

## Review of Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania Department of Athletics

January 2010

In an effort to assist Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania (LHUP) in making policy decisions regarding intercollegiate athletics at the university, the following document suggests several courses of action.

We were charged with identifying how LHUP can best plan for the future of its intercollegiate athletics program. We were also asked to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities, as well as to make recommendations for continuous improvements that will ensure that LHUP is well positioned in the future. We are pleased to assist LHUP in its review of its intercollegiate athletics program.

During the process, we examined numerous documents, held more than 30 individual meetings with campus representatives over a three-day period, reviewed comments submitted by various individuals in response to a request from President Miller to the LHUP community, and researched policies and processes that could be of assistance to LHUP. Documents reviewed include the LHUP university strategic plan, the athletics department strategic plan, the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA) report for LHUP, the recommendations from Andrea Myers (who evaluated the LHUP athletics program in 2005), the gender equity report that was completed in 2002, union policies, financial information for the athletics department, the operating manual for the athletics department, gender equity surveys completed by head coaches, and other resources provided by the Athletics Department and President Miller's office. We are appreciative of the cooperation we received from all parties and the information provided by each individual with whom we met.

We have attempted to categorize the comments we heard, information we received, and suggestions provided into themes or topic areas and thus submit the following recommendations based on our assessment of strengths, weaknesses and other observations which are included in the Appendix.

## **Recommendations for the Future**

1) It is our belief that the President and board must take a serious look at the role athletics will play at LHUP in the future and how much they are willing to support its growth and health. In a world of competing priorities, these are not easy decisions and must be evaluated carefully. Following are several recommendations.

A. Develop a clear philosophy about the role of athletics at LHUP and establish specific realistic expectations and a process to assure accountability. Athletics department policies should be consistent with the established philosophy.

B. Identify priorities for the athletics program and ways of funding those priorities. This may include sports sponsorship (number of sports, possibility of tiered sports, divisional affiliation), level of university support, fundraising expectations and strategies. Sample questions that need to be answered:

1. Is the intent to have a broad-based program and stretch resources, which could impact the competitiveness of all programs, or
2. Should there be fewer programs with a higher amount of support to increase the potential for those teams to be successful to a greater degree, or
3. Should sports be tiered, or
4. Should all sports be at the same divisional level, or
5. Some other new well-defined model?

C. Clarify the role and sphere of authority for the athletics department staff. The specific skills and experiences required of administrators should be consistent with the defined goals for the program. There should be a team approach, inside and outside the athletics department, to supporting the mission of the athletics program. Diverse experiences and skill sets are important to the strength of the team and should be valued.

D. Keep the athletics department aligned with the academic mission of the university and the vision expressed by the President for technology, diversity, and engagement of students in the learning process. Consider the appropriate reporting lines for athletics in light of these goals.

E. Review guidelines established by the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) with respect to the role of campus boards. (April 3, 2009 Document attached)

F. Review the Models for Success for a Division II Athletics Program developed by the NCAA. (Division II Model program document attached)

- 2) Establish university committees to assist in addressing internal governance issues and the gathering of information to determine feasibility of various sports sponsorship models and their funding.
  - A. Establish an Athletics Advisory Committee to offer assistance to the athletics department and campus. Composition of this committee should be diverse and include faculty and administrators from across campus, as well as athletics department administrators, coaches and student-athletes, alumni and possibly community representatives. This committee could assist with the development of a Five-Year Strategic Plan outlining the role of athletics on campus and corresponding needs. Athletics department personnel should be actively engaged in this process as the experienced experts.
  - B. Review financial information from conference schools and other Division II programs that might be considered peer or model programs consistent with the LHUP philosophy and assess how this information may help develop a road map for the future of LHUP athletics. Spend time on those campuses that might serve as model programs to evaluate what processes, strategies and actions might be appropriate for LHUP.
  - C. Establish a Gender Equity Committee to monitor Title IX and gender equity compliance within the athletics department. Suggested committee members include men and women (both in the athletics department and across campus), athletics department representatives (male and female administrators and men's and women's coaches), athletics department Senior Woman Administrator, Title IX Coordinator, university legal counsel, faculty, President's office designee, students (male and female student-athletes, campus student representatives, and possibly alumni athletes). Develop a gender equity plan that is a living document and is reviewed on a regular basis for progress and action needed.
  - D. Develop criteria for assessing sports sponsorship to identify sports that are consistent with university priorities and resources, including a cost analysis of where the break-even point might be for making any changes (cost per student-athlete/tuition generated), including adding new students to campus. Consider the place of club sports teams in this evaluation. Be willing to make changes if it makes sense for the future.
  - E. On an ongoing and regular basis, evaluate participation opportunities and interests of male and female student-athletes and benefits to each gender, and make adjustments if warranted to ensure compliance with Title IX.
  - F. If a goal is for all sports to be competitive at a high level, determine steps to be taken that will result in increased competitiveness for sports that have not enjoyed success recently.

- G. Given the ongoing lack of competitiveness of the football program and the large financial investment, determine at what level football can be realistically supported or other options that might be more appropriate. Options might include sponsorship of sprint football, which would be less costly but retain football participation opportunities. If the philosophy is to support a broad-based athletics program with an emphasis on a high number of participation opportunities, consider the possibility of other sports such as men's and women's rugby, which are now Olympic sports, or other conference, regional or club sports not currently available at LHUP.
  - H. There should be a clear and equitable funding philosophy for all sports. Establish a coordinated fund-raising strategy for the athletics program and clearly define the individual responsibilities of the athletics department administrators, coaches, and university development office. Determine a cooperative means to involve alumni and community members.
- 3) There is a need for enhanced communication, cooperation and collaboration surrounding the athletics department within the LHUP campus and externally. The President and Director of Athletics need to assume primary leadership to make this happen.
- A. Develop strategies and programs to strengthen community outreach efforts. Identify alumni and community representatives to assist in promoting the program and encouraging more community engagement. One common theme needs to be adopted that stresses a positive relationship between the university, community and athletics. The focus should be on educational experiences for student-athletes in the classroom and on the playing fields.
  - B. There should be an expectation that athletic administrators, coaches and staff members be positive ambassadors for the university and relate well with other campus groups, as well as the university's external support groups. Administrators and coaches should work well together, be collaborative, and mutually support the goals of LHUP athletics. All administrators and coaches should be willing participants in the athletics department's fundraising strategies. All job descriptions and performance evaluations should reflect these expectations.
  - C. The athletic support groups need to have their roles defined in light of NCAA institutional control guidelines and the role of the President. Loyalty from those alumni and community members who truly care about LHUP needs to be exhibited, and appreciation should be shown for their support.
  - D. Create a public relations and marketing plan for LHUP athletics (possibly donor funded) that includes student body engagement.

E. Provide Title IX education to the athletics department coaches, university and community members, and student-athletes.

F. Provide professional development/team-building experiences for coaches and administrators to promote a more unified department.

G. Stop tolerating negative attitudes and behaviors from coaches and supporters, pitting men's sports against women's sports. Relationships and trust must be restored, which will require collaborative, constructive efforts internally and externally.

H. A communication plan should be developed immediately to deliver a clear message to all concerned constituents with regard to the lines of authority, the role of the athletics program, and the decision-making process utilized by athletics and the university.

I. Keep demonstrating strong loyalty to LHUP, supporting gender equity for men and women, compliance with NCAA and conference rules and policies, providing positive experiences for students and striving to perform at high levels.

### **Summary Recommendations**

We believe that intercollegiate athletics serves an important role at LHUP and can have an even greater positive impact on campus and in the community. We suggest that an important step in making this happen is a review of the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) of Universities and Colleges April 3, 2009 document on Board Responsibilities for Intercollegiate Athletics with special attention to questions listed on page 5 for boards to consider pertaining to the athletics department mission. The questions identified should be addressed by the suggested athletics advisory committee, and their recommendations should be presented to the Council of Trustees to provide a roadmap for the future of LHUP intercollegiate athletics. It is our belief that this process will address some of the identified weaknesses and provide for developing appropriate strategies and directions for LHUP.

1. Are the mission, values, and goals of the athletics program compatible with those of the institution?
2. Does the administrative structure of the institution and the athletics department allow the institution to achieve its mission and goals?
3. What benchmarks should be used to gauge the success of the athletics department? Are they consistent with the institution's mission and values? Are they achievable given the resources, culture, and history?

4. What is the impact of intercollegiate athletics on the campus climate? How does athletics affect admissions, social life, academic values, and the composition of the student body?
5. What degree of autonomy should the athletics department have? In comparison with other co-curricular activities, is the athletics department appropriately integrated into the general administrative structure in terms of finances, employment practices, operating procedures, and accountability?
6. Is an annual risk assessment conducted to evaluate the internal controls of the athletics department? Is the institution's internal audit program engaged in the evaluation?
7. Is a comprehensive compliance program and review in place for the athletics program?

The AGB document states “the measure of success of an intercollegiate athletics program should be the degree to which the program contributes to the institution’s mission and academic reputation. The board should be certain that its institution has established and promotes a definition for success for the athletics department that goes beyond wins and losses and net revenue. To that end, boards should insist that there is a clear mission statement for the athletics department.”

## Appendix

### Strengths

- The LHUP athletics program has demonstrated success in the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference (PSAC) and nationally in various sports throughout its history.
- LHUP student-athletes perform well in the classroom and in their respective sports, as evidenced by team GPA's and the overall high ranking of LHUP teams in their conference and nationally.
- Student-athletes appear to be having positive experiences at the university and in the athletics program.
- Student-athletes add to the diversity of the university and the athletics program enhances the campus climate, particularly when teams are successful and the campus, alumni and community share pride in such successes.
- There is great passion for LHUP athletics, both within the university and in the external community, and a rich history that is frequently referenced by alums, community members and campus personnel. The athletics program would be further strengthened if this passion were directed in more constructive and cooperative ways.
- Coaches and athletic administrators are dedicated to excellence at LHUP, and for the most part, they have been successful beyond what might be expected given the limited resources available.
- A review of the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA) submitted by LHUP in 2009 shows that there is equitable financial support for men's and women's athletics. Ongoing evaluation of participation opportunities consistent with Title IX requirements should continue.
- In the past several years, as Title IX requirements were more consistently met, the LHUP women's teams have enjoyed increasing success. While this success has been applauded by most people, it has also been viewed incorrectly by individuals not knowledgeable about Title IX as the reason for some men's teams not being successful in recent years.

## **Weaknesses**

- The mission statement for athletics should be consistent with the university philosophy and the defined role for athletics at LHUP. It is not clear what the expectations are for athletics and whether the level of financial resources is appropriate for the expectations.
- The absence of a clear mission statement for LHUP athletics as it relates to the university vision and an appropriate structure for accountability and communication has led to confusion with regard to the program and its direction.
- There is a lack of understanding outside the athletics department about the requirements of Title IX, the federal law that addresses gender equity in all university programs, including athletics. A Title IX report was completed in 2002, but it does not appear that there have been ongoing reviews and follow-up action based on the report.
- There are some sports that have not been as successful as others in recent years. These sports should be reviewed to determine specific reasons for the decline and constructive steps that should be taken to enhance their competitiveness. Compliance with Title IX has been viewed incorrectly by individuals not knowledgeable about Title IX as the reason for some men's teams not being successful in recent years.
- The report submitted in 2005 by consultant Andrea Myers, which included many relevant recommendations, was provided to President Miller and the Council of Trustees, but there was no follow up. Several of those recommendations addressed issues that appear to have continued to be problematic since the report was submitted and correspond to issues that we have also identified. It is unclear to us why there was no follow-up to this 2005 report.
- The lack of follow up to the 2005 Myers report has led to questioning the administration's commitment to both intercollegiate athletics and to the Director of Athletics.
- Relationships among the university, athletics administration and some alumni and members of the community are fractured.
- There is an unhealthy divisiveness within the athletics department that appears to be delineated by sport and gender of teams and may be influenced by pressures from outside the university.

## **Other Observations**

- Like many universities today, LHUP faces serious financial challenges. There is increasing pressure on the coaches and athletics department to generate funding for scholarships and operating costs. This is even more pervasive with the economic downturn and reduced funding from the state. This pressure creates a high degree of frustration and perhaps unrealistic expectations within the athletics department and the community. What might have worked for LHUP athletics in the past might no longer be appropriate or doable.
- There is not a universal understanding of how athletics is funded, the source of funds, and how they can be used. The various changes in university policy pertaining to summer camps and the associated funding have created additional misunderstandings and financial pressures.
- Athletically related financial aid is dependent upon funds generated through fund-raising and other external means. This creates uncertainty on availability of scholarship support from year to year. Given the large number of football student-athletes, fund-raising a reasonable number of scholarships for this sport is more challenging and may be a factor in the lack of competitiveness of the football program. In addition, athletically related financial aid should be within 1% of participation numbers for men and women.
- There is great interest from alums and community members in having a voice in the direction of LHUP athletics, including the hiring and firing of coaches and staff, and some individuals believe that because decisions have not been consistent with their stated recommendations, they are not being heard. It must be made clear that while input is welcome, decisions are to be made by university personnel with the professional expertise and designated authority, and that those individuals will be held accountable for their decisions.
- We are concerned that there is a counter-productive influence from outside parties. This has been distracting to moving the athletics program forward and is detrimental to the university. One student stated “Stuff going on is nuts. There are personal attacks by the community while they are saying that they want to build things up.” Clearly, this is a concern to the university, as well as the community.
- Reporting lines are unusual, with the Director of Athletics formerly reporting to the Provost and now reporting to the Vice President for Finance. The previous reporting line to the Provost seemed to be consistent with LHUP athletics being tied to the academic mission of the university. It is our understanding that on most other PSAC campuses, the Director of Athletics reports to the Vice President for Student Affairs.

- It appears that there is limited direct communication between the President and Director of Athletics. The Director of Athletics has direct line accountability to the Vice President for Finance, and before that, the Provost, but it seems that all important decisions regarding the athletic department require the President's approval. Without regular contact and discussion between the President and Director of Athletics, the decision-making process is slowed and healthy dialogue is limited between those closest to the athletics department operations and the President who ultimately has decision-making authority. In light of the need to overcome tensions that currently surround the athletics program and critical decisions that need to be made for its future, more direct dialogue needs to take place.
- It is common practice at many universities that the Director of Athletics reports to the President, and in many instances the Director of Athletics is a member of the President's Cabinet. The Division II Model Program document attached to this report suggests that the Director of Athletics should report to the University President. We understand that union regulations do not allow for such a direct reporting arrangement at LHUP.
- The impact of union contracts creates added challenges for the administration. Although the Director of Athletics has input, it is highly unusual for the Director of Athletics to not have greater decision-making responsibility for the program and hiring and firing authority for department coaches and staff.
- It is not clear to us what the role and authority of the Faculty Athletics Representative are at LHUP. This individual should help enhance communication on athletics matters between the faculty, University President and athletics department, assist with NCAA compliance procedures, and participate in conference and NCAA dialogue and decisions.
- We heard varying and conflicting reports about athletics department management, decision-making, and actions. There is praise, support and criticism of administrators at all levels of the university structure involved with decision-making for athletics from both internal and external sources. Recognizing that there are always at least two sides to every story (and we heard significantly more sides than that) we did not feel that with our short time on campus and the information provided to us it was possible for us to determine the actual circumstances.