

FLORIDA **A&M** UNIVERSITY
Board of Trustees

Special Committee on Athletics Meeting

Wednesday, June 7, 2023

9:30 a.m.

The Grand Ballroom

Committee Members: Kelvin Lawson, Chair
Londe Mondelus, Ann Marie Cavazos, Deveron Gibbons, and Trustee Otis
Cliatt

AGENDA

- | | | |
|-----|---------------|-------------------|
| I. | Call to Order | Chairman Lawson |
| II. | Roll Call | Marquel Broussard |

ACTION ITEMS

- | | | |
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| III. | Approval of February 15, 2023, Minutes | Chairman Lawson |
|------|--|-----------------|

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- | | | |
|-----|--|--------------------------------|
| IV. | Thomas Howell Ferguson P.A., Consulting Report | Jeff Barbacci
Taylor Harmon |
| V. | Athletic Department Update | VP/AD Tiffani-Dawn Sykes |
| VI. | Adjournment | Chairman Lawson |

FLORIDA **A&M** UNIVERSITY
Board of Trustees
ACTION ITEM

Special Committee on Athletics

June 7, 2023

Agenda Item: III

Subject: Minutes

Rationale: Section 5.10 of the Board of Trustees Operating Procedures provides that detailed minutes should be kept for any Board or Committee meeting. Those minutes should include a record of votes cast and attendance.

Recommendation: Approval of the February 15, 2023 meeting minutes.

Attachments: Yes

FLORIDA  UNIVERSITY
Board of Trustees

Athletics Committee Minutes
Kelvin Lawson, Chair
February 15, 2023

Chair Lawson called the Special Committee on Athletics meeting to order. The Executive Assistant to the VP/AD Marquel Broussard called the roll. The following committee members were present, and a quorum was established: Trustee Ann Marie Cavazos, Trustee Otis Cliatt, and Chair Kelvin Lawson.

Chair Lawson asked for a motion to approve the December 7, 2022, minutes. Trustee Cavazos moved approval of the minutes, Trustee Cliatt provided the second, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Nichole Murray, University Budget Director, deferred the Athletics budget update to Michael Smith, AVP for Athletics Administration and Strategic Initiatives. Mr. Smith shared that the numbers in the athletics budget are still trending in the right direction as athletics continue to move forward with a positive fund balance.

Chair Lawson made mention that the internal budget review was completed for the month as well as the budget review with BOG. He announced that there is a new audit and compliance chair, Mr. Aubrey Edge out of Jacksonville. He shared that this is year five that athletics has had a balanced budget given all the issues with COVID and a number of other things.

Deidre Melton provided an overall update on the Athletics Action Plan. She shared that there has been significant progress since last month. Modifications were made but the plan is still on track to be over 90 % completed by the end of the fiscal year. She said 5 out of 17 strategies are complete, 11 out of 17 are on track for completion and 1 out of 17 is behind schedule but will be back on track by the end of February. She went through some highlights of the strategies and things accomplished over the past month. She announced that 6 of the 7 athletics compliance positions have been filled and they are working to fill the compliance eligibility position.

AD Sykes provided department updates. She announced the changes that have occurred on the athletics staff which include Michael Smith who accepted the role of Assistant Vice President for Athletics Administration and Strategic Initiatives in addition to adding Marquel Broussard, Executive Assistant to the Vice President and Director of Athletics and Brittney Johnson, Senior Associate Athletics Director for Compliance/Senior Woman Administrator. AD Sykes also shared that two new Head Coaches were hired; Camise Patterson, Softball and Garfield Ellenwood, Cross Country and Track & Field. She stated that her focus within the first 30 days has been visibility and engagement. AD Sykes has hit the ground running on January 4th and has since had the opportunity to be engaged with student-athletes, alumni and the community. She highlighted many different engagement settings which allowed her to connect with student-athletes, alumni in different states and FAMU Developmental Research School. AD Sykes highlighted Student-Athletes from various sports on earning SWAC honors. She also shared that Track & Field have recorded over 50 Top-3 finishes this season. AD Sykes expressed her appreciation to the committees she currently serve on for all that they have done and continue to do to support athletics and our student-athletes at FAMU.

In closing, she recognized the late great Ken Riley, FAMU Alumnus who was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame Class of 2023.

With no further business before the committee, the meeting was adjourned.

FLORIDA **A&M** UNIVERSITY
Board of Trustees
DISCUSSION ITEM

Special Committee on Athletics

June 7, 2023

Agenda Item: IV

Subject: Thomas Howell Ferguson PA Consulting Report

Rationale: The University engaged Thomas Howell Ferguson, PA on December 9, 2022, to provide professional services regarding the University's Athletics Action Plan.

The services were completed and the consulting report was submitted to the University on April 27, 2023.

Attachments: Yes

April 27, 2023

Joseph K. Maleszewski
FAMU Athletic Department
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University
G-7 Foote-Hilyer Administration Center
Tallahassee, Florida 32307

Dear Mr. Maleszewski:

Enclosed is our completed consulting report for Florida A&M University related to the FAMU Athletics Action Plan.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide services to Florida A&M University.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

Jeff Barbacci

Jeffrey Barbacci

Enclosure

Consulting Report

Florida A&M University



Consulting Report

Florida A&M University

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Executive Summary

On December 9, 2022 Thomas Howell Ferguson P.A. was engaged by Florida A&M University (FAMU or the University) to provide professional services in connection with the University's plan to address athletic related matters surrounding student athlete academic performance and eligibility. Our engagement was overseen by, and coordinated with, the University's Vice President of Audit.

On August 27, 2022, the FAMU football team was scheduled to play the University of North Carolina in what was termed a "Week Zero" matchup. For this matchup, 29 players on the FAMU football team were deemed ineligible for play. This determination led to FAMU football players penning a letter to the University President dated August 28, 2022, expressing their points of view on why these events occurred and the perceived shortfalls within the University that contributed to the events. In response to the events leading up to and after "Week Zero," the Board of Trustees and the University began to oversee the development and implementation of a corrective action plan titled the FAMU Athletic Action Plan (the Plan).

Our engagement required the development of a detailed profile of the athletics-related issues facing the University by obtaining an understanding of the FAMU Athletic Department and University athletic-support functions. Additionally, our engagement required us to gain an understanding of the root causes contributing to the events that occurred during "Week Zero" of the 2022 NCAA football season. This understanding was developed through inspection of FAMU's organizational structure, interviews with key employees across various departments that have a significant role in the success of student athletes, review and attendance of Board and committee meetings relating to the Plan, documentation of the complaints made by student athletes relating to the events of "Week Zero," interviews with student athletes, reading relevant local and national news articles, and inspection of the FAMU Athletic Action Plan created to address the University's perceived root causes.

The Plan is designed to address the issues of "Week Zero" and other academic related issues facing the FAMU Athletics Department and FAMU student-athletes. The most crucial components of the Plan address challenges relating to academic advisement for student-athletes, compliance staffing shortages, improved training related to student-athlete eligibility specific requirements, interdepartmental technology and communication, high levels of "at-risk" student-athletes, and the student-athlete admission and transfer process.

The Plan, if properly implemented, will result in improved outcomes for the University and will reduce the risk of experiencing future challenges similar to those noted above. The presence of, and adherence to, controls designed to achieve compliance with the Plan will be critical to its success. While a reduction of risk resulting from the Plan's implementation is likely, the elimination of future risk in total is not possible.

Our report is intended to provide an overview of our observations and recommendations resulting from the scope of services described above. In addition, our report includes recommendations associated with the Plan and identification of risks that could impact the overall efficacy of the Plan. Based on our observations and procedures performed, the FAMU Athletics Action Plan is comprehensive and thorough. The seventeen strategies detailed in the Athletics Action Plan adequately address the most crucial issues facing the Athletics Department and the academic success of FAMU's various athletic programs.

This report is not intended to and does not contemplate internal control or compliance risks facing the Athletics Department that were not included in the scope identified above. Our engagement occurred while the development and implementation of control activities surrounding the planned corrective actions were ongoing. As such, the focus of our efforts and attention were limited to the plan design and did not include an evaluation of the specific metrics developed by management to achieve success, nor the day-to-day operating controls necessary to be implemented in this plan.

A summary of the recommendations resulting from our study that address potential implementation challenges associated with the University's Athletic Action Plan is included below and are discussed in more detail within the body of our report. Those recommendations should be considered prior to finalizing the Plan and as part of the ongoing improvements that will enhance the FAMU student-athlete experience.

Recommendation #1 – Continued monitoring and development of control activities

Once implemented, the Plan will take time to achieve the desired outcomes of the University. We anticipate the process could take several years to fully implement. The Plan needs to be a framework that establishes routine controls and procedures to be implemented and executed over a long-term period. The Plan will need commitment and support from those charged with governance with an overall understanding that the Plan will take ongoing refinement and monitoring for its ultimate success.

A system of milestones and expected outcomes should be implemented in conjunction with the Plan. This includes establishing benchmarks over a long-term period for the reduction of "at-risk" student athletes, benchmarks for each sport's improved APR, benchmarks for the reduction in special talent admissions, as well as benchmarks the University believes are important to its student athlete's success.

Recommendation #2 – Departmental alignment and future considerations.

Certain positions and responsibilities created by the Plan have been spread across various departments within the University to improve coordination and to address certain budgetary challenges for the Athletics Department. This was done partially based on the transition in the Athletics Director position during the Plan's development and to ensure that the Plan would quickly address the needs of the University's student athletes.

Now that the Athletics Director position has been filled, we recommend that she maintain appropriate administrative oversight for the positions created in response to the Plan. Additionally, as revenues increase, the University should start to transition certain positions and responsibilities for the Plan under the Athletics Department.

Recommendation #3 - Transfer athletes and academic major change challenges

We noted a number of challenges with the requirement to gather and certify information related to transfer student-athletes and student-athletes that are changing academic majors. While the Plan addresses those items somewhat in the strategies for improved academic advisement, we foresee continued challenges in that area if left unaddressed.

Recommendation #4 - Financial Aid.

The Plan has only limited actions regarding financial aid, which are mostly geared toward summer school and improving the information and communication between student athletes and the Office of Financial Aid.

During our study we observed concerns regarding certain aspects of the financial aid system. Those concerns, raised by student athletes and corroborated through our discussions with university personnel, relate to the delay in the student athlete's receipt of financial aid disbursements, caused by limitations of the financial aid IT system. Additionally, we noted communication challenges that involve placing a "hold" on financial aid disbursements due to academic performance or incomplete required administrative documents, and certain transfer student-athletes being deemed ineligible for financial aid. The delay in disbursement lead to financial difficulties for the student-athletes that then lead to academic challenges. Such challenges are currently beyond the scope of the Plan.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide services to FAMU. We appreciate the assistance received from FAMU Athletics personnel, internal auditors, and others throughout the course of our study. We will be glad to consult further with the University as it begins to implement the FAMU Athletics Plan and to improve the overall quality of its athletic programs.

Events Leading up to “Week Zero” of the 2022 NCAA Football Season.

In response to being placed on a five-year probationary period by the NCAA after being cited in 2018 for a “lack of institutional control” and “failure to monitor,” a plan was put into place for proper certification, student-athlete academic advisement, and to help monitor eligibility. This process is handled primarily by the Athletics Compliance Office and the Athletics Department’s Office for Student-Athlete Success and Competitive Excellence. Over time, staff in the Office for Student-Athlete Success and the Athletics Compliance Office turned over and positions were left unfilled or, at times, filled with staff with limited athletics experience. This reduction of experienced staff resulted from budgetary challenges and the COVID 19 pandemic, which impacted both the ability to finance necessary positions and the availability of experienced personnel in the workforce. Despite the challenges faced, the Plan for athletic academic advisement was still in place and continued to be used.

From 2018 through 2022 the University worked to improve its system for tracking and supporting student athletes determined as “at-risk” for athletic ineligibility, which the University defined as those student-athletes with GPAs of 2.0 or lower (recently increased to 2.5). Throughout the year ended June 30, 2022 and continuing into the fiscal year 2023, the University tracked the academic performance of student-athletes and created individual Academic Success Plans for each student-athlete identified as “at-risk.” Success Plans were developed as part of individual sport APR Improvement Plans, with input from the student-athlete, their academic advisor, and the applicable coaches. Included within the Success Plans were specific steps to improve the academic performance of the student athlete such as scheduling tutoring sessions, attendance in study hall, development of scheduling and time management techniques, and the development of academic goals. The Success Plans also involved tasks to be performed by the Athletics Department’s Office for Student-Athlete Success that included oversight of student progress, weekly meetings with “at-risk” students to review and participation in action plan activities, assistance with scheduling tutoring sessions, review of progress reports from individual professors, and communication with athletic coaches to discuss the progress or challenges with each “at-risk” student-athlete’s plan.

Our study suggests that there were a high number of “at-risk” student athletes being tracked and supported through individual action plans in the semesters leading up to “Week Zero.” Interviews with various University personnel suggest that these risks were known by coaches and other individuals involved in the certification process. Efforts were made to ensure that the certification process was equipped to handle the increased risks.

Each year, in early August, the University performs the necessary NCAA certification of student-athletes, known as the Certification Summit. The Summit involves collaboration between the Athletics Compliance Office, the Registrar’s Office, the Office of Academic Affairs and Office of the Provost, and the Athletics Department for successful certification. The Summit also includes other offices within the University that participate as observers. The process involves an evaluation of each individual student-athlete’s academic performance to determine if the student has completed the adequate number of course hours, is making sufficient progress towards their degree, has met the GPA requirements, and other key required metrics have been met.

The NCAA cited issues in the University's certification process from 2010 through 2017, and from 2018 through 2022, the University improved its process for proper and complete certification in response to those findings. The certification process is a critical component to the University's compliance with NCAA rules and regulations.

The 2022 certification summit process occurred from July 26th through August 12th during which time the certification of athletes was completed, and the coaches were immediately informed of the results. The certification process resulted in 29 student athletes being deemed ineligible for competition.

The reasons for the significant number of ineligible players varied and included the following:

- Student-athlete academic performance matters (15 instances)
- Transfer student-athletes whose credits had not been processed by the time of certification (3 instances)
- Student-athletes with declared majors/minors not processed before the first day of classes (5 instances)
- Student-athletes with outstanding tasks required by the individual student athlete in the NCAA Eligibility Center (3 instances)
- Student-athletes certified as ineligible based on the information available at the time of the certification. Information received subsequent to the certification led to those student athletes achieving eligibility (i.e., additional hours were cleared through the Registrar's Office that were degree applicable) (3 instances)

Subsequent to certification, the University began to identify any waivers that could be completed on behalf of the student athletes and performed the necessary tasks that might result in some or all of those athletes being granted eligibility waivers. Waivers are submitted to the NCAA through the NCAA eligibility portal and involve the performance of various tasks by the Athletics Compliance Office which include but are not limited to interviews of the student-athletes to identify if any of the eligible waiver criteria were met, evaluation of progress towards a degree, evaluation of student-athlete's case history, development of mitigation plans for each student-athlete, the completion and submission of the waiver request, and coordination with the NCAA on the specific additional details and context needed to process the waiver request.

On August 27, 2022, the FAMU football team was scheduled to play the University of North Carolina in what was termed a "Week Zero" matchup. This matchup was a nationally televised event and was an opportunity to showcase Florida A & M University and the FAMU football program. In the days leading up to the game it became a matter of public record that 26 players on the FAMU football team were determined ineligible through the University's certification process.

This determination led to FAMU football players penning a letter to the University President dated August 28, 2022, expressing their points of view on why these events occurred and their perception of the shortfalls within the University that contributed to the events. See Appendix A for a copy of the letter received. The letter was signed by 88 student-athletes within the football program. Certain points in the letter focused on the issues the student athletes believed contributed to the events of “Week Zero,” which included issues in financial aid, academic advising, staffing within the Athletics Compliance Office, and the lack of funding available for housing and meals during summer school. Over the course of several weeks following this communication, all but seven student athletes were certified eligible for play, either through the waiver process or because circumstances determined a waiver was not required.

Root Cause Circumstances Associated with “Week Zero”

The circumstances leading to the University’s 29 ineligible student-athletes, with 22 of those student-athletes ultimately being deemed eligible or receiving waivers, could be attributable to several “root causes”. Through inquiries of key university personnel and consideration of relevant documents, the most significant of those root causes are described in the narrative below.

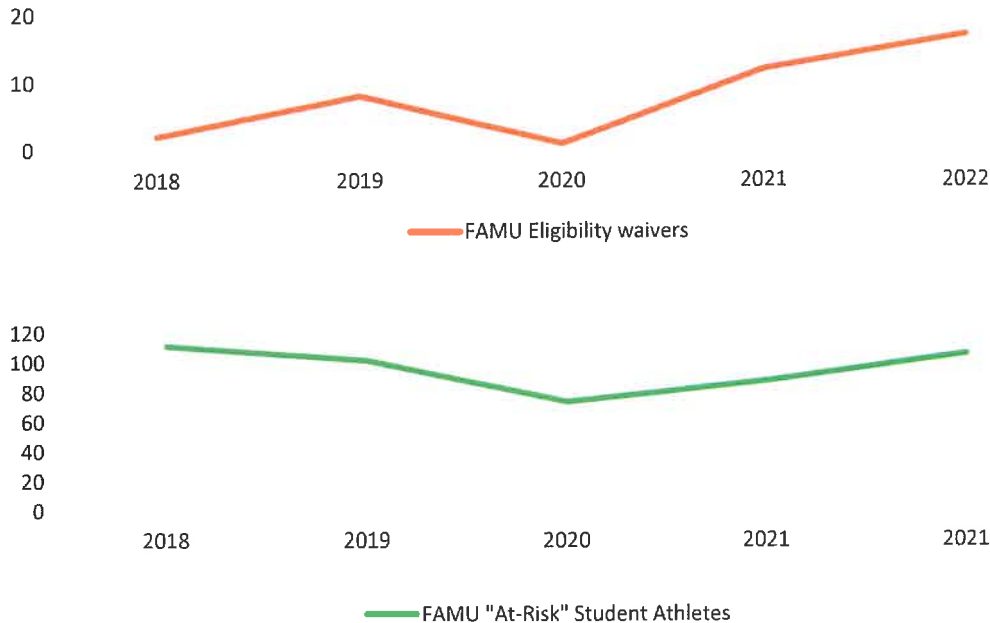
1. High levels of “at-risk” student athletes, ineffective previously designed APR improvement plans, and inadequate resources to address the needs of the high “at-risk” population.

The number of “at-risk” student-athletes and ineligible student-athletes who required waivers was beyond industry norms and historical amounts for the University. High numbers of “at-risk” student athletes has a direct correlation to the high number of ineligible student-athletes who require waivers, if the University intends for the student to participate in FAMU Athletics.

The NCAA Division I Manual details all eligibility requirements at the various stages of a student-athlete’s college career. Other than for incoming freshmen, the NCAA minimum GPA requirements range from 1.8 to 2.2, depending on the student’s academic semester, for a student-athlete to be eligible for competition.

The NCAA requires all student-athletes to maintain progress toward their degree and the fulfilment of various credit hour requirements to be eligible for competition. Eligibility rules require a minimum GPA of 2.3, among other core-course requirements, for incoming freshmen student-athletes to be eligible to practice, compete, and receive athletic scholarships. Transfer student-athletes are required to have successfully completed six hours of academic credit during the previous term. Based on the various metrics described, the number of “at-risk” student-athletes remained high.

The graphs below details the number of “At-Risk” student-athletes and the number of eligibility waivers filed for FAMU since 2018.



**The FAMU Football Program opted out of the 2020 season.*

The Academic Progress Rate (APR) was implemented by the NCAA in 2003 as an effort to hold Division I institutions accountable for the academic progress of their student-athletes through a team-based metric that accounts for eligibility and retention of each student-athlete for each academic term. Data is compiled annually, and results are announced in the spring. In order to remain eligible for post-season play each sport must maintain an average 4-year APR score of 930 or higher. An APR of 950 means that the student-athletes on the team earned 95% of the eligibility and retention points that could have been earned. The APR Improvement Plans developed for the 2021-2022 athletic program year were still being developed and implemented leading up to the “Week Zero” matter.

Our research found that FAMU student-athlete academic performance has been an issue for several sports programs as far back as the 2017-2018 academic year. In 2019, continuing through the current year, sub-par APR scores placed FAMU’s football team on probation, making them ineligible for postseason competition. Exceptions to the post-season rule have been granted to FAMU football program recently based on the COVID 19 pandemic, but these exceptions are expected to end in the near future. The men’s track team was also placed on probation in 2022 due to its APR score falling below the minimum requirements.

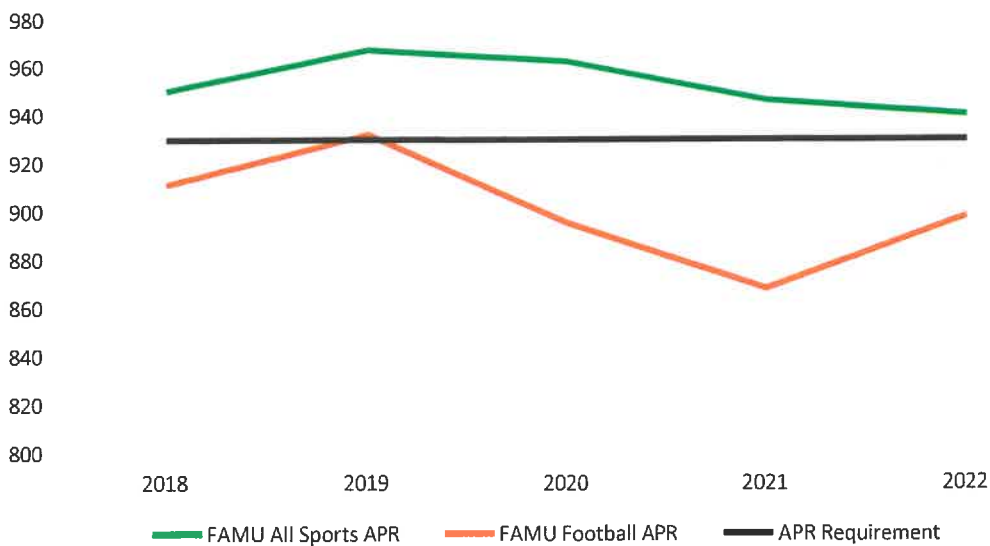
The NCAA requires institutions with teams falling below the 930 multiyear APR benchmark to submit academic improvement plans to address lost eligibility and retention points. In response to this requirement, FAMU Athletics developed Academic Improvement and Sustainability Plan’s (the APR improvement plans) for the football program in each year the APR scores fell below 930 and included the 2021-2022 academic year.

The implementation of efforts to increase academic resources available to student-athletes and improve academic performance from the APR plans from 2019-2021 were not fully implemented and were ineffective in improving APR scores for the football program. The 2019 and 2020 APR plans suffered from a lack of staffing resources and priority given to the Plan, leading to a lack of interdepartmental communication and coordination. Additionally, the previous APR plans were hampered by the Covid 19 pandemic and an inability for those responsible for the plan’s implementation to make changes to the department’s strategies for recruiting.

Prior to the 2021-2022 APR Improvement Plan implementation, student-athletes were limited to the academic resources within the Athletics Department. Most of the University’s support services were not available during hours that aligned with student-athlete schedules. APR Improvement Plan directed implementation to take place during the 2022 Spring semester and led to the availability of more resources for student-athletes.

The 2021-2022 APR Improvement Plan included steps to increase academic resources available to student-athletes, develop procedures to timely identify “at-risk” student-athletes, create individual Academic Success Plans for “at-risk” student-athletes, develop limits to the number of “at-risk” student-athletes allowable on a given roster, and improve the lines of communication between the Athletics Department and student-athletes. The 2021-2022 APR Improvement Plan successfully identified many of the issues facing the program but major components of the plan were either not started or remained in process as of October 2022. As such, the 2021-2022 APR Improvement Plan implementation began too late for the plan to have any significant impact on the 2022 Certification Summit.

The graph below details the single year APR score for all sports and for football individually since 2018.



As shown by the table above, the academic success of the football program is lagging behind those of other sports. Our study suggests that this is the result of 1) decreased funding for athletic specific academic advising and support available to address the needs of the team (these issues are detailed further in root cause #2 below), and 2) a recruiting and admissions system that did not properly balance academic and athletic ability.

Throughout our study, a theme of an imbalance of priorities between academic and athletic ability was discussed. We noted instances of transfer student-athletes being recruited that were academically ineligible from their previous institution and large numbers of “special talent” admissions with weak systems of controls for limitations within the system. While we recognize that some student-athletes may be necessarily admitted based on athletic prowess, an overuse of such policies without an abundance of academic related resources leads to lower sport-wide APR scores and higher levels of “at-risk” populations.

The lack of student-athlete recruitment policies and the overall department philosophy concerning “special talent” admissions made it difficult to reduce the number of “at-risk” students. Programs were already struggling to meet APR benchmarks with current students not earning eligibility points. Additional “special talent” admissions increased the number of student-athletes on rosters not earning eligibility points. Although the 2021-2022 Plan called for improvements to this process, no changes were made, and ineligible transfer students were added to already strained programs. The number of players deemed ineligible for competition in the 2022 Certification Summit was a product of increased numbers of “at-risk” student-athletes.

Overall, we conclude that strong leadership is needed to balance these priorities and to design an overarching recruiting policy that aligns the values and resources of the University with the goals for strong athletic results.

2. *Budgetary shortfalls in the athletics department and staffing shortages in athletics academics and compliance offices.*

FAMU Athletics has had various financial risks and challenges over the last 10 years. Most recently being subjected to both legislative and Board of Governor oversight and monitoring stemming from the use of auxiliary funds to support athletics. The outcome of that violation is a potential loss of working capital for the Athletics Department as the auxiliary funds previously used are required to be repaid from the Athletics Department and the Foundation over 29 years. Additionally, the Athletics Department faced further budgetary challenges due to NCAA violations and lost revenue resulting from the Covid 19 pandemic.

The financial pressures described above contributed to budgetary cuts and the postponement of filling much needed compliance and other academic support positions. Additionally, turnover and changes in positions, including the Associate AD for Compliance during the period from May 2022 to January 2023 (an interim Associate AD served during this time) contributed to shortages in staff support for the completion of academic and compliance related tasks.

Budgetary challenges and turnover in key compliance positions led to staffing shortages within the departments. These shortages coupled with the reduced timeline for the completion of waivers based on the “Week Zero” timing, created additional challenges for the University.

3. *Ineffective academic success plans and deficient systems of information and communication.*

The 2021-2022 APR Plan provided for individual Academic Success Plans for all “at-risk” student-athletes. Success Plans included study hall requirements, weekly check-ins with an academic advisor, and the involvement of head coaches and sports supervisors. Advisors were to also communicate with academic faculty and monitor grades throughout the semester.

Our study suggests that the Academic Success Plans developed for “at-risk” student-athletes failed to achieve the desired outcomes, leading to a high number of ineligible players.

While the plans did have a positive impact on some student athletes, the plans were ineffective for others. These shortcomings were caused by several factors including, staffing shortages, weak systems of information and communication, leadership challenges, and a lack of individual accountability and ownership.

The organizational structure for the Athletics Department’s Office for Student-Athlete Success and Competitive Excellence was not properly designed and included too few support staff to address the needs and to properly monitor outcomes of the large “at-risk” student-athlete population. Our study identified that one person was responsible for developing, coordinating, and monitoring the success plans for over 60 student-athletes. The workload for this one individual included the entire “at-risk” population, all freshmen, and all transfer student-athletes for the football and basketball programs.

Conditions associated with the information and communication systems within the University had several shortcomings that also contributed to the “Week Zero” event.

- The individual Academic Success Plans were developed, initiated and monitored almost exclusively in the Athletics Department. While communication was occurring between coaches, the Athletics Compliance Office, and the Office for Student-Athlete Success; limited understanding of the individual plans and efforts were known by other departments prior to the 2022 Certification Summit. This resulted in breakdowns in understanding and coordination across other departments within the University.

- The various internal platforms used to track academic performance, benchmarking and performance metrics associated with the various plans were not integrated and were not properly used or updated by all parties responsible for ensuring proper monitoring and action.
- Communication and training from the University for student-athletes regarding financial aid, summer school, major change requirements, certification requirements (progress towards degree and course requirements), APR scores, and other material eligibility matters needed improvement and led to avoidable certification challenges.

In addition to structure and communication, the effectiveness of the Athletics Department's leadership in the years leading up to the "Week Zero" incident was impacted by a variety of factors. Strong leadership and a culture of accountability could have prevented many of the certification issues. Conditions that contribute to an environment of accountability would include proper budgeting with a focus on compliance and academic support, established benchmarks and the availability of data to monitor the success of the various APR improvement plans, improved communication and coordination, assurance that APR improvement plans are fully implemented and operating as intended, and the design of strategies for recruitment, training, and support that align with the various APR Improvement Plan goals and University values.

Finally, student athletes themselves must be individually accountable for their academic success. While the University needs to improve the resources and advisement provided to the student-athletes, some of the issues for "Week Zero" come down to personal accountability for achieving the required certification metrics and fulfilling the goals and strategies laid out in the individual Academic Success Plans. Because individual accountability is a core component of the academic success of the team, efforts should be made to ensure that the athletes recruited have the academic ability to meet the minimum standards of the NCAA.

Summary of Root Causes

The three root causes identified above worked together to create an overall system weakness that resulted in the "Week Zero" incident. High "at-risk" populations stem from an imbalance in recruiting methodology and an inability to effectively implement previous corrective actions. The inability to effectively implement previous corrective actions resulted from staffing shortages and inconsistency in athletics leadership since 2018. Shortages in academic support staff stemmed from budgetary challenges and decisions. Imbalanced recruiting policies resulted from a decentralized process, deficient systems of information and communication, and inconsistency in athletics leadership necessary to create balance.

These incidents can be mitigated by implementing systems that result in increased staffing and training, improved leadership and coordination, and developing a culture of accountability. All of which are addressed in the FAMU Athletics Action Plan developed to address the Athletics Departments academic related challenges.

Summary of the FAMU Athletics Action Plan.

In response to the events leading up to and after “Week Zero,” the Board of Trustees and the University began to oversee the development and implementation of a corrective action plan titled the FAMU Athletic Action Plan (the Plan).

The Plan has seventeen unique strategies, each designed to improve a weakness identified by the University’s Special Athletic Committee and to improve the overall student-athlete experience. The most crucial components of the Plan address enhancements needed to academic advisement for student-athletes, staffing shortages within the of Athletics Compliance Office, improved training related to student-athlete specific eligibility requirements, interdepartmental technology and communication, high levels of “at- risk” student-athletes, and the “special talent” student-athlete admission and transfer process. See Appendix B for the complete FAMU Athletic Action Plan.

In regard to the University’s objective to enhance communication, accountability, monitoring, and staffing, the FAMU Athletics Action Plan is comprehensive and thorough. The seventeen strategies detailed in the Athletics Action Plan adequately address the most crucial issues facing the Athletics Department and the academic success of the various athletic programs of FAMU. While the collective implementation of each of the Plan’s seventeen strategies will be important, we consider the following seven strategies to be critical to its success.

Strategy 1: Academic advisement for student athletes

This strategy is focused on improving the quantity of academic advisors that are specifically dedicated to addressing the needs of the FAMU student-athlete population. Additionally, this strategy is focused on improving the quality of academic advising by ensuring that advisors have more training and knowledge on specific NCAA rules and regulations, are equipped to handle the specific challenges facing student-athletes, and are routinely evaluated based on specific performance metrics.

This is a critical component of the success of the Plan, as student-athletes often face various academic challenges beyond those faced by a non-athletic student. Challenges such as meeting various NCAA requirements, balancing a more burdened schedule that includes athletic practices, workouts, and long-distance travel, and can often include other academic challenges that stem from “special talent” admissions that require more advisement and support.

Advisers with the specific knowledge and training of these challenges is necessary to result in improved academic outcomes.

Strategy 2: At-risk student monitoring & support

This strategy is focused on providing real time monitoring of student-athlete academic performance by leveraging technology and improving the interface and visibility of data across the various departments.

This real-time system for monitoring student academic performance will help to ensure that corrective actions are occurring as needed and more timely. Additionally, this system should improve coordination between academic related and athletic related staff to identify potential “at-risk” populations faster, provide additional resources to mitigate the risks, and reduce weekly Countable Athletics Related Activities (CARA) for student-athletes, if needed.

This is a critical component of the Plan as improved communication and coordination is necessary to result in improved academic outcomes.

Strategy 4: Enhance communication & engagement

This strategy is focused on improving the information and communication between student-athletes, the Associate AD of Compliance for Financial Aid and Benefits, and the Financial Aid Office.

Having access to timely and reliable financial aid is critical to resulting in better academic outcomes. Better communication of how financial aid works, how to stay eligible for financial aid, knowing what amounts of financial aid student athletes should expect each semester, and understanding the timing of disbursements is necessary for student-athletes and academic advisors to properly plan for academic success and NCAA compliance.

Strategy 6: Special talent & transfer goal alignment

The focus of this strategy is on establishing thresholds for the number of “special talent” and transfer student-athletes for each sport. Additionally, it focuses on the controls over admissions to improve compliance with the NCAA rules and the University’s core values.

This strategy is critical because the admission of transfer student-athletes and “special talent” students creates additional burdens on the academic support and compliance divisions of the University. Transfer students have unique challenges and compliance requirements. In order to ensure that the University is meeting the needs of this population, it needs to balance the admission of these types of students with the available resources of the University. Without a proper balance and strict adherence to the established University processes, the support divisions will not be able to properly serve the student-athlete population as a whole.

The establishment of thresholds for the number of “special talent” and transfer student-athletes for each sport and the proper alignment of those thresholds, with the support capacity of the University is critical to resulting in better academic outcomes.

Strategy 9: Enhance compliance tracking & reporting

This strategy is focused on providing enhanced real-time monitoring of student academic compliance by leveraging technology and improving the interface and visibility of data across the various departments.

Real-time system monitoring of student-athlete academic compliance will help to improve the timeliness and accuracy of the student-athlete certification. Additionally, it will create improved communication and coordination between divisions so process bottlenecks in the certification process can be identified and resolved more timely. Such system improvements will create transparency between compliance and athletic coaches to ensure that coaches are well informed and can assist in implementing corrective actions to ensure compliance and student athlete availability.

This is a critical component of the Plan as improved communication and coordination is necessary to result in better compliance outcomes.

Strategy 11: Student & staff compliance awareness.

This strategy is focused on providing targeted ongoing compliance training for coaches, student-athletes, academic advisors, and athletics administrators; to include compliance specific topics, such as recruiting, NIL, and APR scoring and requirements.

Our study concluded that improved compliance awareness at various levels of the University was necessary to result in better compliance outcomes. Specifically, we noted that student-athletes and advisors need more compliance related training in order to make well informed decisions that would result in improved compliance.

This is a critical component of the Plan as improved coordination and training is necessary for individuals to take more accountability for their individual academic and compliance success.

Strategy 14: Culture of accountability

This strategy is focused on identifying a comprehensive set of compliance/student success metrics for each head coach and annually reporting those outcomes to the President and BOT Special Committee on Athletics. Additionally, the strategy focuses on creating accountability measures for athletic administrators and coaches in accordance with their employment contracts, as part of the annual performance evaluation process.

During our study we noted various plans and corrective actions have been developed since 2018 to resolve matters of non-compliance and less than optimal academic performance. Many of these plans did not achieve the intended results and the issues they were intended to address remain to this day. We believe that those previously adopted improvement plans and corrective actions did not achieve their intended results based on a culture that did not hold individuals accountable for the full and complete implementation of the various APR improvement plans and their outcomes.

The success of the current FAMU Athletic Action Plan will be directly impacted by a strong control environment, directed by a leadership team committed to the process, adherence to the Plan, and ongoing efforts to monitor actual results against intended outcomes so that timely and appropriate modifications can be made.

Implementation Considerations

The Athletics Improvement Plan strategies, along with strong and consistent leadership, are critical to ensure that results for improvement in academic outcomes and compliance will be linked to accountability and to ensure the Plan is completed, maintained, and followed. Without strong accountability measures the Plan risks being less than fully implemented, and history may be more likely to repeat itself.

It is important that the University successfully implement all 17 strategies of the Plan. The items listed above are those we find most critical and, if not prioritized and properly implemented, may result in an ineffective plan with less than desired outcomes. Many of the strategies are dependent upon one another to reduce the risk of non-compliance and should be closely monitored and adjusted based on the outcomes achieved.

While the Plan has been successfully developed, the Plan still requires successful implementation. Implementation can often be more challenging than the initial plan design. The University has made preparations for successful implementation which include the creation of an implementation team who is responsible for understanding the interconnectivity of various Plan components across university departments, for communicating the Plan within their departments, for overseeing the performance of specific action items, for communicating challenges, and for providing recommendations to the Implementation Team. Equally important and critical to the success of the Plan, is the responsibility of the Implementation Team for monitoring the progress of the unique strategies to ensure that the activities and outcomes achieve the desired results.

Although the University's implementation plan is well designed, challenges may still exist throughout the implementation phase. The following items should be considered to optimize implementation success.

Long-Term Plan Monitoring and Development

The Plan and its implementation are currently high priority items for the University based on the public nature of the events of "Week Zero." However, the events of "Week Zero" were merely symptoms of the weaknesses in the University's system of internal controls over compliance. We believe that the Plan will result in better outcomes, reducing the number of players deemed ineligible for play, in the short term. However, those short-term results should not result in a conclusion that the Plan has been successfully and completely implemented and that further resources for the Plan are no longer required. The successful and complete implementation of the Plan will likely take several years and will require on-going monitoring, development and resources.

Community Pressure and Support for the Incoming Athletics Director

The successful implementation of the Plan and the achievement of the metrics it has designed will involve making difficult decisions that should place the long-term success of the Athletics Program and the University above the short-term successes of any one individual sport. Once the Athletics Director's vision and strategies for the department have been adopted and determined to be in alignment with the University's objectives, the Athletics Director must have the power to make key strategic decisions in response to the Plan or other challenges as they arise. Strong leadership and commitment is necessary if the University is going to improve outcomes.

Respectful and professional internal debates should continue and is a natural characteristic of a healthy internal control environment, but every effort should be made to keep these matters internal and to provide a unified front to the public on key decisions. The public is generally unaware of the underlying root causes of the events leading up to "Week Zero" and the issues concerning APR. Certain decisions made in response to improve the underlying issues may result in community pressure to change course. The University President and the Board of Trustees should support the Athletic Director in making decisions that are in the best interest of the University and in response to the implementation of the Plan.

Recommendations

Based on our observations, inquiries, document review and other procedures performed, the FAMU Athletics Action Plan (the Plan) is sufficiently designed to mitigate the risks of future noncompliance. The seventeen strategies detailed in the Plan adequately address the most critical issues facing the Athletics Department and the academic success of the various athletic programs of FAMU. However, as noted in previous sections of our report, to achieve success of the Plan and its desired outcomes, will require a disciplined commitment to its implementation, a dedication of resources, the establishment of a strong control environment, and the expectation that all parties to the Plan will be accountable for its results.

The Plan is designed to address the issues of “Week Zero” and other academic related issues facing the FAMU Athletics Department and FAMU student-athletes. However, it is also designed to prevent such conditions from occurring in the future, by addressing the root causes leading up to “Week Zero”.

The Plan, if properly implemented, will result in improved outcomes for the University and will reduce the risk of experiencing future challenges similar to those noted above. The presence of, and adherence to, controls designed to achieve compliance with the plan will be critical to its success.

The Plan continues to be monitored and adjusted by the Implementation Team as implementation is still ongoing. This ongoing evaluation process should continue well after implementation is considered complete to ensure that the Plan is operating as intended and achieving the desired results.

This report is not intended to and does not contemplate internal control or compliance risks facing the Athletics Department that were not included in the original scope of work. Our study occurred while the development and implementation of control activities surrounding the planned corrective actions were ongoing. As such, the focus of our efforts and attention were limited to the plan design and did not include an evaluation of the specific metrics developed by management to achieve success, nor the day-to-day operating controls necessary to be implemented in this plan.

The recommendations resulting from our study in regard to the University’s Athletic Action Plan is included below. These recommendations should be considered prior to finalizing the Plan and as part of the ongoing improvements and enhancements contributing to the FAMU student-athlete experience.

Recommendation #1 – Continued monitoring and development of control activities

Once implemented, the Plan will take time to achieve the long-term desired outcomes of the University. We anticipate that the Plan will result in short-term results that improve the academic and compliance environment of the University's student athlete population. However, those short-term results should not be considered as overall Plan success and completion. We anticipate the Plan could take several years to fully implement. The Plan needs to be considered a framework that establishes routine controls and procedures that will be implemented and executed over a long-term period. The Plan will need long term commitment and support from those charged with governance with an overall understanding that the Plan will take ongoing refinement and monitoring for its ultimate success. The control environment and related compliance controls must evolve as the risks associated with student-athletic success evolves.

If the University does not develop a comprehensive framework of controls to facilitate the successful implementation, monitoring, and continued enhancement of the Plan, it faces a high risk of future noncompliance.

A system of milestones and expected outcomes needs to be implemented in conjunction with the Plan. This includes establishing benchmarks over a long-term period for the reduction of "at-risk" student athletes, benchmarks for each sport's improved APR, benchmarks for the reduction in special talent admissions, as well as benchmarks the University believes are important to its student-athlete's success.

The Plan should not be considered fully implemented until, at a minimum, the following three goals are met.

1. Academic Progress Rates (APRs) for all sports earn at least a four-year score of 930.
2. All new positions highlighted in the Plan's organizational charts are fully budgeted, hired, trained, and integrated.
3. The control procedures including routine monitoring developed in response to the Plan become adopted and followed across the various departments.

We recommend that management and those charged with governance maintain an expectation of long-term activities and tasks associated with the Plan to achieve desired results and consider the Plan a framework for continuous controls over compliance. Further we recommend the Plan be routinely evaluated for implementation successes and challenges and revisited on a routine basis for necessary adjustment to plan activities and controls.

Recommendation #2 – Departmental alignment and future considerations.

Certain positions and responsibilities created by the Plan have been spread across various departments within the University to improve coordination and to address certain budgetary challenges for the Athletics Department. This was done partially based on the transition in the Athletics Director position during the Plan’s development and to ensure that the Plan would quickly address the needs of the University’s student-athletes.

Since the Plan’s initial development, the Athletics Director position has been filled. A large part of the overall success of the Plan will rely on the leadership and vision of the Athletics Director moving forward. We recommend that the new Athletics Director be highly involved in the Plan’s implementation and strategy. Further, we recommend that she maintain appropriate administrative oversight for the positions created in response to the Plan. Specifically, our review of the planned organizational structure included the hiring of various positions outside of the Athletics Department. While these changes are considered reasonable, the Athletics Director will need to be able to direct the efforts of these positions in order to promote the culture of accountability necessary for better academic and compliance results.

Furthermore, as revenues increase, the University should start to transition certain positions and responsibilities for the Plan under the Athletics Department. The transition of certain positions under the Athletics Department should result in several improvements and efficiencies for the Plan, including the alignment of resources and their availability with the needs, vision, and ultimate accountability of the Athletics Department.

Recommendation #3 - Transfer athletes and academic major change challenges

We noted a number of challenges attributable to timing issues associated with the requirements to gather and certify information related to transfer athletes and student-athletes that are changing academic majors. During our study of the “Week Zero” issues and the student-athletes deemed ineligible, we noted that 8 of the 29 cases related to the timing required to gather and certify information related to transfer athletes and student-athletes that are changing majors. We consider these items avoidable for recurrence if proper policies are established, but do not believe that the Plan is designed to fully address these issues.

We recommend that improved processes and controls for the timing of transfer athletes’ enrollment into the University be developed to ensure adequate time to perform the required certification procedures. Additionally, improved communication and coordination on the recruitment and admission of student-athletes is necessary. Finally, improved procedures should be developed to assist the student-athletes in ensuring the information/transcripts are properly gathered from the applicable transfer school.

We also recommend that improved processes be developed for the timing of changes of academic majors. Academic major changes within the University require administrative tasks by several departments and faculty. Ensuring that the major changes happen in a timely manner and that oversight of the administrative tasks is properly managed and coordinated within the University is crucial to successful outcomes.

Recommendation #4 - Financial Aid.

The Plan has only limited actions regarding financial aid, which are mostly geared toward summer school and improving the information and communication between student athletes and the Financial Aid Office.

During our study we noted that concerns regarding certain aspects of the financial aid system were voiced. These concerns were mentioned by student athletes and corroborated through our discussions with university personnel. Concerns related primarily to the financial aid IT system and the delayed receipt of financial aid by the University, which in turn resulted in a delay of financial aid disbursements to student-athletes. Additionally, we noted communication challenges regarding “holds” on financial aid disbursements based on academic performance or incomplete required administrative tasks or documents, and certain transfer athletes being deemed ineligible for financial aid. These conditions led to additional difficulties for the student-athletes that lead to academic challenges. We do not believe that the Plan is currently designed to address such challenges, although those challenges may be beyond the scope of the Plan.

We recommend that management look closely at these issues and develop additional plans to mitigate future issues regarding financial aid disbursements.

August 28, 2022

Dr. Robinson,

We, the members of the 2022 Rattler Football Team, would like to address several issues that are having an adverse effect on our lives, our future, and the student-athlete experience at FAMU. To date, we have kept these issues within the university structure, but since they have not been adequately resolved, we will release this statement to the FAMU Board of Trustees and Florida Board of Governors.

Financial Aid: Each semester, we have issues with our financial awards being posted in a timely manner. We are repeatedly told, "It's a new system, and it's taking longer to post than normal". This response is completely unacceptable. This delay in funds has repeatedly left us unable to pay for our basic daily needs. There are also cases of players having evictions filed against us which reflects on our credit reports. We're sure that you are keenly aware of the damage that a poor credit file can have on individuals beginning their professional careers. Additionally, unpaid balances from our financial aid processes prevent us from buying textbooks or access codes for classes and from utilizing the priority registration process afforded to athletes. This, in turn, causes delays in our registration, often causing us to enroll in classes days or weeks after they have already started. Professors often do not allow us to make up the work that we have already missed, which places us in a posture of playing catch-up for the entire semester. Dr. Robinson, when we signed our letters of intent to become student-athletes at FAMU, we agreed to perform at our peak in the classroom, on the field, and in the community. How can we realistically be expected to perform at a high level when we're

Appendix A

concerned with having adequate academic resources and whether or not we will have a roof over our heads and nourishment for our bodies?

Academic Support/Compliance: it was very damaging to the morale of our football team to read on various media outlets, "26 FAMU Football Players Ruled Ineligible." This narrative implies that we are not performing in the classroom. In fact, that couldn't be further from the truth. The issue at hand is not academic performance, but procedural issues within the registrar's office, compliance department and academic advisement. For instance, Isaiah Land, our All-American defensive end, who was singled out as the highest-profile of our teammates unable to compete in our first game, was mis-advised. He was instructed to take three, two-credit hour courses this summer, in order to meet satisfactory progress towards his degree. He did so and passed all three courses. It was determined last week, at the beginning of the fall semester, that Isaiah actually needed three additional hours during the summer, which would not have been an issue had he received proper advisement. This situation left Isaiah three credit hours shy of satisfactory progress towards his degree, deeming him academically ineligible. At the root of this issue is the fact that our Academic Advisement and Compliance Offices are understaffed. The compliance office consists of one person, who has no subject matter expertise in athletic compliance. How can this person be expected to certify over three hundred athletes in a timely manner? You stated in your address on yesterday that, "We have shared a commitment to a culture of accountability and compliance". Are the actions and staffing plans of the current university and athletic administrations in alignment with this statement?

Our campus partners also share responsibility in this fiasco. During the admissions process, several of us had to submit academic transcripts, letters of recommendations, and immunization records multiple times because prior submissions were either misplaced or never forwarded to the proper departments. Currently, we have multiple players that have been deemed unable to participate in competition because simple tasks such as changing of majors, conferring of degrees and the submission of grades have not been completed promptly. One such player submitted a change of major form on August 10th and it has yet to be completed by his advisor or department. Is this the fulfillment of our university motto, "Excellence with Caring"?

Summer School: Dr. Robinson, because of our athletic obligations in the fall and spring semesters, summer school is vital to the academic success of our team. It is imperative that our scholarships cover at least part-time enrollment for the summer term. Additionally, football games are not won during football season. They are won in the grueling workouts and team activities during winter, spring and summer months. In the summer of 2021, we were provided tuition of up to six credit hours plus room and board. We were able to transform our bodies and developed into a championship caliber team. This summer, your administration decided not to provide housing or meals for us during summer school. This decision has had detrimental effects on our preparation for the 2022 season. Many of us were not able to maintain or increase body weights because of a lack of nutrition. Most of us found minimum wage employment but because of educational and athletic obligations, we were unable to work enough hours to fully provide for our needs. Do you think that the same conditions are placed on the players at The University of North Carolina or Jackson State? You claim to support us but

support is much more than cheering for us during games or offering a few kind words after a big victory.

Underrepresentation: We are in the midst of the search for the next athletic Director at FAMU. It was very disheartening that there is no student-athlete representation on the eighteen-member search committee, nor were there any discussions held with us regarding the characteristics or qualifications of our next leader. In contrast, every elected Student Government Association president is seated on the University's Board of Trustees. It is important that students' voices are considered in shaping the future of this institution. Concerning the next athletic director, it is our belief that the individual selected should have extensive administrative experience from successful NCAA member institutions, an efficient organizational structure model to address current existing personnel deficits, and a proven track record of successful fund raising. The idea of placing a person in the position because of ties to FAMU is not appealing to us at all. We need fresh ideas and innovation to achieve the level of excellence that FAMU Athletics is capable of.

Underappreciation: Dr. Robinson, the NCAA allows players to receive four tickets for all games in which we participate. That has been the standard since we arrived at FAMU. Last week, we were informed that the current athletic administration had reduced the number of tickets that we would receive from four to two. This decision left our family and friends, who had already made arrangements to travel to Chapel Hill, scrambling to purchase expensive tickets to see us play. Our family and support systems should not be burdened in this manner. The vast majority of them incur hotel and travel expenses, and the facilitation of game tickets should require minimal effort from our athletic administration.

On Friday, after much dialogue within our team, we decided to play at UNC. We determined that we would not play for this institution, but for our families, teammates, classmates, our rabid fanbase, and our coaches who had prepared us and love us. We played our guts out, and in the process, two of our teammates suffered season-ending injuries. After the game, we decided to protest the Marching 100's playing of the Florida Song and FAMU Alma Mater by kneeling during both songs. We will continue to do so until significant changes that facilitate a positive student-athlete experience are made. We will not sing a song that begins "College of Love and Charity..." when we feel neither from this university.

Dr. Robinson, this letter is not a personal attack, but a demand for positive change and a cultural shift in the current direction in FAMU Athletics. We came to FAMU to better our lives and we are expressing concerns about impediments to that goal. We are not interested in further empty dialogue with you or your staff. We want to see changes made now! We have given our bodies and shed blood, sweat, and tears on behalf of this institution. It's time for FAMU to reciprocate the love.

1. ~~Rick~~
2. ~~Jay~~
3. ~~Log~~
4. John Esten
5. Amy Taylor
6. Corinne Currie
7. Chad White
8. Michaela Dixon
9. Stanley Mentor
10. Richard Summers
11. Christian Jones
12. ~~Ami~~
13. Thomas Demas
14. ~~Julie Lee~~
15. A. Davis
16. John Gillroy
17. ~~Ferris~~
17. Terry Edgerton
18. ~~June Zehn~~
19. ~~Bill Coffey~~
20. Dwayne Walker

21. Mirsad Muratovic
22. Jalory Jordan
23. ~~Bill~~
24. Brad Lamb
25. Charles Christopher Williams
26. Hendrickus Cunningham
27. Jermaine Hawkins
28. Jordan Moore
29. Cesar Reyes
30. ~~James~~
31. Juditha Oseba
32. Marquez Phillipas
33. Donald Hall
34. Benjamin Onwiza
35. Jalen Buss
36. A. Berger
37. Gerik Hen
38. Kwame Clark
39. Morgan Moore
40. Khamari Stephens
41. Jordan R. Lee
42. Myron Ward
43. Sheldon Walker
44. Brian Beck
45. Dwayne Hall
46. Derrick Hall

47. Hyman Kig
48. Jahmarr Sheard
49. Winsome Frazier Jr
50. Terrill Jennings
51. David Manigo
52. DeAndre Francis
53. Kamari Young
54. Zach Ellis
55. Trenton Masterson
56. Cam Sigur
57. Jordan Cumberland
58. Tim Williams
59. Khalif Copeland
60. Travis Moss
61. Justin Porter
62. John Howard
63. ~~John~~ ~~Porter~~
64. Josi Romo
65. B. J. Behler
66. Co'Kaun Egan
67. Jamir M. Williams
68. Matthew Miller
69. Trevante Davis
70. Jaylen McCloud
71. Devin Smith
72. Fenley Graham
73. Dre Jones #40
74. Deondri Clark
75. Michael Marshall

76. Xavier Smith
77. Darian Oxendine
78. Michael Williams
79. Cameron Shelton
80. Kameron Burke
81. Kees
82. Bryce Turner
83. Jack Brooks
84. Tyler Riley
85. Chris Faddoul
86. Javan Morgan
87. Isaiah Mosor
88. Christopher Sanders II

Athletics Action Plan

Larry Robinson, Ph.D.
President

FAMU Board of Trustees
Special Committee on Athletics
October 5, 2022



FLORIDA
AGRICULTURAL AND
MECHANICAL
UNIVERSITY

Athletics Action Plan

- I. Academic Support
- II. Financial Aid, Scholarship, and Student Support
- III. Admissions
- IV. Compliance
- V. Accountability and Operational Effectiveness
- VI. Audit Services

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Strategy	Actions/Steps to Operationalize Strategy	Responsible Person/Unit(s)	Timetable/Key Milestones	Status Update
<p>A. Provide high-quality academic advisement for student-athletes</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt a centralized athletic academic support model in athletics (athletic academic advisors serve as primary point of contact) 2. Increase the number of full-time advisors from three to five 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management & Associate Provost for Student Success 2. Vice President for Student Affairs & Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. September 30 2. October 4 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopted model 2. Completed; Temporarily reassigned two academic coaches to the original team of three full-time advisors. A formal search process is underway to identify permanent hires to replace the academic coaches reassigned to the unit (anticipate issuing offers by: October 31) 3. Ongoing
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Provide enhanced training for advisors on NCAA guidelines and academic degree requirements 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Chief Compliance and Ethics Officer & Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. First session with NCAA: October 7 	

ACADEMIC SUPPORT				
Strategy	Actions/Steps to Operationalize Strategy	Responsible Person/Unit(s)	Timetable/Key Milestones	Status Update
	<p>4. Conduct ongoing evaluations and assessments of the Academic Advisement Program using well-defined effectiveness metrics</p> <p>5. Incorporate performance metrics into annual performance evaluations of advisors</p>	<p>4. Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management & Associate Provost for Student Success</p> <p>5. Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management & Associate Provost for Student Success</p>	<p>4. First assessment begins November 14</p> <p>5. June 30, 2023</p>	<p>4. Identify a set of metrics that will be used to conduct evaluations</p> <p>5. Conduct evaluations at the end of the current academic year</p>
B. Increase monitoring and support for at-risk student-athletes	<p>1. Use analytics to monitor student success metrics and flag potentially at-risk students for additional follow-up each semester</p> <p>a. GradesFirst system used for progress monitoring and communication</p> <p>2. Require a reduction in weekly Countable Athletically Related Activities (CARA) to be replaced with academic activities for all student-athletes who deemed "at-risk"</p>	<p>1. Associate Athletic Director for Student-Athlete Success and Competitive Excellence & AD/Sport Administrators & Associate Provost for Student Success</p> <p>2. Associate Athletic Director for Student-Athlete Success and Competitive Excellence & Coaches & AD/Sport Administrators</p>	<p>1. Ongoing</p> <p>2. November 1 start (ongoing)</p>	<p>1. Continue weekly meetings, which are held between the Associate Athletic Director for Student-Athlete Success and Competitive Excellence & coaches & student-athletes. Academic Affairs will begin additional monitoring and progress reporting on November 1</p> <p>2. Pending</p>

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Strategy	Actions/Steps to Operationalize Strategy	Responsible Person/Unit(s)	Timetable/Key Milestones	Status Update
<p>C. Expand tutorial and study hall services</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increase staffing levels and hours of operation for tutorial labs Enhance monitoring of participation in required study hall activities and elevate non-compliance to Athletic Director and Sports Administrators 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Associate Athletic Director for Student-Athlete Success and Competitive Excellence & Coaches & AD Associate Athletic Director for Student-Athlete Success and Competitive Excellence & Coaches & AD 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing October 14 (ongoing) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded hours and days of operation over the original schedule of M-Th 8 am-9 pm and Friday 8 am-5pm, to include Saturdays (11 am-4pm) and Sundays (12 pm-3 pm). Additional tutors have been employed to handle the expanded weekend hours Expanding functionality of Tutor Ocean for all stakeholders to access information regarding student use and monitor attendance across all tutoring labs

FINANCIAL AID, SCHOLARSHIP, AND STUDENT SUPPORT				
Strategy	Actions/Steps to Operationalize Strategy	Responsible Person/Unit(s)	Timetable/Key Milestones	Status Update
A. Enhance communication and engagement with student-athletes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a dedicated compliance officer position to serve as a liaison from University Athletics to the Financial Aid Office 2. Increase reporting and outreach to student-athletes regarding financial aid guidelines, requirements, and their status for receipt of aid 3. Enhance existing financial literacy education and provide to all student-athletes to assist with NIL and managing financial aid 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chief Compliance and Ethics Officer 2. Associate AD for Compliance (Financial Aid) & Director of Financial Aid 3. Associate AD for Compliance (Financial Aid) & Director of Financial Aid 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. November 30 2. Immediate and ongoing 3. November 1 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pending 2. Increased communication has begun regarding student aid and requirements 3. Planning mandatory sessions with the Office of Financial Aid and other financial partners (each semester)
B. Adopt a sustainable model for summer school	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement a more timely and comprehensive communications plan to relay guidelines and expectations that govern summer activities for student-athletes in each sport 2. Allocate funding for summer support (tuition, room and board) at levels that are consistent with institutional expectations for student-athletes' participation in sanctioned summer activities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. AD & Coaches 2. AD & Vice President of Advancement & Vice President for Student Affairs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. January 2023 2. January 31, 2023 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pending 2. Pending

ADMISSIONS				
Strategy	Actions/Steps to Operationalize Strategy	Responsible Person/Unit(s)	Timetable/Key Milestones	Status Update
A. Management of special talent and transfers to ensure practices align with University goals and APR (Academic Progress Rate) expectations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish thresholds for the number of special talent and transfer student-athletes for each sport's roster 2. Enforce strict adherence to the established University's processes for admitting student-athletes 3. Evaluate the admissions process routinely to ensure compliance 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. AD & Vice President for Student Affairs 2. AD & Vice President for Student Affairs 3. AD & Vice President for Student Affairs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. December 2022 2. December 2022 3. December 2022 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pending 2. Pending 3. Pending

COMPLIANCE				
Strategy	Actions/Steps to Operationalize Strategy	Responsible Person/Unit(s)	Timetable/Key Milestones	Status Update
A. Enhance the University's Compliance Structure by increasing the number of staff and formalizing connections to the Offices of the Registrar and Financial Aid	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allocate funding to establish the new positions 2. Complete searches to fill the positions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Sr. Associate Athletic Director (AD) for Compliance b. Associate AD of Compliance (Financial Aid) c. Coordinator (Financial Aid liaison) d. Associate AD for Compliance (Eligibility) e. Coordinator (Certification Officer) f. Coordinator (general compliance) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. President 2. Chief Compliance and Ethics Officer 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. July 2022 2. Hiring deadlines: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. November 30: Sr. Associate Athletic Director (AD) for Compliance b. November 30: Associate AD of Compliance (Financial Aid) c. October 31: Coordinator (Financial Aid liaison) d. November 30: Associate AD for Compliance (Eligibility) e. October 31: Coordinator (Certification Officer) f. October 3: Coordinator (general compliance) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete 2. Status: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Rolling Search</i>: Sr. Associate Athletic Director (AD) for Compliance b. <i>Pending Personnel Action</i>: Associate AD of Compliance (Financial Aid) c. <i>Pending Personnel Action</i>: Coordinator (Financial Aid liaison) d. <i>Position Posted</i>: Associate AD for Compliance (Eligibility) e. <i>Position Posted</i>: Coordinator (Certification Officer) f. <i>Hiring Completed</i>: Coordinator

COMPLIANCE				
Strategy	Actions/Steps to Operationalize Strategy	Responsible Person/Unit(s)	Timetable/Key Milestones	Status Update
	g. Graduate Assistant/Intern		g. October 15: Graduate Assistant/Intern	(general compliance) g. Request Pending: Graduate Assistant/Intern
B. Enhance the Compliance Structure by providing short-term support for day-to-day compliance function and reporting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the scope of services with BSK to bring an attorney in residence to campus to support the compliance function, including education, monitoring, reporting, and outreach (Note: BSK has been working with the University since October 27, 2014) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Chief Compliance and Ethics Officer 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> October 4 start date 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> On track
C. Enhance compliance tracking and reporting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Expand use of athletics reporting software to track compliance and notifications by monitoring and enforcing use by coaches and athletics staff 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Associate AD for Compliance 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> In progress
D. Strengthen connections between Compliance and administrative units across the University	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Expand campus-wide participation in monthly compliance meetings to include the FAR, representatives from academic, student and fiscal affairs units 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> AD & Senior Associate AD for Compliance 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> October start date (ongoing) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> In progress
E. Increase staff and student awareness of compliance requirements and outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Provide targeted ongoing compliance training for coaches, student-athletes, academic advisors, and athletics administrators, to include compliance specific topics, such as recruiting, NIL, and APR 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Associate AD for Compliance 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Each semester 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> In progress

COMPLIANCE				
Strategy	Actions/Steps to Operationalize Strategy	Responsible Person/Unit(s)	Timetable/Key Milestones	Status Update
F. Continue APR Improvement Plan Monitoring	1. Amend January 2022 APR Improvement Plan. While the amendment is not required by NCAA, amending the existing improvement plan will be reflective of internal progress monitoring	1. Senior Associate AD for Compliance & Chief Compliance and Ethics Officer	1. Improvement plan submitted January 2022; amended plan based on compliance review, recent adjustments, and latest APR reporting will be completed by October 31	1. In progress
G. Continue Annual Probationary Reporting	1. Comply with terms of probation and report appropriately to the NCAA and University leadership	1. Senior Associate AD for Compliance & Chief Compliance and Ethics Officer	1. Year 7 probationary report submitted on September 15, 2022	1. Completed

ACCOUNTABILITY AND OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS				
Strategy	Actions/Steps to Operationalize Strategy	Responsible Person/Unit(s)	Timetable/Key Milestones	Status Update
A. Promote a culture of accountability and compliance within University Athletics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify a comprehensive set of compliance/student success metrics for each head coach and annually report outcomes to the President and BOT Special Committee on Athletics 2. Enforce accountability measures for athletics administrators and coaches in accordance with their employment contracts via the annual performance evaluation process 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Athletic Director & Associate Vice President for Strategic Planning, Analysis, and Institutional Effectiveness 2. Athletic Director 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify metrics (November 30) Complete annual report (June 30, 2023) 2. End of season evaluations (variable) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pending 2. Pending
B. Incorporate University Athletics into the University's Institutional Effectiveness Framework	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and publish dashboards to facilitate ongoing monitoring and evaluation of key performance indicators (KPIs) for athletics 2. Provide monthly updates and reports to senior leadership on KPIs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Associate Vice President for Strategic Planning, Analysis and Institutional Effectiveness & Vice President for Audit 2. Associate Vice President for Strategic Planning, Analysis and Institutional Effectiveness 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. December 15 2. December 2022 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pending 2. Pending

AUDIT SERVICES				
Strategy	Actions/Steps to Operationalize Strategy	Responsible Person/Unit(s)	Timetable/Key Milestones	Status Update
A. Provide independent and objective assurance to the Board that University processes and practices are in place and operating as intended	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitor and advise management in the assessment of Athletics and the development of related action plans 2. Evaluate Athletic program metrics periodically, validate information, and report to management and the Board regarding performance and corrective action plan implementation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vice President for Audit 2. Vice President for Audit 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ongoing (Quarterly) 2. Ongoing (Quarterly) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participating in an advisory capacity in managements' efforts to assess the situation and prepare an action plan 2. Metrics and Evaluation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Researching metrics and methods to gather dashboard information b. Partnering with the Division of Strategic Planning, Analysis, and Institutional Effectiveness on Athletics dashboard
B. Solicit external assurance to the Board that University processes and practices are in place and operating as intended	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage a professional services firm to provide the following services: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop a detailed profile of athletics-related issues facing the University by obtaining a robust understanding of the FAMU Athletic Department and University athletic-support functions, including 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vice President for Audit 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. October 2022-December 2023 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Progress: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Firm identified

AUDIT SERVICES				
Strategy	Actions/Steps to Operationalize Strategy	Responsible Person/Unit(s)	Timetable/Key Milestones	Status Update
	<p>Department organizational structure; staffing/personnel; student-athlete recruitment management and special talent admissions; student academic support; student success analytics; student aid; and compliance (NCAA and compliance related to student-athlete eligibility, Academic Progress Rate, and certification processes)</p> <p>b. Confirm the proper identification of the root causes contributing to athletics-related issues through the assessment and validation of the University's athletics and athletic-support functions</p> <p>c. Evaluate athletics management action plans, and advise on the advisability and likely efficacy of actions planned by management</p> <p>d. Recommend improvements to planned actions and controls that will prevent, detect, and correct any further recurrence of identified athletics-related issues</p>			<p>b. Professional Services Agreement prepared</p> <p>c. Agreement in legal review</p> <p>d. Firm preparing proposal and engagement letter</p>

AUDIT SERVICES				
Strategy	Actions/Steps to Operationalize Strategy	Responsible Person/Unit(s)	Timetable/Key Milestones	Status Update
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. Produce a written report of outcomes containing the profile of issues, root-cause analysis, and evaluation of action plans, including assessments and recommendations 2. Present the results to both FAMU Senior Management and the FAMU Board of Trustees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Vice President for Audit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Report to the BOT and BOG at their regularly scheduled meetings following the delivery of the services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. Information regarding the status of management actions shared with the firm 2. Pending