To: All faculty, instructors, varsity coaches, and athletics advisors

From: The Boulder Faculty Assembly

Subject: The interaction between Athletics and Academics at CU Boulder

The purpose of this document is to circulate a summary of campus policies and practices regarding situations where conflicts arise between athletic events and classes. Our goal is to help clarify the rights and responsibilities of student-athletes, coaches, advisors, faculty, and instructors, and to anticipate and help solve problems. This information may be especially useful for new or junior faculty, and in any case it may help guide decisions about how to deal with conflicts when they arise. We also felt it helpful for us to describe the academic support services provided to student-athletes by the Athletic Department, in conformance with NCAA regulations.

This document was prepared by the BFA Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics, with the cooperation of the Department of Athletics, and pertains only to intercollegiate varsity sports. Thus it does not address conflicts related to other forms of athletic participation by students, such as club sports, intramurals, or the band and cheer squads.

I. Overview

It is campus policy, and our belief as well, that participation in intercollegiate athletics is a valuable part of the college experience for students, and that student-athletes represent the university in a positive way. Hence athletic participation should be accommodated within the academic context. On the other hand, it is also campus policy that academics has priority at all times, that student-athletes must satisfy all class requirements, and that instructors have substantial authority in deciding how to handle conflicts.

It is the recommendation of our committee that conflicts between athletic participation and academics be accommodated as constructively as possible. It is primarily the student-athlete's responsibility to notify instructors as soon as possible about conflicts with athletic events and to seek accommodation. Faculty should be aware that the Office of Academic Support Services in the Athletic Department can assist in several ways when conflicts arise.

II. Policies and practices regarding conflicts.
Sometimes travel to games or tournaments requires student-athletes to miss classes. In general the authority over how to resolve such conflicts rests entirely with the instructor. The only relevant documentation about this is the general attendance policy that is printed in the University Catalog for each college, in which it is specified that students must work with their instructors if they miss class for "good cause." Thus an instructor has the right to refuse to allow make-ups or provide other accommodations -- but also, in our view, the instructor has a mandate to try to resolve such conflicts in a manner that does not unduly penalize the student-athlete.

For conflicts with classes during the regular term, instructors have final authority to decide how or whether to accommodate schedule conflicts. During final exams, when normal policy forbids participation in athletic competitions, our committee must also approve any exceptions, after the instructors have already done so. Recent examples occurred when the volleyball team qualified for the NCAA tournament, which takes place during fall semester exams; and when several track athletes and one soccer player were invited to Olympic qualifying events at the time of spring semester exams. In these cases, with the concurrence of the instructors and in consultation with the Office of Academic Support Services in Athletics, our committee has authorized such exceptions.

Normally, team schedules are known well in advance, so student-athletes are able to communicate with their instructors at the beginning of the term. In addition, the Office of Academic Support services usually provides written notification of conflicts, also far in advance. However, situations can arise where a student-athlete may make the travel roster and/or qualify for a game or tournament at the last minute. In that event the student-athlete may not be able to provide much advance notice of an upcoming absence.

Faculty responses to schedule conflicts have varied widely. Most attempt to work with the student-athletes to resolve schedule conflicts, usually by allowing assignments to be turned in late; scheduling early or make-up tests; or simply excusing the absence (in classes where attendance is taken). Some faculty have taken a harder line, offering no make-up opportunities, in which case the student-athlete either misses a game or tournament or loses credit for class time and work missed.

Should the absence be on the day of a scheduled quiz or exam, members of the Office of Academic Support Services staff are quite willing to assist in proctoring the quiz or exam at a convenient time for the faculty member and student-athlete.

In cases where it is known in advance that many schedule conflicts will arise (as, for example, when a required weekly lab conflicts with athletic team practice), it may be advisable for the student not to take that particular course during the term in question. This possibility should be a part of the consideration at the beginning of the semester, when student athletes inform their instructors of known conflicts. Academic counselors in the Office of Student Support Services should also be aware of such situations and advise accordingly.

III. Communications between Athletics and faculty.
In order to avoid any appearance of pressure by the Athletics Department on instructors, Athletics policy forbids coaches from initiating contact with instructors regarding grades, schedule conflicts, or academic progress of specific student-athletes. Any instructor who feels that inappropriate contact has been made should contact the Athletic Director, the director of Academic Support Services, or any member of the BFA Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics. Names and contact information appear at the end of this memo.

There is no rule forbidding instructors from contacting athletics staff. In fact, the Athletic Support Services Department would very much like to hear from instructors should there be a concern with poor attendance, poor academic performance, disruptive classroom behavior, etc. -- or if a student-athlete is performing particularly well in a class.

The Office of Academic Support Services in the Athletics Department monitors the progress and status of student-athletes in class, and has used various methods for notifying instructors when student-athletes are enrolled in their classes and for soliciting progress reports during the term. Response to these inquiries by instructors is voluntary, but helpful to the Athletics Department in recognizing and averting academic problems among the student-athletes. Current Department policy is that student-athletes considered to be "at risk" (i.e., those with GPAs below 2.3) will personally bring progress report forms to their instructors, up to twice a semester. In addition, for all student-athletes, regardless of academic standing, instructors will be contacted by Academic Support Services at mid-semester for status reports.

A new policy this year requires each student-athlete to meet with his/her primary advisor (in the appropriate academic college) to obtain a signed form listing recommended classes. This procedure is meant to ensure that student-athletes are in touch with their academic programs, instead of relying solely on Academic Support Services within the Athletics Department as they plan their course and major decisions.

IV. Academic support services in Athletics.

The Office of Academic Support Services within Athletics provides academic support programs to all student-athletes at the University of Colorado. This office advises student-athletes, keeps track of their records, GPAs, and course schedules, provides tutoring and academic skills training, runs mandatory study programs for student-athletes whose GPAs are below 2.3, communicates with various offices on campus to provide support for special needs students, such as the learning disabled, and also hires numerous subject tutors to augment the classroom learning environment.

One of the primary goals for this office is to integrate student-athletes into the campus community, to enhance their experience as a student at the University of Colorado. The staff encourages open communication with faculty, advisors and other offices on campus. Please feel free to contact them at any time. Contact information is appended to this memo.

CONTACT INFORMATION:
The BFA Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics: [NOTE: The membership of this committee has changed. The correct contact information can be found via the BFA committee's web page.]

From BFA Committee: Intercollegiate Athletics
Approved by Executive Committee for forwarding to BFA: January 22, 2001
Notice of Motion to BFA: February 1, 2001
Approved BFA: March 1, 2001
Forwarded to UCB Faculty and Dept of Athletics: March 22, 2001