

2-4 Transfer Academic Requirements

FARA Executive Committee Response to Academic Cabinet

The Executive Committee of FARA first held a discussion of the proposals to enhance the academic success of 2-4 transfer student-athletes at the NCAA Convention in San Antonio in January. We continued this discussion at our Spring planning meeting in Indianapolis. This represents a synopsis of our perspectives on this important issue.

First, we consider that the Academic Cabinet is making positive strides in addressing the 2-4 transfer issue. It is evident that constructive measures are needed to improve the academic fortunes of these student-athletes. We understand that legislative proposals will be forthcoming in the 2011-12 cycle and are fully supportive. In that light, we offer the following comments and suggestions.

At the recent meeting of the Academic Cabinet, the required GPA standard, previously discussed to be raised from 2.00 to 2.50, was reduced to 2.25. The FARA Executive Committee questions this reduction.

We understand that a concurrent reduction in the number of transferable PE activity credit hours for all sports beyond men's basketball may adversely impact the GPA of some 2-year-college student-athletes although this effect is not well known. A counterpoint to this claim is that, from the 4-year institution's perspective, the GPA of the 2-year student-athlete is inflated by high grades in PE courses, and this GPA inflation is shown by a more significant drop in GPA at the 4-year institution. We also note that many Division I institutions already limit or disallow PE credit hours for transfer students.

The norm for 2-4 transfer students to our institutions (all students including student-athletes), is a significant drop in GPA when compared to their record at the 2-year college. We contend that, if the standard is raised, whether to 2.25 or 2.5, potential transfer student-athletes will strive to achieve that standard, and the higher of the two ensures a higher rate of academic success at Division I institutions. So, we support the earlier proposal of a 2.5 standard for 2-4 transfer student-athletes to be eligible for competition in their first year at a Division I institution. It may make sense to use 2.25 as a transitional standard for one or two years before moving to 2.5. NCAA data show that a reducing trend in first-year-after-transfer "0-for-2"s begins at a threshold of 2.4, and, as that threshold is raised to 2.5 and above, the downward trend in "0-for-2"s is sustained. The onset of this trend does not occur at 2.25.

The FARA Executive Committee also supports the extension of the limit on the number of transferable PE activity credit hours to all sports from its current application only to men's basketball. Consistency is called for with this rule. We also agree that the requirement of a transferable science class is appropriate and understand from research data that a great percentage of recent transfers already satisfy this requirement.

To facilitate access, an earned GPA of 2.0 would be sufficient for athletically-related aid in the year of transfer, but not competition. Of course, practice participation would be allowed.

It is our position that the *year in readiness* concept has merit but also brings problematic aspects. We believe that the concept should be pursued but that more study and consideration are required. We question the size of the student-athlete population for whom this option will be attractive. Limiting competition for participants to two years at the Division I level will make the year-in-readiness option

less attractive. In addition to considering how coaches would use this rule to recruit, one should also consider the repercussions on the student athlete.

Criteria should be established for participation in the year-in-readiness program. We question whether any non-qualifier student-athlete who does not compete in the first year at a junior college, either due to a coach's decision, injury or some other reason, should have the ability to designate that a year in readiness. Or, should some *a priori* action be required of the student-athlete to designate that year as such? Would this action be registered with the NCAA Eligibility Center?

There should be some way to limit the program to students who demonstrate commitment to succeed academically and graduate from a 4-year institution but who have left high school unprepared for the rigors of college and are in need of remedial academic work.

A student who has spent five or more semesters at a 2-year school will be very limited in their choice of majors at the 4-year institution, and we must consider that achieving progress toward degree standards subsequent to transfer may be difficult, along with immediate enrollment in upper-division courses. The fact that these students are enrolled in a major not due to interest but rather eligibility can be a primary reason why she or he does not graduate.

We also believe there should be some expectation of academic progress during the year in readiness. Some standard should be established for the credit hours passed and the GPA achieved during this year.

The FARA Executive Committee appreciates the opportunity to communicate its thoughts and suggestions regarding this important issue to the NCAA Academic Cabinet.

This document was prepared by FARA Executive Committee members Scott Benson and David Clough on March 18, 2011, and approved, as amended, by vote of the Executive Committee on March 19, 2011.