Athletic Council Meeting Agenda and Minutes

1. Welcome and Introductions

Pat Vittum and Sam Hazen opened the meeting at 10:02AM and asked members to introduce themselves. The approval of the September 23, 2015 meeting minutes was taken. Robert Goodhue moved for approval and Nancy Buffone seconded. Minutes were approved by the members. The council agreed to operate by general guidelines but to not strictly follow Roberts Rules of Order.

2. Introduction of Coach Ken O’Brien – Men’s Cross Country and Track & Field

Coach O’Brien introduced himself and traced the program history, his contacts and relationships that helped establish him as a coach here at UMass.

This past year was the 40th Anniversary of Men’s Track & Field which started here in 1964. Coach O’Brien shared about how many alumni student-athletes return who are ecstatic about the program. Recent fundraisers have helped the program tremendously including the installation of a new scoreboard on the south end of the track complex.

The program has evolved from its earlier days and starts for some athletes after three days on campus for cross country runners and ends two weeks after graduation making the season for some athletes long and strenuous. Ken is the only full-time Men’s coach and Assistant Coach, David Jackson splits his times between both the Men’s and Women’s Cross Country/Track & Field teams.

Coaching track and field requires great organization skills and knowledge across a broad spectrum of events -- 21 separate events for track and field and over the years required attending lots clinics, lots of coaching, and juggling a lot of skill areas to help athletes perform better over the course of a season. Coaching is labor intensive hands on coaching for all of the different event and the most significant change in recent years has been the increase in the extra paperwork...
documenting the program. Coaching an Olympic sport is very time consuming with an average work week in season running for 75-80 hrs. When travel is involved in-season, the work week can easily extend to 90-95 hours. This would be typical for the A-10 Cross Country meet.

The track and field team is split with 45 men and 45 women. Taking 90 kids, age 18-22 years old can be challenging but the students who gravitate to track and field are largely dedicated, disciplined kids, very mature and excellent students. From the Men’s team we are about middle of the pack for the 12 team league. Scholarship package is not the best; however, the department does its best in helping the team with resources and the team on the men’s side has one full scholarship for each of any four years. The number of scholarships also puts us about in the middle of the other A10 teams.

The program has raised about $865K with $175K recently going to the scoreboard and the funds were raised from John Legere, former UMass track athlete who is the CEO and President of T-Mobile™. Another key point shared by Ken was how often the alums come back and how very dedicated and most praise how prepared for their professional life and personal development from the University of Massachusetts and how participating on the track and field team helped them.

Question and answer period revolved around the people who have excelled and come through the program and how the sport has transformed from an individual sport to a team sport over the year. The program recruits well from Long Island, NY, NJ and PA area. About 80% of the rosters are students from MA but we do bring in students from the region and along the east coast.

Coach O’Brien praised Ryan Bamford, AD and the team he has assembled in last three (3) months and the interaction with his team has been both spectacular and heads above any individual leadership since he started coaching at UMass.

3. **Update on Athletic Staff – Darrice Griffin -- SWA**

Darrice Griffin introduced herself as the SWA and commented on how grateful she was with her start here from the support of the staff and the AC members and FAR to becoming comfortable with her new role and the complexities of meeting and starting in a new place.

Darrice also commented on her transition from college athlete to professional and eventually to her work and role and mentoring from her head coach at Texas Tech to Dr. Diane Murphy who helped her come into athletic administration at Columbia University. She also commented on how the organization and professional development at Columbia prepared for a four year run as Associate AD at Columbia/Barnard College which help prepare her for the move as the SWA at UMass Athletics.
Darrice also commented on how inspirational Ryan Bamford has been in motivating her for this SWA positions and truly transformative time it has been for her and for UMass.

Darrice will manage all internal affairs, including sports medicine, strength/conditioning for all sports and how she will work closely with Rob Peterson on the fiscal and administrative roles for all varsity sports. From the fiscal and human resource perspective, she is experiencing a vibrant and engaged relationship between administrators and student-athletes and hopes this will continue and be further enhanced under her leadership. She has been impressed with the recruiting of highly talented student athletes and when they get here how willing and involved they are to contribute and develop their skill levels. A major goal for her role will be to continue to build trust with coaches and students and to continue to pursue the right strategy for conference alignment and for program improvements.

Question and answer period followed that touched on roles and practices of operating in the UMass system, breaking down silos across the system, dealing with game day operations, identifying the right people to do the right jobs, appreciation of the roles individuals play across the department, organizing across the program for efficiency in game day operations and ending with the priority of building an environment of collaboration. Some also commented on the morale within the department in both Boyden and Mullins and how much it has changed and it seems to be a much better atmosphere to be evolving into a winning atmosphere and where a Division 1 program should be.

Darrice Griffin completed her comments by stating that the change in the atmosphere was a reflection of leadership and it all starts with Director of Athletics Ryan Bamford. She thanked the AC for having the opportunity to present her reflections of her first few months with us.

4. **Subcommittee Assignments**

The subcommittee assignments were distributed and the name noted in **BOLD** is the Chair who has accepted. Pat and Sam encouraged the subcommittee chairs to have a meeting this semester so the subcommittee could have a report to Chairs/ Council by end of academic year. Rebecca Spencer asked that each subcommittee meeting Chair take notes/minutes and get them back to Sam or Pat when completing their meetings.

Comments evolved to Nelson Lacey’s service on the COIA, which is the body that has a faculty representative from individual faculty senates for each University that has 1A or FBS Football program. The question and discussion revolved around whether this should be a position on the council which would free up another slot for a faculty position.
Rebecca Spencer indicated that the FAR position did not take a faculty slot and we could make this position do the same. Do we add another faculty member from campus since Nelson is overtasked/conflict of interest – this decision will be made by Rules Committee – Rebecca Spencer – the FAR position is not taking a faculty spot. If Nelson comes and go – Faculty Senate – COIA will have a seat on the council even if we have them on as faculty.

After considerable discussion on the role of the COIA position it was moved by JC Schnabl – makes sense for this position, the COIA, to be a non-voting, ex officio member of the council. Nick Andrade 2nd the motion. All in favor w/ motion – none opposed. We will take this up with the Rules Committee.

The COIA position then becomes an ex-officio member on campus – and we then would have another faculty position on the Council. Could Nelson still serve as Chair of the Finance Subcommittee? The answer was “yes.”

Ryan Bamford in absence of Nelson Lacey not being present questioned whether Nelson wants to continue as an ex officio member of the council in the COIA position?

Pat Vittum suggested that the Rules Committee would not make a decision on this immediately and it would not be fully enacted until next fall – Fall Semester 2016.

The motion passed to make this a non-voting ex-officio member – none opposed.

5. Athletic Department Update – Ryan Bamford, Athletic Director

Ryan Bamford echoed the sentiment of Coach Ken O’Brien and commented on how Ken has preserved the program over the years even with lack of resources on scholarship side for Men’s Cross Country/ Track & Field. For example, Ryan also said how well he has done even noting how some of the male sports lack scholarship resources. He applauded Ken O’Brien for his best work on the people side of the program by building great relationships with alumni and fostering a highly active alumni group who are very interested in future of this program even though they don’t provide full scholarship funding. The Athletic Department still wants to help Coach O’Brien and with only three (3) full-time employees for both Men’s and Women’s Cross Country/ Track & Field, this is a huge task. The ability to secure and construct a scoreboard is a great addition to the program and working together and building these relationships have helped make this happen. Ryan also noted that he wants our coaches to recruit, compete and share a great experience for student-athletes and the track and field is an excellent example of how this is being accomplished even with the lack of a full scholarship program.

Ryan also commented on the hiring of Darrice Griffin being a major accomplishment for the program and although she trained as a professional
counselor those skills have served her well and he needed someone who wasn’t overwhelmed by the position and the demands of the internal affairs. Darrice was the perfect hire for this position. He also spoke to her creativity and that she is not overwhelmed by lack of resources; is extremely organized; is a trusted advisor and is especially thankful for everything she’s done.

The department has made an offer to Associate AD for Development – former football player – Dr. L.A. Love. Hope to have him join us in November as he is moving with three children from Texas.

Fall sports are in full mode now and football progress has not been what we anticipated, thought we’d be in a different place by now and although the team has suffered a hard loss on Saturday, the atmosphere and attendance for homecoming Saturday was exceptional and we are still learning. The team is resilient and expects them to rebound down the stretch.

Field Hockey plays LaSalle at home today and their record is 3–3 in conference tied with 4 other teams in 4th place. We have to get one other positive result to get into tournament. While the team has had some injuries if they can win 2 more games they will get into tournament.

Men’s Soccer is now 3rd in league with a 3-1-1 in league record and Fran is a heck of a coach. The team is at Dayton (2nd in league) and this is a big match up tomorrow night. There is a great chance the team can make it to the A10 tournament.

Women’s Soccer is currently 8th in league and suffered a hard lost at Duquesne. They are currently tied for 8th in the leagues and the top 8 teams go to the A10 tournament.

Winter sports are starting and Ice Hockey is currently 3-0. President Marty Meehan wanted to go to Hockey – Lowell guy – hadn’t been in Mullins. He was engaged and so passionate about our win – we were in the elevator and he said “I’m going to locker room to celebrate” and he did so with the team. This is a great indication that the President, who is the former Chancellor at UMass Lowell, is excited about the UMass victory as the President of University system.

President Meehan also went to the Football game on Saturday – he was impressed with Minute Fan Way loved the tailgating pieces. President Meehan indicated that not having football on his Lowell campus for last 8 years and seeing how it has taken hold here was truly inspiring.

Ryan also commented on hoping to close out fall sports and then make the transition to the start of the Winter Season with basketball, hockey, and the other winter sports. With tennis and lacrosse up and active, we are really playing year round with our traditional spring sports.
Dedication for Champions Center is scheduled for January 2016 and will hope to confirm date soon with the Chancellor's Office and University Relations. Darrice Griffin and the development staff are working hard on inside branding items before we dedicate it and this is necessary before the full dedication.

Adjournment. Pat Vittum announced the next AC Meeting to be on November 20th, 2015.

Bob Goodhue motioned to close meeting at 11:32 am–Ed Ward seconded the motion to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Rod Warnick, AC Secretary with assistance from Julie Sarsynski