

## **Report of the Committee on Instruction, March 2007**

The Committee on Instruction (CoI) has looked into the question of early registration for varsity athletes. In the fall of 2006, varsity athletes in spring sports were allowed to register for courses with the first cohort of their class. Roughly 500 students qualified for early registration, but about 200 were already in the first scheduled groups for their classes. Thus about 300 students registered early.

The early registration program was intended to address scheduling problems experienced by varsity athletes: They can end up in late-afternoon classes that conflict with practice times, or repeatedly miss classes on team travel days. Robert Midkiff told us that complaints from parents, students, and faculty about such problems increased in Fall 2006. He also noted that other universities use early registration to deal with this sort of problem. The hope was that early registration would allow athletes to choose courses and sections that would reduce these conflicts.

The results of the program were mixed. Robert reported that he looked at the effects of early athlete registration on closing of courses. He noted that the number of closed courses did not increase, nor did the set of courses that closed early change. However, courses that closed early tended to close sooner than in the past, which suggests that athletes took advantage of the opportunity to register for popular, limited-enrollment courses. He noted his impression that the number of complaints received so far this semester has decreased, though he also reported that some student athletes complained that early registration had not worked for them. Karen Marosi noted that she also deals with these complaints, and that the spring and fall semesters are not necessarily comparable in this regard. CoI also heard from the Registrar's Office that early registration had worked in the cases of some courses with multiple sections, specifically some management courses and science laboratory sections. Varsity athletes were able to register for sections that did not conflict with their sports' schedules. On the other hand, we also heard complaints of unfairness from students who felt that they had lost the opportunity to take courses that closed earlier than they normally would have.

CoI agrees that a problem exists, and recognizes that it makes life difficult for students caught between academic requirements and the demands of their teams. However, we recommend that early registration for varsity athletes not be repeated in the registration period held during Spring 2007 (i.e., registration for Fall 2007 courses). While there were some benefits, there were equal or greater offsetting problems caused by the system. The attempted solution was not specific to the problem; a more focused solution is desirable. We further note that scheduling conflicts also occur for students involved in other activities or work (e.g., members of theater, music, or dance groups, or students who need to work in order to attend Bucknell). Further, registration is not the only direction for addressing the problem. A wider range of solutions should be considered (e.g, a committee member noted a recent study on the effectiveness of various attendance policies; the Teaching and Learning Center could sponsor a session on this and related work).

Finally, CoI recommends that a group be formed to investigate and propose solutions to scheduling problems between academic and extracurricular activities. We note that early registration for varsity athletes was implemented without consulting students or faculty. As a result, it caused a great deal of controversy. Hence we recommend the group be broadly constituted from the interested parties. We recommend that the group be composed of the following members:

Robert Midkiff

The Dean of Student Services or designee

An athletic administrator

A faculty member from the Committee on Athletics

A faculty members from CoI

A faculty member from CCA

A representative of the Registrar's Office

A representative from BSG

Two students-at-large, one an athlete and one not an athlete

A faculty member at large

This group should report to the faculty and the provost on their recommendations.