

# Best Practices for Working Effectively with Your Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR)

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## Abstract

*Positions held by faculty members at institutions offering NCAA-sponsored intercollegiate athletics, Faculty Athletics Representatives (or FARs) serve as a liaison between athletics and academics and play a critical role in the institutional control and academic integrity of athletics as well as the welfare of student-athletes on campus. Based on a survey of more than 160 FARs, this article describes the role and responsibilities of FARs and provides advice on how to collaborate with the FAR.*

Today, all NCAA member institutions (representing more than one thousand colleges and universities) are required to designate a faculty athletics representative (or FAR). Can you spot your institution's FAR walking across the quad? Here's a hint. Look for a faculty member who is a white male, in his fifties, holding a rank of associate or full professor, who teaches about half to two-thirds of his time, and has been at your institution for about twenty years. Of course, not every FAR fits this description, compiled from demographics submitted during a recent survey of FARs (see Miranda and Paskus 2013). Based on rank and longevity, FARs generally are successful in their academic careers and have a long work history at their institution. The vital component of this description is that the majority of FARs are members of their institution's *faculty*, with a few administrators not associated with athletics holding the position as well. As a faculty member, he or she teaches courses, advises students, conducts research, publishes, and, perhaps, holds an administrative role in his or her department or college. It is this faculty perspective that makes the FAR a valuable advisor to both your institution's CEO and your athletics director. It also makes the FAR an important resource on campus, because he or she represents and balances both academic and athletic interests on your campus. Even if you can't name your institution's FAR, you probably could use some advice on how to work more effectively with him or her.

FARs are not new positions on campus. In fact, faculty members have been involved with sports on their campuses for almost as long as sports competitions have occurred between institutions, at least 150 years. Faculty, unhappy with how disruptive, unregulated, dangerous, and unruly athletics had become under the guidance of student-athletes, opted to form faculty athletics committees—and shortly thereafter the position of FAR—to provide institutional oversight of athletics. Later, these FARs would band together to form athletic associations (that would later become some of the athletics conferences we recognize today). Slowly, however, faculty control of athletic

conferences declined as athletics directors in the 1920s took more control of the athletics programs at institutions. In the ensuing decades, the NCAA, athletics conferences, and institutions wrestled with and ultimately helped to define the role and job descriptions of FARs. These efforts resulted in the formation of the Faculty Athletics Representative Association (FARA) and the publication of the *NCAA Faculty Athletics Representative Handbook* (see the “Resources for More Information about FARs” section at end of article). Far from settling the issue of faculty involvement in intercollegiate athletics, significant variation among FAR duties, resources, and their control over athletics still exists today. (For a more detailed history of faculty involvement in intercollegiate athletics, see Barr [1999] and Oriard [2012].)

The FAR on your campus represents an important resource for information, guidance, and recommendations. This article reports on the best practices offered by more than 160 FARs. Because a FAR works closely with stakeholders across campus, this article includes sections providing advice to the major participants in this collaborative endeavor: student-athletes, faculty, administrators and staff, new FARs, and CEO (i.e., president and chancellor). But, first, I describe the present-day role and responsibilities of the FAR.

## **The Role and Responsibilities of the FAR**

It is difficult to write a one-size-fits-all job description for a FAR. Although the specific day-to-day duties will vary, a FAR’s role is to ensure the proper balance between academics and intercollegiate athletics on his or her campus. This is no easy task in this era of billion dollar television contracts for athletic teams and shrinking state funding for the academic side of campus. Highly public scandals routinely occur (Libit 2011 and Branch 2011). However, to guide the FAR in fostering an environment in which intercollegiate athletics is an important contributor to the overall education of the whole student body, there is consistent agreement on the three major responsibilities of any FAR: ensure the institutional control of the athletics program, maintain academic integrity, and foster the welfare of student-athletes. How much each FAR attends to these responsibilities is influenced largely by the unique resources and constraints found at individual institutions.

## **Institutional Control**

You might have already heard this term mentioned in relation to intercollegiate athletics. Unfortunately, the term usually appears in the context of an NCAA investigation, when the NCAA Committee on Infractions charges an institution with a *lack of institutional control*—the worst possible charge with which an institution may be charged in relation to its intercollegiate athletics program. One CEO, for example, remarked that his institution being found guilty of a lack of institutional control was the single worst day of his tenure as CEO. The *NCAA Manual* describes the general principle of institutional control in 6.01.1: “The control and responsibility for the conduct of intercollegiate athletics shall be exercised by the institution itself and by the conference(s), if any, of which it is a member. Administrative control or faculty

control, or a combination of the two, shall constitute institutional control.” That’s pretty broad and a huge responsibility.

Often the CEO cannot manage the day-to-day operations and oversight of an intercollegiate athletics program. Instead, the CEO delegates such authority and control to the athletics director and oversight to the FAR. Both the athletics director and FAR report directly to the CEO, and, in some cases, the FAR reports to the faculty senate as well. However, while the athletics director manages the operations of the athletics program, the FAR ensures that institutional and NCAA policy is followed. In practice, the FAR might oversee the certification of student-athletes for financial aid as well as practice and competition. The FAR also will work closely with senior athletic staff responsible for ensuring compliance with all NCAA rules. Moreover, any allegation of the institution violating NCAA rules usually is investigated by the FAR, in collaboration with other senior administrators and faculty.

Typical duties related to ensuring institutional control might include the following:

- Regularly meet with CEO, athletics director, director of NCAA Compliance, and legal counsel as needed.
- Administer the yearly NCAA recruiting test to current and newly hired coaches.
- Participate in all phases of a major violation case.
- Work with NCAA compliance office to write and revise policies.
- Review and approve hardship waivers, progress toward degree (PTD) waivers, reinstatement, and NCAA violations paperwork.
- Cast institutional vote on NCAA legislation and overrides.
- Meet with prospective student-athletes, following NCAA rules.
- Attend conference-related meetings.

To help in this large, complicated endeavor, the FAR might chair or serve on a committee (e.g., an intercollegiate athletics advisory committee, chancellor’s intercollegiate athletics policy board) tasked with advising the CEO and faculty senate on matters related to intercollegiate athletics to ensure institutional control. In addition, the committee might serve as an advisory resource for the athletics director and director of NCAA compliance on matters of policy and development to ensure the alignment of intercollegiate athletics with the values and goals of the university. Also serving on this committee might be faculty members, university administrators (e.g., vice president for student affairs, registrar), and community members as well as students (e.g., a student-athlete representative, student-body president). Typical duties of the committee might include the following:

- Providing the CEO with information on and recommendations for improving institutional control of intercollegiate athletics, student-athlete welfare, academic integrity, and compliance with Title IX. Regularly submitting *Gender Equity*, *Academic Services*, *Diversity Plan*, and *Exit Survey Review* reports to CEO and athletics director.
- Monitoring and supporting academic performance of student-athletes.
- Providing guidance to the athletics director on matters related to institutional control of intercollegiate athletics, student-athlete welfare, academic integrity, and compliance with Title IX.
- Providing advice to director of NCAA compliance on matters related to NCAA and conference compliance
- Offering feedback and recommendations on compliance audits, reviews, reports, waivers, and violations brought to the committee by the director of NCAA compliance.
- Helping the athletics program complement the total life of the institution.

In addition to serving on the preceding type of committee, the FAR also serves on many on- and off-campus committees to further his or her efforts to ensure institutional control. In fact, in 2012, I attended more than 140 athletically-related meetings. A FAR might serve on campus committees such as an athletics admission oversight committee, student-athlete financial aid appeals committee, academic support services committee, student-athlete well-being committee, search committees (e.g., hiring athletics director, head coach, academic support personnel), faculty senate committee on athletics, NCAA compliance committee, and academic improvement committee. The FAR also represents institutional interests on conference-level committees (e.g., joint executive council, recognition committee) as well as might serve on national NCAA committees.

## **Academic Integrity**

Even though a student might participate in intercollegiate athletics (and, say, be really good at shooting a basket), this student must still meet the academic requirements and policies in place for *all* students at the institution. The FAR is responsible for ensuring that student-athletes are not treated any better than other students enrolled at the institution. Instances of when faculty give student-athletes special benefits not given to other students (which is a violation of NCAA rules) often make the news headlines. An overly enthusiastic instructor, for example, might allow a student-athlete to retake an exam or submit extra credit even though the syllabus explicitly states that neither is allowed. Or, an instructor might allow student-athletes to skip class meetings without penalty, even though attendance is required. (Student-athletes as well as students in other university-sponsored activities such as band and debate may miss class meetings

for travel to away competitions without penalty. But, student-athletes not traveling to a competition cannot skip a class without consequence, if attendance is required.)

To meet this responsibility, a FAR might review grades for specific student-athletes or courses/majors with a high proportion of student-athletes to look for evidence that academic policies and rigor are not being applied uniformly. The FAR also reviews the academic progress and GPA of each student-athlete before they are allowed to compete. Finally, the FAR works with the Registrar's office and admissions to review student-athlete prospects that are deemed high-risk because they do not meet the typical academic profile of other admitted students. In many cases, the FAR has the authority to decide not to admit a prospective student-athlete who he or she feels will not be successful at the institution.

Typical duties related to ensuring academic integrity might also include the following:

- Coordinate the academic eligibility certification of all student-athletes.
- Assist in the writing and/or review of Academic Progress Rate (APR) improvement and implementation reports. For more information visit <http://ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/public/ncaa/academics/division+i/academic+progress+rate>.
- Proctor or arrange for the proctoring of exams for student-athletes attending off-campus competitions, conference tournaments, or championships.
- Monitor playing and practice schedules to ensure student-athletes are not abusing missed class policy. Also, review competition schedules to limit the amount of time student-athletes are away from classes.

## **Student-Athlete Welfare**

The FAR is responsible for ensuring the development of student-athletes as whole, as a student, an athlete, and a member of the community. The FAR is also responsible for ensuring that student-athletes are not treated any *worse* than other students. Just as there are overly enthusiastic instructors willing to help in any way to further the success of an athletic team, there are instances of faculty who distrust and dislike student-athletes and go out their way to make life difficult for them. Typically, some faculty will not allow student-athletes to make up work they missed while excused on official university business (i.e., competing at an away site). The FAR might intervene on behalf of the student, often using the institution's official student absence policy that states that the student has the right and responsibility to make up any work missed because of their official absence (e.g., see [http://policy.boisestate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/3120\\_OfficialStudentAbsence.pdf](http://policy.boisestate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/3120_OfficialStudentAbsence.pdf)).

Ensuring the welfare of student-athletes goes beyond the classroom. The FAR also is responsible in making sure that student-athletes are being treated fairly by the athletics program. The FAR is also confidential resource *outside* the athletics program for

student-athletes. Student-athletes may contact the FAR with concerns they do not feel comfortable discussing with a coach or athletics administrator. For example, a student-athlete might meet with the FAR to discuss options if he or she feels that the coach is discriminating against him or her because of sexual orientation. Or, a student-athlete might contact the FAR about a possible violation of NCAA rules by the coaching staff. In addition, a student-athlete raise a concern about being pressured to return too quickly from an injury. Finally, the FAR often chairs or serves in an ex-officio capacity on committees tasked with hearing appeals by student-athletes who have had their athletic scholarships pulled by a coach.

Typical duties related to ensuring student-athlete welfare might also include the following:

- Administer NCAA surveys (e.g., surveys on gambling, drug use, etc.) as requested and as resources/time allow. Also, ensure that NCAA surveys meet the institution's human subjects guidelines.
- Review scholarship opportunities for student-athletes and helping with applications (e.g., FAR letter of recommendation).
- Monitor the cases of student-athletes involved in conduct-code violations.
- Attend team meetings, practices, home contests, and away contests, as available.
- Conduct face-to-face exit interviews, with the help of other faculty, with all departing student-athletes.

## **A Survey Study on FAR Perspectives**

Ensuring institutional control, academic integrity, and student-athlete welfare is a big responsibility and one that requires close collaboration with stakeholders from across campus, in and outside of athletics. Because each campus has its own unique qualities and limitations, how a FAR works day-to-day with each of these stakeholders varies. I invited FARs from Division I, II, and III to respond to a brief survey that asked them to discuss the challenges they faced in their role as an FAR and to share strategies for success.

More than 160 FARs participated, with the majority (61 percent) representing NCAA Division I institutions as well as representatives from DII (21 percent) and DIII (18 percent). The majority of respondents (60 percent) had between two and nine years of experience, with 27 percent having more than ten years of experience as FAR. Below is a compilation of their advice.

## **Advice for Student-Athletes**

Most FARs regularly look for opportunities to themselves in front of student-athletes and to educate them about their job. Many visit summer courses populated with incoming student-athletes as well as present at an orientation for new student-athletes

and attend team-specific meetings early in the semester. They also occasionally attend a Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) meeting (see NCAA YouTube video for a brief overview). In all these interactions with student-athletes, FARs typically focus on core responsibilities of the FAR—institutional control, academic integrity, and student-athlete welfare—and how these relate to the student-athletes.

Of course, being a student and an intercollegiate athlete is a time-consuming challenge and new student-athletes (like other new students on campus) are feeling overwhelmed and suffering from information overload. A short, focused message is often appreciated and better remembered. Student-athletes should do the following:

- Know that the majority of instructors want them to succeed in the classroom. If they make an effort, so will the faculty.
- Keep handy the name and contact information of their FAR. Students should know that the FAR is a resource they can use when they have concerns about their academic career, welfare as an athlete, and potential NCAA violations.
- Be a student first and athlete second. Unless being an athlete is relevant to the conversation (e.g., negotiating make up work for missed classes due to official, excused absences for away competition), they should not bring it up. Sit at the front of the classroom, actively listen and take notes, and arrive prepared with class materials.
- Recognize that they will face increased scrutiny because of their involvement in intercollegiate athletics. Some instructors might buy into the negative stereotype portrayed in the news of athletes trying to cheat their way to continued eligibility. Consequently, they will need to be vigilant in avoiding even the appearance of academic dishonesty. That might mean, for instance, not sitting next to other student-athletes (if possible) during exams, consistently and accurately acknowledging their sources in papers, and seek instructor guidance when in doubt.

*Bottom line:* Student-athletes, like all students, should take an active role in their academic career, go to class, and meet regularly with an advisor from their major department (and not only an advisor from the athletics academic support staff).

## **Advice for Faculty**

Faculty members want their students to succeed in their academic careers and many students often ask for help. Faculty regularly hear from students asking for extensions, extra-credit, accommodations, grade changes, etc., because of a student's heavy work schedule, sick relative, GPA-dependent scholarship, or desire to go to graduate school. Faculty might hear from student-athletes for any of the above reasons but also who want to remain eligible or to play in the big bowl game. However, in the overwhelming majority of instances, faculty routinely have student-athletes enroll in their courses, and the student-athletes contribute to the overall success of the course and master the material without incident.

The two most common reasons for faculty to contact me about a student-athlete enrolled in one of their courses is (1) missed classes due to away competition and (2) suspicion of academic dishonesty. In regards to missed classes, some student-athletes *do* miss a lot of class meetings, especially if the class meets only one day a week and that day falls on a typical travel day, or they are members of teams with a high number of competition dates (e.g., baseball, softball, basketball). Usually the faculty member can work with the student-athlete to make up any missed work. Sometimes, a FAR can refer faculty to their institution's policy regarding absences involving official university business (e.g., intercollegiate athletics, band, debate). Not all institutions have such policies. In these cases, a FAR can work with faculty to come up with reasonable solutions. Sometimes, a FAR might need to talk to specific coaches and work with them to improve the away competition to minimize missed classes. A FAR might also be available to proctor exams, if that helps.

Unfortunately, some students get lazy, procrastinate, and make poor choices leading them to commit academic dishonesty. Such dishonesty might include plagiarizing, fabricating data, deception, cheating on a test, or deliberately sabotaging a classmate's lab experiment. Sometimes the cheating student is an athlete as well. If a student-athlete is guilty of academic dishonesty in class, assess the appropriate penalty as outlined in the syllabus and also report that student to the appropriate office (e.g., office of student conduct, dean of students, etc.). Not reporting the incident might allow a student-athlete to cheat in multiple courses but never be held accountable for the sum of his or her actions.

When working with student-athletes, faculty should also do the following:

- Treat student-athletes as they would any other student in class. Give student-athletes the same opportunities (e.g., extra-credit) as all enrolled students. Conversely, do not give student-athletes a free pass just because they are star athletes. Likewise, do not make a big deal of a student-athlete enrolled in the course. Do not, for example, ask in front of the whole class the student-athlete to predict the outcome of the big game coming up or about a referee's call on Monday morning.
- If the student-athlete is a major in the faculty's discipline, encourage the student-athlete to regularly visit with his or her advisor for academic and career advice.
- Contact the FAR with concerns and questions. Faculty might want to contact the FAR if, for example, they are suspicious about a student-athlete who missed a class because "my coach called a meeting," are concerned that a student-athlete rarely attends class or fails every assignment, or question a student-athlete's claim that he must take the exam early even though he is not scheduled to be away from campus for competition.
- Working with the FAR and the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC), explore opportunities to get to know student-athletes by participating or attending

student-athlete campus events (e.g., student-athlete convocation, a fundraiser, SAAC meeting, etc.).

## **Advice for Administrators and Staff**

Student-athletes, like all students, will likely interact with almost all offices on campus, from admissions and financial aid to academic support services and housing offices. Misguided student-athletes, their parents, coaches, boosters, and even community members might pressure institutional personnel to provide some type of extra benefit based solely on the fact that the student-athlete excels in a sport. Some well-meaning personnel might inadvertently violate institutional policy and NCAA rules by merely giving a break to a student-athlete. The most important piece of advice for administrators and staff is to treat student-athletes as students first. Provide them with the same level of service and opportunities as any other prospective or enrolled student. Depending on how frequently an office on campus interacts with student-athletes, administrators and staff in that office should consider the following:

- Schedule a meeting with the institution's NCAA compliance staff. This is especially important if you regularly interact with prospective and enrolled student-athletes. NCAA rules address such topics as financial aid, recruiting, transfers, and international students.
- Contact the FAR, if they have a concern or feel pressured to treat a student-athlete differently than other students. Not only does this alert the FAR to potential NCAA violations, but also he or she will be able to provide advice on how to address the situation. In addition, the FAR because he or she is in regular communication with the CEO and NCAA compliance staff might be able to help an administrator argue for more resources or a change in practice.
- For administrators and staff who deal regularly with student-athletes such as those working in the Registrar, Admissions, Financial Aid, Student Rights and Responsibilities, and Dean of Students offices maintain regular communication with the FAR. The FAR needs big-picture information on how student-athletes are being treated across campus. For example, it might be important for a student-conduct office to regularly contact the FAR when cases of academic dishonesty involving a student-athlete are received. By keeping the FAR informed, the FAR can understand the scope of academic dishonesty among student-athletes and whether a problem exists.

The more people on campus who know who the FAR is, and his or her role and contact information, the better able the institution as a whole is able to monitor, control, and support its student-athletes and athletics program. Consider this scenario: a distraught student-athlete confides with an instructor that he suspects his coach is violating NCAA rules and that the pressure of this knowledge is causing him to do poorly in all his classes. The instructor refers the student-athlete to the department chair. The chair refers him to the Dean's office. The Dean refers him to the counseling center, and so on as the semester proceeds. Or, anyone of these individuals could

contact the FAR and the FAR can notify the NCAA compliance office of the allegation and get the student-athlete the support he needs. The potential NCAA violation is investigated in a timely manner (without the coach knowing who made the allegation) and the student-athlete quickly gets the help he needs to succeed in his classes.

## **Advice for New FARs**

Because there is just one FAR per institution and each institution has its own unique dynamics between academic and intercollegiate athletics, it is difficult for a faculty member considering accepting an offer to be FAR on his or her campus to get a good idea of what the job really entails. There are job descriptions for FARs (see resources at end of this article). However, job descriptions and compensation (e.g., extra money, clerical support, office, travel funds, course releases, athletics-related benefits such as game tickets, travel with team, etc.) are often tailored to specific individuals and institutions.

Another challenge facing a new FAR is that his or her work experience as an anthropologist, engineer, or poet has probably not fully prepared him or her for the world of intercollegiate athletics, boosters, television contracts, multi-million dollar coaching salaries, and a 315-page NCAA rules manual. In addition, intercollegiate athletics is a 24/7 industry, with little slowing down for customary academic breaks and holidays. As a result, becoming an effective FAR is a steep, time-consuming learning curve.

Before agreeing to the position, a prospective FAR should do the following:

- Ask for a written job description, including compensation, support, and athletics-related benefits.
- Review this job description and honestly assess whether he or she has the time, enthusiasm, and skill set to be effective. When asked “What do you know now that you wish you knew when you accepted the FAR position?” the most common response given by FAR respondents was “how much time is involved.”
- Talk to the current/former FAR and ask about the job description and what he or she would change. Ask to shadow a current FAR for a semester. Ask to serve on one of the athletics advisory committees for a year or two. Ask the outgoing FAR specifically why he or she is leaving the position. Admittedly, talking to your institution’s current FAR is sometimes a challenge. The current FAR might be stepping down or being relieved of his or her duties as part of wide-reaching housecleaning effort in the wake of a major NCAA investigation. Unfair or not, like the captain of a sinking ship, the FAR might lose his or her position even though he or she did everything right but for a newsworthy scandal involving the athletics program. This is not meant to scare a new FAR. It is just one of the challenges of the position.

During the first one to two months on the job, a new FAR should do the following:

- Do not be afraid to ask questions. A new FAR will be introduced to a whole new set of jargon: PTD, APR, counter, equivalency sport, Title IX, a 4-2-4 transfer, Fruit, Nuts and Bagels, NCAA Bylaw 16.5.2, and so on.
- Avoid saying yes, until you fully understand the situation. A FAR is likely to be asked several times a semester some version of the following: “Are you good with this?” Make sure to understand student-athlete eligibility, recruiting process, and the financial aid process at the institution.
- Meet with CEO to discuss his or her expectations and vision for the position. And, continue to meet regularly with the CEO.
- Meet with other stakeholders (e.g., athletics director, director of NCAA compliance, senior women’s administrator, coaches, SAAC student representative, admissions, financial aid, academic services, Registrar staff handling student-athletes, and conference staff). Ask about their job duties and how you can support them. Continue to meet regularly with these people.
- Get a copy of the *NCAA Manual* governing the institution’s division. Start by reading Article 14 Eligibility: Academic and General Requirements.
- Reach out by e-mail or phone to other FARs in the institution’s conference and introduce self. Begin establishing rapport with the FARs.
- Visit the Faculty Athletics Representative Association (FARA) website (see the “Resources for More Information about FARs” section) and check what resources are available.
- Develop a schedule of tasks, arranged by month. Figure out what must be done, signed, and submitted and when. Distinguish between mandatory and optional/as time allows tasks. At the start, when every task is new, just keep a running list as you go. When year two begins, this list will serve as a helpful reminder.
- Get a smartphone, if he or she does not already have one. The FAR will be spending a lot of time on the phone and responding to e-mail outside of their campus office. Downloading an app that allows the FAR to electronically sign PDFs is also helpful.
- Establish a recordkeeping system. A FAR receives a lot of e-mail as well as electronic and print documents and will need to hold onto these items for future use.
- Keep a simple log of your activities. A FAR will be asked to make many decisions, look into areas of concern, and meet with student-athletes. Without some record of activities, the meetings and decisions will all run together. A spreadsheet works well

for this. Include a column for the date and a column for notes. Typical notes might read as follows: “Met with RJ in compliance to review and sign hardship waiver for WVB Clare Heinz as well as discuss WVB Megan Pruitt’s eligibility re: low GPA” or “Spoke with instructor Cook at Southwestern CC re: Mark Blaine’s SOC 101 grade change: calculation error on final exam, change submitted by institutional deadline.”

A new FAR should also consider doing the following:

- Attend the next NCAA Rules Seminar.
- Attend FARA Annual Conference and Symposium.
- Work with the conference office to learn the details about the NCAA-sponsored FAR Fellows Institute each summer. This relatively recent training program is offered to all divisions and is designed to help FARs in their first one to two years on the job.
- Attend a Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) meeting.
- Consider creating an action plan for each academic year. An action plan created in a spreadsheet might include columns for describing the current situation, how success will be measured, what actions must be taken, and a timeline for completion. This will help keep a FAR’s focus on big-picture issues and opportunities while attending to day-to-day tasks. Combined with the activity log, these two documents will help the FAR document his or her activities for the year.
- Arrange to attend a team meeting for each sponsored sport to introduce self and meet the coaches and student-athletes.
- Arrange to travel with one or more sports that do not get a lot of publicity on your campus (e.g., non-revenue sports).
- Attend a faculty senate meeting and introduce yourself and the position. Establish a way for faculty to provide feedback to the FAR.
- Ask to see the Athletic Department’s yearly budget to get a feel for the scope of the program.
- Add the following to your list of materials to read: *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport* and *NCAA Champion Magazine*.
- Avoid getting caught up in the athletic perks. Traveling with teams to bowl games, getting logo merchandise, meeting high-profile coaches and athletes, and attending banquets is fun, but do not lose sight of the FARs primary responsibilities: institutional control of athletics, academic integrity, and student-athlete welfare.

*Bottom line:* Cultivate good working relationships with the stakeholders and maintain regular communication with them.

## Advice for CEOs

Picking the right person to serve as the institution's FAR is critical to the CEO's ability to maintain institutional control and academic integrity of the athletics program.

Although the CEO should take an active role in oversight of athletics, the day-to-day tasks will fall to the FAR. When searching for a faculty member to serve as FAR, look for the following characteristics:

- **Integrity.** Some FARs will receive pressure from within and outside of athletics to go as close to the line possible (with toes hanging over it, sometimes), if not blatantly step over the line. The CEO needs a FAR with a strong moral compass to guide his or her decisions.
- **Tenured.** The FAR interacts with many people on campus and often needs to tell people what they don't want to hear. A FAR will likely need the authority that comes with tenure and, perhaps, the rank of full professor when working with other faculty and administrators on campus. An untenured FAR might be placed in a difficult position of trying to work toward tenure and perform effectively as a FAR.
- **Passion for intercollegiate athletics.** The FAR job is time consuming and unless a FAR is interested in athletics, the chance for burnout or apathy is high.
- **Self-starter.** A FAR needs to be able to figure out what must be done and a plan for accomplishing it, almost daily. A CEO usually does not have the resources to check in with the FAR every day or week and must trust that the job is getting done. An unmotivated FAR might sit in his or her office and wait until problems occur. A self-starter will be proactive in maintaining institutional control and address situations before they become problems. As a FAR, I was once told, "If you are sitting in your office, you are not maintaining institutional control of athletics."
- **Details-oriented project manager.** Admittedly, the FAR needs to be able to step back and see the big picture, but the FAR must be able to keep track of lots of details. The FAR might juggle the facts related to a NCAA violation, look up in the *NCAA Manual* Bylaw 14.5.4.6.2, switch to checking the academic eligibility of the women's tennis team, review an APR Improvement Plan for the men's golf team, write a letter of recommendation for a NCAA-sponsored award, field a call from a faculty member concerned about a student-athlete enrolled in his or her course, read a draft of a Title IX/Gender-Equity report, and meet with a new coach all in a single morning. Most FARs have multiple athletically-related projects occurring at the same time.
- **Comfortable with gray areas.** NCAA rules and institutional policy sometimes, no matter how often they are read or the subject of interpretations, do not provide the

FAR with a clear directive. The FAR will sometimes be asked to make a judgment call based on a rule or policy with many shades of gray.

Once the CEO has identified the FAR, a CEO should consider the following:

- Supply a written job description for FAR, outlining tasks, resources, and expectations.
- Provide adequate release time from teaching and other service so that the FAR has the time to be effective. How much release time is dictated by the size of the athletics program and the scope of the FAR's duties.
- Provide resources so that the FAR may regularly travel to seminar and conferences to improve his or her FAR-related skills. The NCAA Rules Seminar and FARA Symposium and Conference are both valuable to a FAR's continuing education (see "Resources for More Information about FARs" section).
- Provide resources so that the FAR may attend conference meetings. Many conferences hold face-to-face meetings once or twice a year. These meetings are excellent opportunities to network with other FARs, NCAA compliance staff, and athletics administrators.
- Provide resources for administrative help, if necessary. The FAR might need help, for instance, scheduling meetings, taking minutes, copying documents, printing spreadsheets, and making travel arrangements.
- Consider appointing a FAR for at least three years with the opportunity to renew. Some institutions put limits on how long a FAR may serve, in part to protect against a FAR who becomes too comfortable with athletics and too enamored with the perks. However, the steep learning curve at the start of the job pays off the longer the FAR serves and the more experience the FAR gains. FARs who have been in the position for several years understand the athletically-related processes on their campuses, have forged solid working relationships with stakeholders across campus and in their conference, and can bring a wealth of practical experience to the job.

The most important step a CEO can take to ensure the success of the FAR is to be easily available to the FAR by phone and e-mail and to regularly communicate with the FAR.

## **Conclusion**

At this point, you have probably noticed a few themes: trust but verify, time-consuming job, work touches almost all areas of campus, institutional control of a multi-million dollar department, lots of meetings, duties on top of teaching load, frequent travel, deadline driven, and piles of paperwork.

Why would anyone want to be FAR? It's a challenging, often 24/7 job that requires daily decisions, some with far-reaching consequences. However, for the faculty who serve as FAR, the job can be a rewarding one and very different from the traditional academic-scholar functions they have performed for the last twenty years.

The FARs who responded to my survey offered many examples of the rewards that accrue when a faculty member serves in this capacity. Some reported a deeper understanding of an important, but non-academic unit on campus. Others valued getting to know athletic department staff. But, the most common rewards FARs wrote about were (1) getting to know student-athletes and (2) seeing them succeed in academics and after they graduate. And, those responses really underscore the central role of FARs and how to effectively support FARs: collaborate with your FAR to help student-athletes succeed academically and in their chosen careers.

### **Resources for More Information about FARs**

- Faculty Athletics Representatives Association (FARA)  
[www.farawebsite.org](http://www.farawebsite.org)
- FARA Voice (the newsletter of the FARA)  
[www.farawebsite/voice.asp](http://www.farawebsite/voice.asp)
- FARA Annual Meeting and Symposium  
<http://farawebsite.org/fara-annual-meeting/>
- Sample FAR Job Descriptions  
<http://farawebsite.org/resources/far-job-descriptions/>
- D1A Faculty Athletics Representatives  
[www.oneafar.org](http://www.oneafar.org)
- National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)  
[www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org)
- *NCAA Faculty Athletics Representative Handbook.*  
<http://www.ncaapublications.com/productdownloads/FAR4-04.pdf>
- *NCAA FAR Study Report: Roles, Responsibilities and Perspectives of NCAA Faculty Athletics Representatives.*  
<http://www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/public/ncaa/pdfs/2013/far+survey>
- NCAA Regional Rules Seminar.  
<http://www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/public/NCAA/Resources/Events/Regional+Rules+Seminar/Regional+Rules+Seminar+Home>

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