheduling tool found at <https://msuspartans.com/sports/2023/2/1/michigan-state-student-athlete-wellness>. Spartan student athletes can work with the center staff to address a wide range of issues they may face, including:

- Depression
- Anxiety (including performance anxiety)
- Grief and Loss
- Trauma
- Motivation
- Focus and Concentration
- Visualization
- Substance Abuse
- Self-esteem
- Effective Communication
- Relationship issues with family, friends, coaches, and teammates
- Identity development
- Time Management
- Daily routines and habits
- Stress Management
- Injury and Transition out of sport
- Disordered Eating

In addition to these individualized services, the center also offers group-based workshops dedicated to topics such as emotion management, team cohesion, resiliency, mindfulness, performance anxiety, and goal setting.

### **5. Description of the FAR's Activities/Role of the FAR**

Each institutional member of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is required to have a Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR). According to the NCAA Constitution “The president or chancellor of each member institution shall appoint and support the Faculty Athletics Representative as the principal point of contact to whom student-athletes can report any action, activity or behavior by anyone associated with athletics programs inconsistent with this Constitution’s principle of student-athlete health and well-being. In this role, the Faculty Athletics Representative is a reporting contact for student-athletes independent of the institution’s athletic department, but not a legal advocate for student-athletes. The Faculty

Athletics Representative, in this capacity, shall report directly to the member institution's president or chancellor" (p. 16).

Beyond this basic mission, the FAR position can take on many forms across institutions. At MSU, the FAR serves a number of roles both internal to the institution and via representation on Big Ten Conference and NCAA matters. Below is a description of the FAR position and a list of responsibilities noted in the most recent position description for the FAR.

### **Overview:**

The Michigan State University Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR) is a member of the university's faculty, appointed by the MSU President, and serves as a liaison, independent faculty voice and provides advice in the administration of the institution's athletic program. The FAR is an ex-officio member the MSU Athletic Council and is the institution's faculty representative to the Big Ten Conference and the NCAA.

### **Role:**

The FAR plays a strategic role at Michigan State University, helping ensure the academic integrity of the intercollegiate athletics program and enhancing the student-athlete experience.

The FAR represents MSU and its faculty in the relationship between the NCAA, The Big Ten Conference and the institution. The FAR serves an integral liaison and advisory role in the governance of MSU's intercollegiate athletics programs and represents the President -- in academic and student-athlete matters -- to the athletic department and MSU's faculty.

### **Authority**

The authority for the FAR's oversight responsibilities comes from the President, the NCAA Bylaws, the Big Ten Conference Bylaws, and MSU's Academic Governance Bylaws.

Additionally, the FAR:

- Maintains access to and a working relationship with the Provost, Vice President for Student Life & Engagement, the Director of Athletics, and other key personnel within the institution and the Athletic Department.
- Reports annually to the Faculty Senate regarding the operation of the athletics program and their role as FAR.
- Serves as ex-officio member of Athletic Council, without vote, and serves as a member of other committees as assigned.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Academic integrity**



The FAR helps ensure the academic integrity of Michigan State University's intercollegiate athletics program.

- Periodically review appropriate records (for both individual student-athletes and for athletic teams) to ensure that decisions related to admissions, academic advising, evaluation of academic performance, and the extent of academic support services are made in ways that are consistent with the primary academic mission of the institution.
- Review that MSU has effective mechanisms for evaluating whether student-athletes have met all academic eligibility requirements for practice, financial aid, and intercollegiate competition established by the NCAA, the Big Ten Conference, and MSU.
- Review that all certifications for both initial and continuing academic eligibility have been performed correctly, and with adequate documentation.
- Prepare (or request on the basis of FAR specifications) periodic reports on the academic preparation and performance of student-athletes and discuss such reports with the President, the faculty, and the athletics department.

## **Compliance**

The FAR assumes joint responsibility with the Director of Athletics and staff for ensuring compliance with NCAA, Big Ten Conference, and institutional rules.

- Maintain a working relationship with compliance staff on compliance-related activities undertaken within the athletics department and coordinate the compliance-related activities of campus units located outside the athletics department including, but not limited to, efforts focused on academic-eligibility certifications (noted above), rules education and staff training, rules interpretations, and periodic spot-checks of records to ensure all institutional compliance systems are engaged and functioning.
- Play a role in any major institutional inquiry into alleged or suspected rules violations and in the preparation of any infraction reports submitted to the Big Ten Conference or the NCAA.
- Review the results of any periodic audits of the athletics department that may be conducted.
- Coordinate the review and completion of the Big Ten Institutional Standards document.
- Provide signature authorization for NCAA violations and Big Ten waivers.
- Serve as a member of the Review Committee for the NCAA Student-Athlete Conduct Review Policy.
- Play a major role in any NCAA athletics certification program reviews.
- In collaboration with athletics administration, ensure that appropriate standards of student-athlete conduct are established (for both on- and off-campus behavior), clearly communicated, and consistently enforced.

## **Student-Athlete Experience**

- The FAR serves as an advocate for student-athletes, ensures student-athletes' well-being, ensures access to mental health services, and promotes the development of student-athletes as a whole -- as students, athletes, and members of the community.
- Promote a balance between academics, athletics, and the social lives of student-athletes, which affords them opportunities to enjoy the full range of collegiate experiences available to students generally.
- Facilitate student-athlete participation on athletics boards and committees and inform student-athletes about the FAR role as an independent source of counsel, assistance, and information.
- Encourage and facilitate interactions between student-athletes and the mainstream of institutional activities.
- Ensure that testing, counseling, evaluation, and other career-planning services are made available to student-athletes.

### **Communication/Administration**

- Serve as an advisor on academic and student-athlete wellness athletics matters to the President and others involved in the administration of intercollegiate athletics.
- Represent the faculty perspective in the governance of intercollegiate athletics and play a central role in discussions of matters related to intercollegiate athletics at athletics committee meetings and at Faculty Senate meetings.
- Play a significant role, in conjunction with the Office of Compliance Services, in the shaping of institutional voting decisions on Big Ten Conference and NCAA legislation.
- Participate in NCAA and Big Ten Conference committees, councils, and in other capacities as appropriate.

### **Other**

- Perform other duties as assigned by the President and/or as appropriate under the NCAA and Big Ten Conference Bylaws. These and above duties may change as the result of changes to the NCAA and Big Ten Conference Bylaws and policies.

### **6. Roster of the Athletic Council**

2024-25 Athletic Council Members			
LAST	FIRST	Email	Affiliation
Bonczewski	Jillian	bonczews@msu.edu	SAAC President
Callahan	Michael	mrc@msu.edu	MSU Music Assoc Prof
Dobrovolski Pereira	Gustavo	dobrovol@msu.edu	COGS
Fisher	Ronald	fisherr1@msu.edu	Economics

Garety	Joan	joangarety@gmail.com	
Gasser	Ray	gasserra@msu.edu	REHS
Gerstner	Joanne	joanneg@msu.edu	Journalism
Idema	Amanda	<a href="mailto:agidema@msu.edu">agidema@msu.edu</a>	UCUE
Jones	Brian	brianjones@playmakers.com	Alumni & Business Owner
Kaplowitz	Michael	KAPLOWIT@MSU.EDU	FAR
Key	Travis	<a href="mailto:keytravis13@gmail.com">keytravis13@gmail.com</a>	Alumni
Knutson	Bonnie	drbonnie@broad.msu.edu	FAR
Malouin	Rebecca	malouinr@msu.edu	International Studies & Programs
Mastin	Teresa	mastinte@msu.edu <a href="mailto:teresamastin@gmail.com">teresamastin@gmail.com</a>	MSU Advertising and Public Relations
McLaren	Nicklas	mclarenn@msu.edu	Alumni Assoc
Radakovich	Isabelle	<a href="mailto:radako10@msu.edu">radako10@msu.edu</a>	ASMSU
Smith	Mary Kay	mksmith@msu.edu	MSU Learning and Assessment Center, Alumni & Past Parent
Stieve	Deb	stieved@msu.edu	Assistant Professor of Nursing
Wagner	Brian	brian@ptisglobal.com	Alumnus
Williams	Sheneka	will3677@msu.edu	MSU Educational Administration
Melde	Christopher	<a href="mailto:melde@msu.edu">melde@msu.edu</a>	Criminal Justice

## **7. Complimentary Ticket Use of the Athletics Council**

While members of the Athletics Council are urged to “minimize the award of special privileges to themselves that are uncharacteristic of those generally available to faculty... it is expected that the Athletic Council will fulfill responsibilities related to institutional representation as appropriate throughout the year” (see Bylaws 5.2.5.2.1). Given this, members of Athletics Council are eligible to receive two complimentary season tickets to football, men’s basketball, and hockey, as well as two Go Green Cards, which can be used to attend home games for Men’s & Women’s Soccer, Women’s Gymnastics, Wrestling, Baseball, and Softball. While the base price of the season tickets are waived for Athletics Council members, if there are additional fees associated with the seats, such as Spartan Fund Seat Premiums, Athletics Council members are responsible for those costs. Athletics Council members are also provided with a parking pass for

home football games upon request. Lastly, members of Athletics Council are taxed on the face value of the tickets.

During the 2024-2025 Academic Year, of the 23 members of Athletics Council, nine received complementary football season tickets, 10 received men's basketball tickets, and nine received hockey tickets. The ticket office does not track the use of Go Green Cards by Athletics Council Members as these do not come with specific seats for attendance at games, although all members could pick up these cards at the ticket office.