

University Athletics Committee Meeting Minutes
March 21, 2023, 3:30 pm
Pat Draughon Study Center Conference Room

Attendees: Timm Hackett, Alex Keddie, Gary Higgins, Cal Christian, Mike Harris, Stephanie White, Karen Vail-Smith, Peter Francia, Emily Yeager, Andrew Pickett

Meeting called to Order by Timm Hackett.

1. Approval of February 28, 2023, minutes
 - a. Motion to approve by Peter Francia, Second Karen Vail-Smith. Approved.
2. Remarks from Gary Higgins, ECU Pirates Head Soccer Coach
 - a. Coach provided UAC with background of his playing and coaching career.
 - b. Coach Higgins provided a recap of the 2022 Soccer Season and his first year as Head Coach at ECU.
 - c. Able to keep Emily Buccilla on staff as Asst. Coach from previous staff. Have added Asst Coach Evan Gaffney and Director of Ops, Dar Battistoni.
 - d. Member comments, questions for Coach Higgins:
 - i. What differences have you found at ECU from other places you've been? (C. Christian)
 1. Having come from small private schools, found that at ECU people are accessible and open and able to build relationships.
 2. The Women's soccer student-athlete is here for a degree and to play a sport to where communication is the bridge to make everything work.
 3. In the first year it has been priority to build the program and relationships
 4. Currently have roster size of 28 players
 - ii. How important is soccer student-athletes major/degree? (C. Christian)
 1. Wants to recruit great players but very few will ever make soccer a professional career, so the degree must be able to set each player up for a career in the degree they choose here at ECU.
 2. Recruit by 3 P's, Person, Player, and Performance.
 3. Must fulfill potential in the classroom.
 4. Once at ECU, focus on the pillars of Sports Psychology, Performance, Analytics and Academic Excellence in all that the team does.
 5. Major focus on relationship building with players, team staff, professors, and academic advisors.
 6. Team has many different majors that presents challenges.
 - a. Must create a balance with academics and soccer.
 - b. Communication is key to make sure schedules align but if academic needs interfere with practice, student athletes will focus on academic needs first, even if practices are missed.
 - iii. What does ECU do better than other places you've been and what needs to be improved? (P. Francia)

1. Good at allowing any major you want and having a great Academic Advisor for the team in Karlie Abbott.
 2. With many resources can delegate roles on the staff and have support staff for specific roles, much like the Advisors.
 3. Many hands are involved each member of the Team or Athletics staff is specialized in what each does well.
- iv. Have you thought about expanding or promoting other degree offerings for the student-athlete when certain degree offerings are challenging to obtain? Looking at alternatives like Public Health or Pre-Health professions for those challenges when pursuing Nursing school and taking clinicals? (K. Vail-Smith)
1. Try to give options but that is something to consider and to have contact info for that program will be helpful. Academic advisors can also be aware of this.
- v. Have you had any ups/down/challenges with travel schedule in the fall? (M. Harris)
1. Schedule is always challenging but team and staff are on top of the challenges with letters, communication, and notifications.
 2. Fortunate to have student-athletes that are on task and work hard on academics while travelling and at home.
 3. Soccer will add different teams to Conference next year, and travel will always be challenging.
 4. Will have 2 long trips this fall and will have an East/West Division
 5. The team reports the first week of August and some travel will occur prior to the start of fall semester.
- vi. With your experience in the Academy system from your background, will you bring any of that system to ECU? (T. Hackett)
1. Always must bring discipline, high soccer IQ and doing the right things.
 2. International student-athlete will be recruited and look forward to bringing that culture to academics and athletics.
- vii. What's your take on NCAA soccer competing in a full year of play possibility? (C. Christian)
1. With all things, need balance in life and 10 months of play could pose risk of injury.
 2. Key here is you need to balance with games spread out to prevent injuries and allow recovery across the season.
 3. Currently, like the aspect of multiple games in a week and the 3–4-month season we have, now.
 4. At ECU, it would also be challenging with shared facility space at Johnson stadium with ECU Lax.
 5. To add, our facilities are amazing and love them.
- viii. Do you have everything you need to compete at this level and Conference? (P. Francia)
1. We do and will compete for championships. It is challenging sometimes to compete with the Florida schools and the weather, but we have what we need.

- 2. We want players to bleed purple and gold and that what we recruit. The buy-in for how we recruit has been great.
- 3. Fully funded with 14 scholarships.
- ix. Do you need anything with Recruiting to help? (A. Keddie)
 - 1. Must be able to appreciate what you have, recruit players that love this town, community and this University.
- x. How does NIL work with soccer? (M. Harris)
 - 1. Trying to get opportunities and we must look more into this space for our student athletes.
 - 2. Have great potential, some local players that we can market well.
- xi. How is the transfer portal with ECU Soccer? (K. Vail-Smith)
 - 1. It is more beneficial for the student-athlete to find what works and the situation or opportunity that is best for them.
 - 2. Only lost 1 player in the summer of 2022, once new staff was hired. Feel very good about team and what was able to keep here.
 - 3. We still must recruit our current players.
- xii. How has the alumni support been for the staff and for you? (A. Pickett)
 - 1. Did find that we did have a disconnect with the alumni once hired in 2022 and have been working towards fixing that.
 - 2. Developed a newsletter and send out monthly to soccer alumni to keep them engaged with the team.
 - 3. Have seen some recent success and had an event in the fall to help bring the alumni back for support. Going well and looking to do more.

3. Athletic Director's Update (Alex Keddie)

- a. Continued success for ECU Women's basketball and their incredible season with a Conference Championship and berth into the NCAA tournament.
 - i. Received AAC honors:
 - 1. Coach of the Year, Kim McNeill
 - 2. Freshman Player of the Year, Amiya Joyner
 - 3. Defensive Player of the Year and Most Improved Player of the Year, Danae McNeal
 - ii. Great turnout for the NCAA Selection show in TowneBank Tower.
- b. All spring sports are trending up and seeing continued success.
- c. Athletics Administration is renewing policies and auditing department.
 - i. After the Univ of Georgia incident with FB player, staff members and use of rental car, reviewing policies that we have in place to prevent this type of thing occurring at ECU.
- d. NIL, Athlete Safety and Title IX for Faculty Senate reporting.
 - i. Meeting with Cal and Timm to complete report
 - ii. Will update as needed with the ongoing NCAA Transformation Committee reports.
 - iii. Athlete safety mtg will happen in June 2023 and will have updates.
 - iv. Member comments:
 - 1. Did mention to Faculty Senate that all athletes do not receive full scholarships and many only partial. Many faculty senators did not know that information. (T. Hackett)

- e. March 22nd is Pirate Nation Gives
 - i. A competition for restricted funds.
 - ii. Each team has created graphics and videos to encourage donors to donate.
 - iii. Looking to get most donors, not values, but number of donors to unlock certain money to be given to team is places in 1st, 2nd or 3rd place across all athletic teams at ECU.
 - f. March is National Athletic Training Month
 - i. Commend the job our Athletic Training Staff does daily.
 - ii. The AT staff is here every day, longer than anyone on staff and deserves many thanks for what each do for our student-athletes.
 - iii. More to come and teams will celebrate their AT through social media.
4. Update from Faculty Athletics Representative (Cal Christian)
- a. Will be looking at new Mental Health screening for Athletes with help from research conducted by experts in this area from campus/ECU.
5. New Business
- a. Possible meeting on April 18th only if something arises from Faculty Senate or need to report.
 - b. An Educational session will be held on 4/14 amongst Athletics staff and campus partners on Compliance, Academic Advising, and other specific areas across campus to collaborate on current practices. .
6. Motion to adjourn, Timm Hackett. Second by P. Francia. Adjourned at 4:45pm.