

REPORT ON VARSITY ATHLETICS
by
Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Athletics

The Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Athletics was formed at the behest of President Morton Schapiro to explore the status of athletics at the college. The Committee consists of a chair, Michael MacDonald, tenured faculty from each of the three divisions – Chris Pye, Stephen Sheppard, and Lee Park – and the coach of the men’s soccer team, Mike Russo, and of the women’s tennis and squash teams, Julie Greenwood. The athletic faculty were appointed by the Athletic Director, Harry Sheehy. The four academic faculty were appointed by President Schapiro on the advice of the Steering Committee.

The committee was appointed in part because periodic reviews are a good idea. But the timing of the review is directly bound up with a recent intensification of concerns about the role of athletics prompted by the publication of James Schulman and William Bowen’s The Game of Life: College Sports and Educational Value. President Stupor encouraged all members of the academic community to read the book, and for good reason. The book investigates the educational consequences of the increasing professionalization of sports in the academy – the intensification of athletic recruitment, of financial and cultural investments in athletics, and of specialization. Though the book considers the range of institutions of higher education – from big, Division 1 universities to liberal arts colleges – the book is fundamentally about Williams and the schools to which it likens itself. One of the authors’ central points is that athletics has a less pervasive influence at Division 1 universities, which offer athletic scholarships but where 5% of students play varsity sports, than at Williams, where 30-32% of the students are varsity athletes. For better or for worse (or, for better and for worse), the culture of athletics permeates the fabric of the institution here more fundamentally than it does at most any other institution of higher learning.

Part of our aim was to find out how pertinent Schulman and Bowen’s concerns are to Williams right now. But it is worth noting that the most striking aspect of their analysis is the long view, the larger 10 and 20 year trajectories they trace. For instance, the number of high profile Athletes (football, basketball, hockey) in Schulman’s and Bowen’s account at liberal arts colleges who reported that recruitment was a very significant reason for their choice of college moved from 38% in 1976 to 83% in a 1989. Even adjusting for differences in SAT levels, the admissions advantage for athletes at the one school for which they have full data moved from 30% in 1989 to 48% in 1999, whereas that for minorities moved from 23% to 25%.¹ Whatever one decides about the advantages or disadvantages of athletics, it is critically important for us to be at least conscious of this larger picture. To the extent that we make policy decisions solely on the basis of keeping up with or ahead of our comparison schools, such trends will clearly continue, and – and this is the key point – they will continue blindly.

Most significantly, the work of the committee is justified because the larger question of the status of athletics in relation to the goals of the college simply has not been engaged institutionally. The College backs teams with preference for athletes in admissions, has expanded

¹ James L. Schulman and William G. Bowen, *The Game of Life: College Sports and Education Values*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2001, pages 126-31 and footnote 4 page 395. Schulman and Bowen, while acknowledging that their data is comes from only one school, also maintain that the school is typical of “the academically selective schools that do not offer athletic scholarships.”

the coaching staff (in part in response to Title IX), and has arranged the schedule of classes to accommodate extracurricular activities, especially athletics. Yet notwithstanding its commitments to athletics, the College has not reviewed and has not established mechanisms for supervising the athletic program systematically. Athletics may provide surpassing benefits to the College or may inflict unjustifiable costs on the College: the matter has not been examined by the College.

Accordingly, we focused our investigations on varsity athletics. This is not to say that there are not important issues related to junior varsity and club sports. But varsity sports are the programs we sponsor institutionally – they receive the college’s imprimatur – and they raise by far the most significant issues in relation to admissions and expenditure of resources.

Our method was to approach the issue of athletics a number of different ways. We have conducted interviews with the athletic director, coaches, captains, former athletes, non-athletes, the minority council, two departments with large numbers of athletes enrolled in them, the current and previous Deans of the College, the President, the Calendar and Schedule Committee, the Dean of the Faculty, the Provost and the director of institutional research. We have reviewed data accumulated by the Provost’s office on admissions, grades, the choice of majors by athletes, and the curriculum.² We also prepared and circulated a survey for faculty and students. About 65% of the faculty responded to the faculty survey, and 60% of the 1,000 students who were sampled responded to the student survey. We have tried to process the information we have received in ways that get at telling differences, real differences in perceptions between, say, faculty in different divisions, between new faculty and veterans, between first year and senior students.

What did we discover? Among other things, that athletics at Williams has been extraordinarily successful. We all know that in a general way, but it is worth looking at the numbers. Williams has won the Division 3 Sears cup for 5 of the past 6 years running – this is for having the most successful athletics program across the board. Although sports has always been significant at Williams, the college has clearly become an athletic powerhouse since the 90’s. We have calculated the varsity win/loss percentage over five year periods since 1981/2.³

² Rick Myers was very helpful in assembling these data, and we are very grateful for his assistance. We also thank David Brodigan for administering our survey and George Marcus for helping us prepare it.

³ To assess the success of our teams, we received copies of the records of almost all of our teams from 1981/2 through 2000/01. We received copies of the records from through 1997-8 from Amy Rupert, the Acting College Archivist, and from 1996/7 through 2000/01 from Dick Quinn, the Sports Information Director. The records are not complete. We are missing season records for several years for several teams – mostly men’s and women’s crew and women’s squash in the ‘80s – and we do not have a team record for track & field and skiing from 1981/2 through 1996/7. We did not, therefore, use the records for track & field and skiing for the years we do have them, lest we distort the results. With those exceptions, we have more or less complete results for a 20 year period. We made the following calculations ourselves, and might have made a few mistakes, but the picture should not have been affected by them.

We have taken the annual records of each team over 4 five year periods: 1981/2 through 1985/6; 1986/7 through 1990/1; 1991/2 through 1995/6; 1996/7 through 2000/1. We then converted the team records to winning percentages for each of the five year periods, and then added up the total winning percentages and divided them by the numbers of teams we had records for over that period (from 22 to 25). We did not add up all the wins and then divide the sum by the total games because we wanted the record of each team to weigh equally in our final calculations. To count each game, as opposed to each team, equally would have had the unfortunate effect of underweighing football in comparison with, say, women’s volleyball, because football plays fewer games. We also dropped tied games from our records, as if they had not been played.

Time Period	Average Team Winning Percentage
1981/2 through '85/6	54.1
1986/7 through '90/1	68.5
1991/2 through '95/6	76.1
1996/7 through '00/1	77.1

There can be many reasons for such successes, but chief among them is the talent and dedication of the coaches – we know that not just from their won/lost records, but from the testimony of so many of the athletes we have spoken with. The athletics department at Williams is without question the strongest Division 3 program in the country.

And it is worth noting that, as members of NESCAC, William’s coaches have accomplished their successes within the terms of far and away the most rigorous constraints of any college conference. For example, excellent schools in other conferences begin their seasons earlier, play more games during their seasons, stage practices and games during the off-season, and allow for more active recruiting of athletes. While the coaches we spoke with differ in the particulars of their coaching philosophies, all demonstrate an allegiance to the educational mission of the college simply insofar as they choose to coach here. We should say, too, that the athletic faculty, not surprisingly, feels unappreciated. They see themselves as doing their jobs very successfully, individually and collectively, as winning respect throughout their profession, yet receiving the disdain of the academic faculty. The Athletic director, Harry Sheehy, last year remarked in the Record that coaches felt like prophets without honor in their own land. Their achievements, they worry, are respected everywhere else; but not here.

We want to say at the outset that we have discovered that it is in fact very hard to talk about athletics in general at the college, or even about Varsity athletics in general. There are vastly different cultures associated with different teams, and we need to keep these differences in mind as we weigh the issue of athletics.

We will get into particulars in what follows – admissions reader’s reports, practice times, etc. – but it is important to begin with the largest question: what in principle is the role of athletics in relation to the educational mission of the college? We have received various accounts of the value of athletics. They include:

1. The “sound mind in a sound body” thesis. Athletics is significant to the physical and psychic health of students. The arguments for this claim are clear and, with the possible exception of teams where players must make weights, are incontrovertible, having to do with the value of health. But they serve as a justification for a P.E. program more than for building an extensive varsity program.
2. The “athletics as educational” thesis; the point is that students learn skills in playing athletics that extend beyond the playing field. “Athletic experience,” says Harry Sheehy, “enhances growth in the classroom. Confidence, time management, leadership, group dynamics and self-awareness are a few traits that can couple with the classroom experience to help form a more effective

student.” The claim is difficult to assess empirically, but we did find – and this is contrary to the findings of Schulman and Bowen – that athletes at Williams do not perform below expectations. That is, athletes perform at the same level as non-athletes admitted with comparable academic ratings (high school grades, SAT scores, etc.). At the same time, they do not perform any better than those comparable students, so it is hard to make the case that athletic participation translates into academic advantage for these students. Among the former athletes we interviewed, about the same number said that their school work improved after dropping their varsity sport as said it made no difference one way or the other.

3. There is, however, a more sweeping argument that athletics teaches an array of skills and values that can not be measured in academic performance but are valuable nonetheless – that it teaches “life-lessons” about working with others, overcoming adversity, thinking quickly, etc.. The committee feels this is probably true. On the other hand, we are wary about this argument serving as a guide to policy. It can imply a profound realignment of education priorities, suggesting, for instance, that an athletically talented team is its own justification. Whether intended to do so or not, the recent description of athletics as “co-curricular” rather than “extra-curricular” risks endorsing such an account. We think it is important to retain the understanding that athletics is an extra-curricular activity.
4. Successful teams, it is suggested, are a source of real pride and thus important for a sense of community at the college, or at least for many at the college. As Harry Sheehy has said, athletics “builds campus spirit and community,” overcoming the “balkanization of our campus.” Athletics breaks down barriers and has a special “potential to unify our community at key times.” Of course, other, less-institutionally funded activities might have strong, community affirming dimensions of their own. Nevertheless, varsity athletics helps serve this purpose, and we will want to keep this claim in mind as we explore the relation between teams and community in a more textured way below.
5. Finally, it can be argued that a successful athletics program actually brings us stronger students. The argument runs like this: The college can not hope to compete in a consistent way for the very strongest students in sheer intellectual terms – more often than not, we will lose such students to Ivy League schools. We can compete, however, for a student with a particular profile: the very bright, as we say, “well-rounded” student, the smart student who wants to be at an institution where he or she can continue to participate in athletics at a high level. As President Schapiro put the point publicly, a good athlete who is a good student would have to be “nuts” not to consider attending Williams. Because such students are more drawn to a college that competes successfully in athletics, it is in the college’s interests to do what it can within reasonable boundaries to sustain its athletic programs at their current, or at least at a strong, level. In other words, we have a niche, and it would be a mistake to jeopardize it. This is a strong argument, and it would be good to find a way to test its validity. The College should study the costs of turning prospective students away, and turning potential applicants off, as a

consequence of admitting athletes and favoring athletics. Aside from the practical question of trade-offs, the argument in favor of the admissions advantages of having an athletic niche raises two larger points. If we do in fact occupy a niche, it is important that it is one we are willing to affirm actively and consciously; that is, is this the intellectual profile we want for ourselves? Second, to the extent that such an argument is a principled one, it implies that the college places a special premium on “well-roundedness.” We should, therefore, make sure that the role of athletics is in practice working to sustain that ideal.

In general, the committee was inclined to accept that athletics confers benefits on its participants and on the institution. Our main concern was to weigh those benefits against the possible costs of athletics as it is currently sustained at the college, with all its remarkable successes. Although these areas of concern overlap, we have divided our analysis into three domains: Admissions; Athletics and student culture; Athletics and intellectual life.

Admissions

It is clear from our faculty survey that most faculty feel the college places too much emphasis on athletics, and that most who responded thus locates the problem with admissions policy. It is also clear that faculty is unclear about what the admissions policy actually is, and what it means to say there are admission “tips” for athletes.

The word “tips” is a misnomer, because what are called “tips” do not tip the balance when all other things are equal. Tips more accurately should be seen as “coaches’ preferences.” Coaches are allocated a certain number of choices per year, depending on the sport. These preferences, when ratified by the Admissions office, are what are called “tips.”

The formal process begins with a review of all applications by the admissions department, in which two ratings are assigned. The first is the academic ranking on a 1 to 9 scale; the second is the extra-curricular ranking. Williams has, in effect, two kinds of admits. The first are those who are selected on a combination of the academic and extra-curricular ratings. Almost all students with academic rankings of 1 are accepted; about 65% of students with academic ratings of 2 are accepted, with extra-curricular activities often being the deciding factor among academic 2s. The second kind of admits come from tips, who are students admitted for reasons of College policy (for example, athletics and legacies). The College never accepts applicants with an academic ranking of 8 or 9, and does not want too many 6s and 7s.

Coaches’ preferences are set aside at the outset of the admissions process, with the Athletic department now receiving 66. It then divvies them among the various teams, with some teams – football, for example – receiving more than other teams. The advantage of the system of coaches’ preferences, which was implemented in the early ‘80s, is said to be that it allows coaches to get the players they want, providing they meet the academic standards set by the admissions office. Before the instituting of the coaches’ preference system, the admissions office admitted players, with more or less consultation with coaches (depending on the particular coach), on its own authority. Sometimes the players were not very good, sometimes they were not the players preferred by coaches, and sometimes the players, since admitted through normal channels, chose not to come to Williams. As a result, the College had to admit many more athletes than it needed, and hoped that not too many and not too few in general, not too many or too few for particular teams, and not too many or too few for particular positions on particular teams, would attend Williams. The system was regarded, therefore, as unsatisfactory by both the

Athletic Department and the Admissions Office. The current system – by allowing coaches to recommend athletes they prefer, to negotiate with the Admissions office in the event that they want too many weak students, and by limiting coaches to a specific number of spots, even if the admits choose not to attend Williams – promotes predictability and, judging from the coincidence of the coaches choice system and our records, athletic excellence.

Coaches' preferences are not the only advantages extended to athletes. Applicants who are ranked as 2s generally are accepted by virtue of their curricular and extra-curricular accomplishments, including athletics. Moreover, the College also has what are called "protects," by which 32 openings are allocated for athletes with academic ratings of 3. The allocation of over 100 spots per entering class to "coaches choices" and "protects" indicates a major commitment on the part of the College to athletics. The Athletic department, for its part, notes that other schools – Amherst, especially – have the same number of coaches' preferences, but have fewer teams. As a result, Williams often has fewer coaches' preferences per team, although that does not seem to have hampered our teams unduly.

The Committee thinks that admissions preferences for athletes is an important issue. The College is taking many students because of their athletic ability, and incurs academic costs as a result. The SAT scores of applicants who are flagged with the athletic attributes are, on average, lower than those of other students. The weaker students are not, moreover, spread evenly among teams. The lowest academic readers' ratings are concentrated in two or three teams, mostly men's teams. Several teams are anchored by coaches' preferences with low academic ratings, with stronger students filling in around them. About 25% of admits flagged as "A attributes" have academic ratings of 1 or 2.⁴ The other 75% of athletes have academic ratings of 3 to 7.

The academic ratings of incoming Williams students – both athletically tipped and all other students – have risen over the past decade. In '90 and '91, the average academic ratings for tipped athletes were in the 5.7-5.8 range. For '92 through '98, they hovered around 5.5. For '99-'00, they averaged about 5.0. Meanwhile, the academic ratings of all other students rose from 3.6 in '90 and '91 to 2.8 in '00, improving fairly steadily. The numbers of "low-band athletic admits" – that is, athletes with academic ratings below 6.0 – has decreased by 38% from previous levels for the classes of 2003-'05. In the class of 2006, the Athletic department reports that only 10 "low-band" athletes were admitted, in accordance with our President's commitment to make our athletes representative of our student body.

But the Committee is not convinced that admissions should be our sole focus as we explore the issue of varsity athletics. First, it is methodologically unsound to suggest that admissions is the whole of the matter until other aspects of the question have been considered and discarded. Focusing entirely on admissions without considering the other implications of athletics is rather like the drunk who looks under the lamppost for his keys; it reflects the fact that we have data on admissions and have not had data on other aspects of the issues. Consequently, the Committee has endeavored to broaden the College's understanding, if only because we cannot conclude that problems arise primarily from admissions without investigating other sources, dimensions, and hypotheses. Second, data we have accumulated suggests that admissions is not the whole of the explanation. Although the academic qualifications of incoming varsity athletes

⁴The "A" attribute tag is applied to any admitted student who has been identified by a coach as being an "impact athlete" capable of playing four years of a varsity sport. The attribute is assigned by the Admissions office after the applicant has been admitted. About 130 students per year are designated as A attributes. The admissions office formally assigns the status, but usually to people brought to its attention by coaches. About 15 of our AAs per year have academic reader ratings of 1 or 2. The rest are tips (72 in the past), protects (32 or so), legacies, or are admitted in some other category.

have improved steadily over the past decade, much of the faculty is convinced that the educational costs of athletics are growing over time. If both findings are valid, then something is mediating between the qualifications of our student athletes and their performances in our classes.

Student Culture

Faculty and students generally agree that athletics is significant to the social and educational life of the college, and has, according to 63% of the faculty, increased in their time at Williams. Students describe a similar experience, of athletics exerting a powerful influence on their social life and educational experiences. That does not mean that faculty and students are agreed on the balance of costs and benefits derived from athletics. But faculty and (especially) students tend to agree on the facts the matter, that the influence of teams and athletes is pervasive in the social and intellectual life of Williams.

The effects of athletics on the cultural and educational dimensions of the institution are hard to disentangle, but for heuristic reasons we will begin with student culture. Students were asked about the importance of athletics to their social life at Williams. Their answers attest to the significance of athletics. 14% of students said athletics was “dominant” in organizing social life. 57% called athletics “significant” and 27% thought it was “somewhat significant.” Totaling those three responses, 98% of students thought athletics was of some significance or more. Students have varied personal experiences of the social reality they describe in general. When asked about the significance of teams in organizing social life for them *personally*, only 37% – down from 71% – described teams as “dominant” or “significant.” Students may develop strategies for embracing, coping with or avoiding the social prominence of teams, but they do not think that they escape it. We asked what we thought to be a strong question about the impact of teams in shaping how students are perceived. “Do you feel that belonging or not belonging to a team defines you, as others see you, at Williams.” 58% of our students felt defined in their eyes of others by their status as varsity athletes or non-athletes. Our students may feel that others define them as athletes or as non-athletes, but they do not define themselves in those terms. Only 5% think their status as varsity athletes or not as varsity athletes is “dominant” in defining their own senses of identity and 33% think the athletic status is “significant” in their self-definition. Nevertheless, team membership plays a major role in organizing housing choices. 61% of our varsity athletes met some of those they plan to live with next year on a team.

Students, in other words, report that varsity athletics is significant in their social life, over half feel that belonging or not belonging to a varsity team “defines” how other students see them; it also plays a significant role in who lives with whom. When asked specifically about the pervasiveness of athletics at Williams and whether it is a good or a bad thing, 68% of our students regard athletics as “more pervasive” at Williams than at other excellent colleges. 38% of our students think that is good and 31% think it is bad, but two-thirds of our students think it is true.

We have given aggregate numbers, the percentages of all of our students who have various opinions. But the aggregate numbers break down in interesting ways when we organize the responses to questions about the prominence of social life by the athletic status of our students. The general pattern is clear. Students who are not varsity athletes – whom we are calling “non-athletes”⁵ – think teams are more important in organizing social life at Williams than

⁵ A definition is in order here. We are using the term “non-athlete” to mean students who are not on varsity teams. We recognize that many of our students are not on varsity teams and yet are athletes. Nevertheless, we are using the term “non-athlete” to include them on the grounds that the term “non-varsity athlete” is cumbersome and confusing.

do varsity athletes. And many non-athletes are displeased by the social prominence of teams at Williams.

Students who are not varsity athletes see teams as more significant socially than do varsity athletes. 6% of athletes think teams are “dominant” versus 19% of non-athletes, and 58% of athletes think teams are “significant” versus 56% of non-athletes who think they are “significant.” We offered students 5 possible answers, and 64% of varsity athletes ranked athletics in the two highest categories. By contrast, 75% of non-athletes ranked athletics in the two top categories, with most of the difference surfacing in the number of students who think it is “dominant.” One-fifth of our non-athletes think teams are “dominant” in organizing social life. But students describe a different reality for them personally. Varsity athletes, who tend to find teams less important socially than non-athletes in organizing social life at the College, do find them important for organizing their own social lives. 59% of varsity athletes characterize teams as “dominant” or “significant” in organizing social life for them personally. Non-athletes, 75% of whom think that teams are “dominant” or “significant” in organizing social life at the College, do not think it organizes their lives personally. Only 23% called the impact of teams in organizing their social lives “dominant” or “significant.”

That is, varsity athletes describe an integrated social reality. They describe the general prominence of teams and social life and the particular prominence of teams in their individual lives in very similar terms, and they find comfort in their teams and coaches. When asked whom they would consult about “a major personal problem,” 45% of varsity athletes mentioned their coach. By comparison, 29% of all students would consult a professor or faculty advisor and only 17% of all students would consult a dean. Non-athletes, on the other hand, describe a bifurcated life. Teams are characterized as “dominant” or “significant” in the social life of the College by three-quarters of them, but less than a quarter of them describe teams as “dominant” or “significant” for their lives personally. The non-athletes describe a less integrated social reality. They make lives for themselves outside the society they describe as prevalent at the College.

Athletes and non-athletes feel equally defined by membership or non-membership on teams. Athletes seem comfortable with the importance attached to belonging to a team. 77% think it is “about right” versus 22% who think it “too much.” Only 1% of athletes think the importance attached to teams is “too little.” By contrast, 57% of non-athletes think “too much” importance is attached to belonging to a team. Similarly, 53% of varsity athletes think athletics is more pervasive at Williams than at similar colleges and that is a good thing. Only 27% of non-athletes agree with them. 45% of non-athletes, however, agree that athletics are more pervasive here, but disagree in thinking that is a bad thing.

Finally, our committee reviewed data on disciplinary incidents and honors offenses assembled by the Dean's office. The data on discipline were assembled for the years 1998-99 through 2000-01, and on honors offenses for the years 1996-7 through 1999-00. The numbers of incidents are small, and must be approached cautiously. Nevertheless, certain patterns emerge. First, disciplinary actions in general at Williams overwhelmingly involve male students; this pattern holds for athletes as well. Second, 56% of the disciplinary actions taken against students with the A attribute were directed towards the members of two teams. We have heard reports from athletes that the conduct of teams improves and deteriorates according to the comings and goings of a few players on teams. Third, athletic admits were about twice as likely as the student body as a whole to receive “discuss/warnings,” and were more likely than the student body to be found culpable of multiple offenses, and receive probation, suspension, or expulsion. Finally, athletic admits were three times as likely to be found to commit honor code violations than the

student body as a whole, and are somewhat more likely to commit violations than members of the comparison group. These figures are not broken down by team.

What the committee finds, in other words, is something akin to a culture of athletics. Athletes, who often are drawn and brought to Williams because they are athletes, feel comfortable here socially. They do not think they preside over social life, but other students believe that they do. Athletes live and socialize together. Moreover, a majority of non-athletes disapproves of the social prominence of athletes. Over half of non-athlete students feel defined as non-athletes, over half of non-athlete students feel athletics is too pervasive here, and over half of our non-athlete students feel too much importance is attached to belonging to teams.

Education

Williams is, of course, a college, and education is our core project. The social prominence of teams is a social problem for many students, although they believe that they can carve out niches for themselves. Our greatest concern must be the educational impact of athletics.

Judging from student perceptions conveyed in the survey, athletes and non-athletes feel about equally in place and out of place academically at Williams. About 10% fewer athletes than non-athletes characterize themselves as “more” intellectually engaged than typical Williams students, but are only slightly more likely to describe themselves as “less” engaged. Athletes are less likely to attend campus lectures that are not related to their coursework, but are as likely to go to office hours. Almost half of varsity athletes also claim to experience discrimination “sometimes” or “often” from faculty in class. But athletes do not generally describe themselves as intellectually alienated from the College. In their self-perception, athletes closely resemble non-athletes as students. They do not feel especially out of place and express a bit less interest in activities such as outside lectures, but the differences are not dramatic.

It is encouraging that varsity athletes feel part of the intellectual community. But that is only part of the issue. We also wanted to know whether varsity athletics has an impact on the educational environment of the college. The evidence on that question is uncomfortably mixed. Over three-quarters of our students (77%) report that some courses have a reputation for drawing members of particular teams, and 42% of them are less likely to take such a course or would not take it at all. Almost a quarter of our students (23%) find the chemistry of classes is “completely” or “significantly” influenced by the team affiliations of the students, and 61% of our non-athlete students think class chemistry is affected “completely,” “significantly,” or “somewhat” by teams. Nevertheless, almost half of our students (48%) think athletics enhances the educational mission of the College, and another quarter of our students think it has no effect on education. Only 26% of students think athletics detracts from the educational mission of the College. These results, of course, include varsity athletes. When we consider the responses of non-athletes only, we see a different picture. Only 31% of non-athletes think athletics enhances the educational mission of the College and 39% of them think it detracts from the educational mission of the College. These proportions are more favorable when we ask students about the impact of varsity athletes on *their* educations. About half of all students (51%), and 85% of varsity athletes, think their educations are enhanced by athletics, and only 15% of all students and 22% of non-athletes think athletics detracts from their education.

The positives associated with athletics are stronger for freshmen than for seniors, and the negatives are stronger for seniors than freshmen. Seniors are more likely than freshmen to think athletics at Williams needs to be explored, to regard the importance attached to teams as

excessive, to judge the pervasiveness of athletics as a bad thing, to avoid courses because of the presence of athletes, to think that athletics detracts from education at the college (21% for freshmen, 36% for seniors) and for them personally (9% for freshman versus 19% for seniors). The longer students are here, in other words, the more they detect a negative intellectual impact of athletics. The change is not dramatic, but it is noticeable and consistent across an array of measures about the costs to intellectual life of teams. Interestingly, seniors do not see the social prominence of teams as greater than freshmen.

The committee also considered the impact of gender and ethnicity of the student responses. Gender did not have a large effect on the results, although it is notable that male students tended to report a greater impact of athletics (both positively and negatively) than female students. Females were somewhat more likely to report that athletics had “no effect” on their experiences. Ethnicity had a more pronounced impact, however. Students in minority groups were significantly less likely to report that athletics enhanced the educational mission of the college, and were much less likely to report that athletics had enhanced their individual college experiences.

Student opinion, then, follows an interesting pattern. Students generally think teams play a prominent role in their education. They affect class chemistry, can influence the choice of courses, and are something they seem to notice. A bit over half of our students do not believe that athletics enhances education at Williams, but only a quarter thinks it harms education. Moreover, our students generally think they can escape the detrimental effects, assuming they exist, of athletics. Only one-seventh of students (and 22% of non-athletes) feel their educations here are impaired, speaking to a coping response. Students make the best of the situation, but they also sense that their educational opportunities, if not lost, are not fully realized either. These are, of course, only opinions, and may be mistaken. It is, for one thing, unlikely that the educational effects of athletics are pervasive at the College, as students maintain, yet are not affecting most of our students.

Faculty perceptions of the educational impact of athletics bear an interesting relation to student perceptions about the influence of athletics on the culture of the college. Whereas students found general problems with teams but think they can avoid most problems in practice, faculty supports athletics in principle, but registers objections in practice. In general, faculty, like students, are well disposed to varsity athletics. When asked whether *in principle* varsity athletics should be part of the educational mission of the College, 66% of the faculty responded affirmatively; only 30% thought not, and 3% offered no opinion. The pronounced majority in support of athletics begins to melt, however, when the questions shift from principle to practice.

For example, the faculty expresses serious and widespread concerns about the demands of athletics on scheduling. The division of the day is not regulating athletics successfully, according to the bulk of the faculty. Coaches believe academic faculty commonly violates the division of the day; 33% of coaches believe the violations by academic faculty are “very common” and 52% that violations are “fairly common.” Academic faculty, on the other hand, think coaches commonly violate the division of the day. 24% of the academic faculty think violations by coaches are “very common,” 39% that violations are “fairly common,” for a total of 63%. Moreover, a total of 57% of all faculty – including coaches – think that the violations by coaches are either “very important” or “important.” Only 30% of the academic faculty regard the number of scheduling problems raised by athletics as acceptable; 83% of coaches, on the other hand, regard them as acceptable. The academic faculty is concerned with the frequency and the reason for missed classes and with the attitude of students when they miss classes. 87% of the

faculty are “generally” or “sometimes” concerned with the reasons varsity athletes offer for scheduling conflicts, and 66% of faculty report varsity athletes are more likely than other students to presume their scheduling needs will be accommodated.

Missed classes, scheduling conflicts, and the sense of entitlement of some athletes raises questions about the centrality of academics to *some* varsity athletes. Nevertheless, the faculty is divided about the educational value of athletics. 35% of the academic faculty – and 100% of the coaches – believe that varsity athletics enhances the educational mission of the College. 38% of the faculty as a whole – and 42% of the academic faculty – believe varsity athletics detracts from the educational mission of the College. 19% of the whole faculty believe that the effect is neutral (2% are undecided).

Much of the faculty may believe that athletics enhances the educational mission of the College, but only 3% of the faculty believe that varsity athletes are generally more engaged than other students in our courses. Exactly half of the faculty believes that varsity athletes are generally as engaged as non-athletes, and 36% believe they are generally less engaged. 11% of the faculty have no opinion on the matter. The faculty also divides evenly on the question of whether varsity athletes change class dynamics. 49% believe that they do; 51% that they do not.

The faculty is evenly divided, in other words, between two bodies of opinion. One body holds that varsity athletics is enhancing the educational mission of the College, is not interfering with class dynamics, and, while not producing more engaged students, is not producing less engaged students either. The other body of opinion, which is about the same in size, holds that varsity athletics is detracting from the educational mission of the College, is influencing class dynamics, and is associated with less engaged students. Not all of the faculty falls into one of these two bodies; some – a smaller portion – think the effect of varsity athletics is neutral or have no opinion on specific questions. But the broad symmetry of differences in opinion does not convey the underlying factors that organize faculty opinions about varsity athletics.

The Athletic committee considered the correlation between, on the one hand, rank, term at Williams, gender, and division, and, on the other, faculty views on the consequences of athletics at Williams. We have found that gender exerts a slight effect, rank exerts a somewhat greater effect, but the influence of those factors pales besides that of the division of respondents. We organized the responses we received by division, counted the athletic department as a division unto itself, and found a clear pattern.

The Athletic Department is at one end point. Coaches detect few problems with athletics. They are unconvinced that the role of varsity athletics needs to be explored. Whereas 89% of the academic faculty think the issue of varsity athletes is worth exploring, only 42% of coaches agree. Coaches believe unanimously that varsity athletics should be part of the educational mission of the College (compared to 62% of the academic faculty) and that athletics enhances the educational mission of the College. By contrast to the rest of the faculty, coaches do not believe that scheduling conflicts arise more often with athletics and overwhelmingly regard the number of scheduling problems with athletics as acceptable (83% of coaches versus 30% of the academic faculty), although they share some of the rest of the faculty’s concern with the validity of the reasons students provide regarding scheduling. Coaches, in other words, present an enthusiastic portrait of athletes. It brings great benefits to the College and enhances education, and achieves these advantages at minimal costs in terms of scheduling conflicts. Moreover, coaches think they cause less disruption to the academic faculty than the academic faculty does to them.

The views of division 3 faculty resemble those of coaches on some scores and diverge on others. Division 3 believes athletics contributes to the educational mission in principle and, with some exceptions, in practice. 76% of division 3 faculty believe that in principle varsity athletics should be part of the educational mission of the College. 42% of division 3 believe athletics enhances the educational mission of the College in practice, which is not far from the average for the faculty as a whole. But 33% believe that the impact is “neutral” and only 22% that it detracts, with the first number being noticeably higher and the second being lower than those for the faculty as a whole. 61% of division 3 faculty think athletes are about the same as other students in intellectual engagement in their courses, only 27% think athletes are less engaged, and 42% think teams alter class dynamics. Division 3 faculty is concerned with scheduling issues in about the same proportion as for the academic faculty as a whole, and is a bit more skeptical of the validity of the reasons given by students for scheduling conflicts. On the whole, then, division 3 faculty is friendly to athletics. It expresses general concern about scheduling issues, and is not convinced that it actually enhances the educational mission of the college, but it does not see substantial costs charged to the educational mission of the college by athletics either. Varsity athletics seem like a good thing in principle, and is acceptable in practice.

The views of division 1 about athletics are more critical. 61% think varsity athletics should be part of the educational mission of the college. But only 38% believe that varsity athletics actually enhances the educational mission of the College, and 51% of division 1 faculty think varsity athletics detracts from the educational mission of the College. Nevertheless, division 1 reports slightly fewer scheduling conflicts with athletics than does the rest of the faculty, is close to the rest of the faculty in the proportion that finds scheduling problems with athletics acceptable (32%), shares skepticism with the rest of the faculty about the validity of the reasons given for scheduling problems, and is about equally bothered by the presumptuousness of some athletes in expecting their scheduling needs to be accommodated. But only 33% of division 3 faculty see athletes as less engaged in classes and 42% think athletes affect class dynamics.

The experiences of division 1 faculty, in other words, resemble those of division 3. They find their athletes a little less intellectually engaged than non-athletes, but otherwise describe a similar reality: very similar percentages of the faculties in divisions 1 and 3 think athletes influence class dynamics, think scheduling issues are common and serious. What is different between divisions 1 and 3 is the overall assessment of the value of athletics to the College. About the same percentages (38% versus 42%) think varsity athletics enhances the educational mission of the college. But 11% of Division 1 versus 33% of Division 3 think the impact of athletics is neutral and 51% of division 1 versus 22% of division 3 faculty think varsity athletics detracts from the educational mission of the college. Division 1 and 3, then, see a similar pattern of facts, with division 1 issuing a severe and division 3 a lenient verdict.

The views of the faculty in division 2 differ from the rest of the faculty. Division 2 faculty is a bit less tolerant of missed classes than is the rest of the faculty and finds athletes a bit more presumptuous in expecting their scheduling demands to be accommodated, but otherwise division 2 faculty does not experience scheduling conflicts much differently than the rest of the faculty. But differences emerge starkly when asked about the impact of athletes on the educational mission of the college in principle and in practice. Only in division 2 is the faculty fairly evenly divided about whether in principle varsity athletics should be part of the educational mission of the College, with 51% believing that it should and 44% believing that it should not. For the rest of the faculty, by contrast, 73% believe that in principle varsity athletics should be part of the educational mission of the College. Only 26% of the faculty in division 2 believe that athletics enhances the educational mission of the college, and 52% believe it detracts from the educational mission. The figures for the rest of the faculty are, respectively, 48% and 31%. The

pattern continues when faculty is asked about the intellectual engagement of varsity athletes. 60% of non-division faculty outside division 2 believe that athletes are generally as engaged as or more engaged than other students. Only 38% of division 2 faculty agree. 54% of division 2 faculty find athletes generally to be less engaged academically than other students. 69% of division 2 faculty believe athletes affect class dynamics; only 42% of division 1 and division 3 faculty agree.

What explains the differences between division 2 and the rest of the faculty? They might bring different standards and expectations to bear on questions of education, but we are skeptical of this hypothesis. We believe that division 2 experiences athletes differently, that it is encountering a different reality. It is the faculty in division 2 that in good measure are teaching our varsity athletes.

At least 66% of students who were flagged as athletes – the Athletic attribute – when they applied for admission to the College are division 2 majors. In the graduation years 1998-2002, 23% of the degrees awarded to “A” attributes were in Economics, 17% were in Psychology, 13% were in Political Science, and 13% were in History. The pattern is at least as marked when we consider enrollments. Using data the College has collected on course selection by athletes who entered Williams between Fall 1990 and Fall 1999 and focusing on departments that had over 5,000 total enrollments over the period, we find A attribute students make up these proportions of enrollments in these departments:

Percent of ‘A attributes’ of the enrollments of large departments from 1990-99	
Economics:	31%
Psychology:	30%
Political Science:	28%
History:	28%
Art History:	25%
Math:	25%
Biology:	22%
English:	21%
Chemistry:	19%

The pattern is accentuated when we see what percentage of four categories – female non-athletes, females with an AA, male non-athletes, and males with an AA – majored in each of them.

	% women majoring in	% women with AA majoring in	% men majoring in	% men with AA majoring in
Economics	8	11	18	31
Psychology	14	25	5	9
Political Science	9	9	10	12
History:	14	14	13	19
Art History	14	12	6	4
Math	5	5	9	4
Biology	15	14	10	8
English	19	13	13	8
Chemistry	4	3	7	4

Taking the same departments for the year 1999-'00, we can see the proportion of students in each of these departments who are varsity athletes and tipped athletes.

	Varsity Athlete	Tipped Athlete
Economics	45%	20%
Psychology	37%	19%
Political Science	36%	18%
History	37%	17%
Art History	32%	19%
Math	37%	15%
Biology	34%	14%
English	28%	13%
Chemistry	32%	9%

The number of actual or anticipated graduates in each of these departments is:

Number of actual or expected graduates			
	Year of Graduation		
	2000	2001	2002
Economics	85	79	87
Psychology	71	84	72
Political Science	49	77	61
History	64	63	61
Art (History and Studio)	62	51	56
Math	41	26	26
Biology	69	49	48
English	92	74	84
Chemistry	19	20	29

We believe that the distribution of athletes in courses and majors goes a long way to accounting for the intensity of feeling in division 2 about the educational costs to the College of great athletic success. For Division 1, 16.7% of graduates in the years from 1998-2002 had entered Williams with the A attribute; for Division 3, 16.8% of graduates in the years from 1998-2002 had entered Williams with the A attribute; for Division 2, 29% of graduates – 57% more than the other two divisions – in the years from 1998-2002 entered Williams with the A attribute.

The pattern of athletes flocking to Division 2 is a problem only if the athletes there are weaker academically than other students at Williams. Unfortunately, that is the case. The weakest academic admits are concentrated in three teams. We took athletes from these teams in the year 1999-2000 who went on to graduate in 2000, 2001, and 2002, and found that of the total number of majors completed by athletes from these teams, 6% were in Division 3 departments, 16% were in Division 1 departments, and 78% were in Division 2 departments. The percentages of majors completed by players from these teams can be broken down by the departments we have been using. Again, Economics leads the pack, as 28% of the majors completed by these players were in Economics.

Percent of majors completed by players from two teams in large departments	
Economics	28%
Psychology	17%
Political Science	15%
History	14%
Art History	6%
Math	0%
Biology	3%
English	9%
Chemistry	0%

In an institution that encourages seminar discussions, and monitors faculty performance through the SCS, the costs of concentration are high. Athletes in general, and weaker athletes in particular, are concentrated in Division 2 and, within Division 2, athletes in general and weak students in particular are concentrated in some departments. The pattern of faculty opinion we have observed, in other words, reflects the distribution of students across divisions and departments. The more faculty teaches varsity athletes, and, in particular, members of several teams, the greater their reservations about the educational ramifications of varsity teams. Moreover, the congregation of athletes in some departments prevents those departments from developing courses for non-majors, which are likely to draw large numbers of athletes, after the fashion of Division 3.

To get a more nuanced sense of the impact of varsity athletes on particular departments, we visited two of the departments in division 2 that enroll a significant number of varsity athletes, History and Economics. Both departments stress that some of their best teaching experiences involve athletes, especially women athletes. Women athletes came in for considerable praise, as engaged and skillful at managing time. But some – not all – male athletes were criticized. In the perception of some faculty in one department, the problem is in good measure one of intellectual attributes – that is, it is an admissions issue. Many of the poorest students are male athletes, from two teams in particular. The disparity in the abilities of students is “not trivial,” and these teachers are concerned with the lower level of the distribution. They compare their situation to a coach having to play players who are not talented and do not want to play, and feel that they must often “dumb-down” their offerings to accommodate weaker students. Others in both departments spoke in terms of the adverse contingencies of team-membership. One professor noted that athletes on one team (women’s swimming and diving) already had missed two of the six weeks of courses. One professor also mentioned instances of teams missing classes to attend practices in the Field House, which could not accommodate all of the teams during the times allocated by the division of the day, and other faculty expressed concerns about captains’ practices. They observe that captains’ practices intrude on class time, and, regardless of the counsel of coaches, players feel subject to pressure to attend captains’ practice over classes. The history faculty was, on this score, especially concerned that the division of the day, which is supposed to prevent such things, was not shielding athletes from pressure to miss classes.

The greatest concern of the faculty in the Economics and History departments, however, is evidence of anti-intellectualism, of clear disengagement and even outright disdain, on the part of varsity athletes, again in particular sports. “Disdain is a big problem.” There is an “astounding level of disengagement.” Such an attitude is especially troubling because it affects the entire chemistry of a class. Moreover, some team members take courses in packs, adopting “tag-team” approaches for attendance and assignments. Such problems alter the role of teaching, some

faculty noted; professors must police students, making assignments for the sole purpose of making sure students do work. One senior professor noted, for example, that some – mostly male – athletes do not do assigned work unless policed, and the need for policing casts a pall over the course. Some of these male athletes, the professor concluded, make no pretense of doing work. The point was picked up by a younger tenured professor. Some male athletes, he observed, are looking for a C or C+ for the course. Since the professor does not organize courses to give courtesy Cs, more tests are required, trapping the better students in unnecessary work. The best students, in other words, are shortchanged as a result of the measures adopted to deal with the weakest students. The problem, it was stressed, is not the hard-working C student; it is the underachieving C students, who in this observer's view are disproportionately male athletes. One faculty member was sufficiently discouraged by the impact of athletes that she had come to feel it is sometimes better that athletes skip class. Then, at least, they do not taint the rest of the class with their attitude of disdain.

Some faculty, especially several untenured ones, made an additional point bearing on their roles as teachers. They feel under pressure to acquiesce to the demands of athletes, sometimes against their better judgment. They worry that they will “get hurt” on the SES forms “if you are mean to students.” Moreover, faculty “feels badly for teams” if they hold the line on attendance and rescheduling. Athletes have worked hard, and it seems unkind and unfair to expect faculty to spoil their dreams by refusing to accommodate their demands.

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We have discussed the views of students and faculty about the impact of varsity teams on education at Williams, and the significance of the departmental distribution of varsity athletes. We now consider how students fare in their courses. To that end, we looked at the grades of athletes, and we also compared the GPAs for the three teams with the weakest academic reader ratings with all male teams, with all female teams, and with all varsity teams in the year 1999-00 (the only year where the College has full rosters) with all other students. We found several points of interest.

- 1) The difference between the mean GPAs for all varsity athletes and all non-athletes .13 per grade for the year. The difference is not especially large, but given narrow continuum of grades here is not insignificant either.
- 2) The mean GPA of all varsity male athletes – excluding those from the two weakest academic teams – was .08 lower than for all non-athlete male students.
- 3) The mean GPA of all varsity female athletes was .06 lower than for all non-athlete women.
- 4) The mean GPA of the two weakest men's teams was much lower than that for male varsity athletes in general.

The grades of our athletes are lower than the grades of our non-athletes, which should not surprise us. They are often weaker students when they enter Williams, and they commit much time and effort to their sports. It is predictable that they would be weaker students in Williams, suggesting a second question: do athletes underperform academically, controlling for their academic ratings at the time they were admitted? The data is mixed, but suggests on balance that our athletes achieve about the same grades as non-athletes with similar academic ratings.

There are problems, however, with using grades as a sole measure of academic performance. We ran three tests to determine what *sorts* of courses varsity athletes tend to take.

First, it is possible athletes are taking courses that assign less work and grade more generously than typical courses at Williams. To test that hypothesis, we asked the Provost's office to sort out the easiest and the hardest courses, as defined by student responses to the SCS. The formula for identifying the easy and hard courses included difficulty, work load, and anticipated grade. 38 sections were identified as "easy" and 43 were identified as "hard" out of total of 805 sections. We find that the proportion of varsity athletes in all courses in '99-'00 was 28.4%; the proportion of varsity athletes in hard courses was 23.4%; the proportion of varsity athletes in the easiest courses was 37.2%. The grades of athletes, in other words, may be somewhat higher than they would be otherwise.

The figures for varsity athletes taking "easy" courses can be broken down further. Varsity athletes who are not tipped are 22% more likely than other students to take easy courses. Tipped athletes, however, are 44% more likely than non-tipped athletes to take easy courses. Moreover, members of some teams are more likely to take the easy courses than are members of other teams. Football players, for example, are 47% more likely than students who are not football players to take easy courses, and men's ice hockey players are 93% more likely than other students to take easy courses. (Women's ice hockey players, on the other hand, are only 9% more likely than other students to take easy courses.) Legacies, by way of comparison, are 24% more likely than other students to take easy courses. That is, non-tipped athletes and "tipped" legacies take easy courses in about the same proportions, but tipped athletes are about twice as likely as tipped legacies (whose academic reader ratings, we note, we do not know) to take easy courses. That points, we suggest, to a culture of athletics: the academic ratings of athletes at the time of admission do not account for a big chunk of the variance between their performance and students with comparable ratings.

Second, we examined whether varsity athletes take large courses, where they can "hide" more easily. Reviewing the median enrollments for sections taken by students, we found the median course size was 26 for male non-athletes in 1999-00 and 25 for female non-athletes. For varsity athletes, male and female alike, the median enrollment was 31. These numbers are very consistent for teams we checked on, with the exception of football players. The median enrollment for sections taken by football players was 35. Moreover, varsity athletes take fewer courses with enrollments under 20 students and more courses with enrollments over 50 than other students. That is, varsity athletes do take larger courses than non-athletes.

Third, we asked how many varsity athletes and non-athletes take tutorials. Tutorials, after all, require a major effort from students, are superb learning experiences, and are closely identified with Williams. We have, unfortunately, data problems. We have a full computerized list of all varsity rosters only for the year 1999-00; otherwise, we have data on students who were regarded as strong athletes at the time they were admitted, but not all AAs are tips and not all go on to play varsity sports. What we find is that 18% of AAs – as opposed to 34% of all other students – graduating from '94 to '00 took a tutorial. We were also able to take a one year snapshot of the issue, using the year '99-'00 (the one year for which we have the full list of varsity athletes). That year, 4% of all varsity athletes and 13% of all other students took a tutorial. Assuming that they numbers are typical of other years, they suggest that whereas AAs take tutorials at about half the rate of other students, varsity athletes takes tutorials at a bit less than one-third the rate of other students.

Athletes, to summarize, achieve lower grades than other students overall, but achieve about the same grades as students with similar academic ratings. They tend to take easier courses, larger courses, and fewer tutorials than the student body as a whole.

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Finally, and still under the heading of the educational impact of athletics, we want to consider the recurrent problem of scheduling. Faculty complaints about the prominence of athletics often focus on the demands for time made by teams. Academic and athletic faculty both complain about the infringements of the other on “their” time, suggesting that the “Division of the Day” is not successfully managing tensions between classes and teams.

The stated policy of the Calendar and Schedule committee on the Division of the Day, as reproduced in the Student Handbook, reads as follows. “In order to protect the wealth and diversity of activities at Williams – first academics, but also athletics, performances, cultural events, volunteer work, and others – the College has reserved the hours of 8:00 a. m. – 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 7-9:30 p.m. Monday evening for academic courses. This rule, which is overseen by the Calendar and Schedule Committee, is called the ‘Division of the Day.’” Several exceptions then are published, including exception number 3. “Athletic events: If the instructor gives approval, a student may miss a class or classes (typically no more than a week’s worth of classes in any course during an entire semester) because of conflicts with scheduled athletic events.” It is our opinion that this policy is flawed and is symptomatic of the objections raised by the academic faculty in the survey of faculty opinion.

The exception to the Division of the Day that allows two absences with the permission of instructors is not binding. It was promulgated by the Calendar and Schedule committee and was not ratified by the authority of the faculty meeting. The exception is an advisory, not a policy. Moreover, the advisory does not, upon consideration, make much sense. Faculty, as intimated by the statement, may enforce or not enforce attendance policy as it sees fit. Faculty do not need permission from Calendar and Schedule committee to allow students to miss courses nor does the exception confer the right of students to miss courses for games. The exception, therefore, serves no obvious point. It allows faculty to do what it can do anyway; faculty can allow athletes or non-athletes to miss classes whenever it likes and as often as it likes.

Nevertheless, the exception does suggest a guideline, and is published in the Student Handbook. As a result, the exception fosters the expectation among athletes and coaches that athletes are entitled to miss two class meetings and imposes pressure on individual faculty to “comply” with a policy that is not really a policy. Two points are worth noting here.

First, some coaches reportedly take the two missed meetings for granted, as a right, and sometimes, we have been told by our student interviewees, press their players to miss more classes as occasions demand. We have also heard coaches complain that two missed classes are insufficient, that they should cover only the regular seasons. They are necessary to qualify for tournaments, which then require more excused absences.

Second, in stating that “the Athletic Department *strives* to schedule events so that students will not miss more than a weeks worth of classes,” college policy on scheduling already implicitly contradicts the counsel that faculty may or may not give approval to players to miss classes. The games have been scheduled already, without the prior approval of the faculty that is supposed to be approving absences. The scheduling of games during the time of day “reserved” for classes is not, we stress, a matter of bad faith or dishonesty. It is the outcome of having an athletic program that has outstripped the College’s methods of regulation. Some teams – golf, and skiing – routinely and necessarily schedule competitions during class hours, when access to facilities – ski slopes, golf courses – can be attained. The problem is that the College’s mechanisms for balancing the conflicting imperatives of successful athletics and academics are insufficient.

Violations of the division of the day are aggravated by the custom of captains' practices, a subject of some controversy within the athletic program. At one end of the continuum, captains' practices are nothing more than players gathering informally during the off-season to play games recreationally. As such, they are beyond regulating, but also are not in need of regulating, inasmuch as basketball players playing three-on-three games is not of much concern to the College. At the other end of the continuum, captains' practices are organized efforts to circumvent NCAA regulations. The NCAA limits practices to defined seasons. Outside that period, players may not practice under the supervision of coaches. But both players and coaches, wanting to be prepared for the season, stage organized practices under the supervision of captains. The captains often take their responsibility very seriously. They consult with coaches about what to do, report to the coaches about attendance and, by some accounts, exert pressure on players to attend practices out of season. We have been told by student athletes that players sometimes believe their playing time in the season is contingent on participation in out of season practices. Aside from the problems of time-commitment such semi-official activities entail for student athletes, captains' practices sometimes do not conform to the division of the day, aggravating the concerns of many faculty.

Scheduling conflicts, and especially violations of the "division of the day" express the tension between education and varsity athletics at Williams. It is tempting to discount the scheduling conflicts, captains' practices, and the presumptuousness of some athletes as mere nuisances, easily corrected by better communication. Certainly, mutual communication and respect would improve matters considerably. But the failures of the division of the day, as attested in the faculty survey, do not result merely from bad communication. They also derive from the College's commitment to athletics. When some teams must unavoidably schedule games in times reserved for classes, and when other teams accept invitations to tournaments that require them to miss the better part of weeks of classes, the conflicts between the College's commitment to academic and athletic excellence are colliding.

Conclusions

First, a majority of our students approves of the contributions of our varsity teams. But a substantial minority of our community, students and faculty alike, believes athletics has assumed excessive significance at Williams. About 40%-45% of our non-athletes think that the influence of athletics is too pervasive for an excellent college, that it detracts from their experience at Williams, and over half of our students think that their status as athletes or non-athletes defines them at Williams. Meanwhile, faculty is concerned with the practical impact of athletics at Williams, and the concerns increase with the exposure to varsity athletics, tipped athletes, and specific teams.

Second, AGAFA needs to continue studying the relation between athletics and admission, beyond the issue of the number of tips and protects. It is worth noting that admissions advantages probably follow from athletic success. We have winning teams; athletes want to play for winning teams; we do not, therefore, have to dip deeply into the pool of good athletes who are plausible students. We get a disproportionate number of good students from the good athletes we are selecting from. Nevertheless, we raise two cautions about our recruiting advantages. First, we need to consider how our athletic success is influencing the kind of students who are drawn to Williams. We might be driving away some students as we attract others, and we need to

understand how our niche as a quality school strongly invested in varsity athletics is affecting the composition and intellectual tenor of the institution. Second, tips must be addressed in terms our stated values, and not just in terms of what we must do in response to our competitors. Just because a rival of ours might be admitting certain kinds of students is insufficient reason for Williams to do the same. We must determine our admissions policies in response to *our* values and *our* standards. Unfortunately, to the extent that our policies react to the behavior of athletic rivals, we surrender control of admissions to our competitors on athletic fields.

Third, athletics imposes social and educational costs. Socially, a substantial chunk of students lives somewhat circumscribed social lives. Whether these students are disaffected or not, Williams has produced an environment in which non-athletes are a sub-culture, with all that implies of limited social possibilities. Educationally, the costs are distributed unevenly. They are concentrated in Division 2, and specifically in several large departments. It is, we suggest, unfair to expect students and faculty in a handful of departments to bear disproportionately the costs of our athletic programs in the form of less demanding and less interesting courses than would be mounted otherwise.

Fourth, the College needs a clear statement about the value of athletics to the whole community. The justifications advanced on behalf of athletics do not serve their stated purposes. The healthy body/healthy mind argument justifies a P. E. program. The claim that athletics unifies the student body collides with evidence that varsity athletics is resented by many of our students. And the claim that athletics teaches valuable lessons does not address the question of who learns its lessons. The lessons are taught to students, who often are recruited because they already are accomplished athletes, and are not really available to students who are indifferent as athletes. We note in this context how rare the “walk on” athlete has become on many of our varsity teams.

Fifth, our athletic program differs from standard academic departments in two respects. First, it inevitably generates externalities for the rest of the College in the form of weaker students and scheduling conflicts. Second, the logic of athletics is, potentially, expansionist. The College recruits athletes to win games. It organizes the schedule to help them play and to win their games. Our success in winning games then is used to recruit more athletes. Understandably, athletes presume the College is committed to their athletic achievements. On this score, one senior coach suggested that the academic faculty ought to stay “in tune” with the culture of the College. The problem, of course, is that success may come to feed on itself. The better we are at athletics, the more commitments athletics instills; the greater the commitments, the more the pressure on academics to accommodate them. Consider, on this score, tournaments. The College accommodates successful teams, fueling their success. Their success produces invitations to tournaments; tournament invitations produce demands for more accommodations. To offset this tendency, the College needs to declare explicitly the place of athletics in our community. Our *laissez faire* practices have become inadequate, and the College should declare a mission statement to define, legitimate, and contain the place of athletics at Williams.

Sixth, the College must confront seriously the entailments of a successful athletic program. The College has proceeded as if we can have excellent athletics and excellent academics, without either bearing a cost for the excellence of the other. We must clarify the relationship between academics and athletics by affirming the primacy of academics. While favoring athletics would not eliminate all of the conflicts that confront student athletes, it would establish guidelines for our students. When students face conflicts between their academic and athletic endeavors, students are expected to place priority on the academic. This message should be delivered consistently by captains, coaches, academic faculty, and administrators.

Seventh, the academic faculty must assess its responsibilities. Much of the academic faculty feels pressure to accommodate athletes, to excuse absences and reschedule exams so that players can make practices, games, tournaments. Faced with some athletes who feel entitled, faculty sometimes makes accommodations against its better judgment. That is a problem. It is a greater problem when faculty acquiesces to the indifference of some students, either by letting them pass unchallenged or by assigning grades do not reflect their performance. Coaches, hearing academic faculty complain about the poor performance of some athletes, point out that the grades of many athletes are reasonably high. If academic faculty is awarding satisfactory grades, they ought not to be surprised that students and coaches regard the academic performance of athletes as satisfactory. The tenured faculty, which has less reason to worry about SCS results, needs to assume leadership on this score. It is our prerogative and our responsibility to establish academic standards.

Finally, communication between academics and coaches must be improved. Almost all athletic and academic faculty have urged more communication and greater integration of coaches into the internal life of the college. We commend this, and not only because suspicion and misunderstanding is now widespread. Enhanced communication can only improve a situation in which coaches feel unappreciated and academics feel intruded upon, where small incidents fester into large problems. But we should not imagine that improved communication alone will solve all of our problems, for athletic and academic faculty conceive of the results of communication differently. We are confident that coaches and non-coaches, athletes and non-athletes, all are committed to the best interests of the College. But we are not confident that all of us agree on what constitutes the College interest. We must have that conversation with the understanding that ultimately decisions must be made.

Proposals

I. Proposals for Athletic Committee

A. Establish a Standing Faculty Committee on Athletics to oversee the relationship between athletics and the intellectual and social life of College.

1. The Committee shall consist of six members; one chair; one faculty member from each division; and 2 faculty from athletic department.

a. The chair and all members shall be appointed to two-year terms by the Steering Committee.

2. The Standing Committee shall formulate a mission statement for athletics, in consultation with the President of the College and the Athletic department.

a. The mission statement shall declare the goals and rationale for athletics, offering an integrated vision of the role of varsity, junior varsity, club, and intramural sports and PE, at Williams, and shall set forth terms for assessing how each component of the athletic program contributes towards the central educational mission of the College.

Justification: The mission statement would establish a framework for assessing the costs and benefits of varsity athletics at Williams. It also would set forth the terms for allocating resources within our athletic program. If, for example, the mission statement affirms the value of widespread participation in sports, the mission statement would have implications for the College's commitment to junior varsity teams.

3. The Standing Committee shall assess the status of athletics on a team by team basis, according to the goals and mission of the College.

a. The Standing Committee, in assessing the status of teams, should consider a number of factors. These factors include, but are not limited to, the academic performance of players on teams, the disciplinary record of players on teams, the academic ratings of the players at the time of their admission to the College; the compatibility of the scheduling demands of teams with the division of the day; and the historical record of the teams according to these criteria

b. The Committee, when confronted with an unsatisfactory record by these criteria, may recommend penalties. These penalties may include, but are not necessarily limited to, reducing tips to teams, eliminating tournament play for teams, and suspending players from teams.

c. The Committee, in the event of an investigation into the conduct of a particular team, will issue a finding of fact and a recommendation to the President of the College. It also will present its findings and its recommendations to the Faculty Meeting.

Justifications: The Ad Hoc Committee on Athletics has found that some problems are general to varsity teams, such as scheduling issues. The Ad Hoc Committee also has found a wide range in the culture and academic performances of teams, and has found several reasons for assessing teams individually and recommending penalties when warranted. First, it is unfair to tar all teams with responsibility for what might turn out to be the misdeeds of a few teams. Second, reviewing teams on, among other things, the academic performance of their members asserts the primacy of academics. Third, College support should not be assumed for teams that conflict with the College's mission or that do not make progress towards achieving the goals set for it.

4. The Standing Committee shall undertake a systematic evaluation of conflicts surrounding athletics in relation to the Division of the Day.

Justification: Complaints about the Division of the Day are rife, from both academic and athletic faculty. The survey of faculty makes this clear. But the College does

not have reliable information about actual compliance with, and violations of, the Division of the Day. To rectify that shortcoming, the Standing Committee on Athletics shall collect information about the operation of the Division of the Day in regards to athletics.

5. The Chair of the Standing Committee shall serve as the faculty representative to the NCAA and NESCAC..

Justification: NCAA regulations provide for a faculty representative to serve as a contact to both the NCAA and the athletic department. The College should satisfy this commitment formally.

6. The Standing Committee shall promote communication between academic and athletic faculty.

Justification: The survey of academic and athletic faculty made clear that communication within the faculty could be improved. It is the belief of the Ad Hoc Committee that our experience may serve as an example of the beneficial consequences of academic and athletic faculty interaction.

7. The Standing Committee shall seek to make contact with and discuss matters concerning athletics with the faculties at other NESCAC schools

Justification: Faculties, as the custodians of education, naturally balance the tendency to overemphasize athletics. Athletic competition raises matters of common concern to the faculties at NESCAC schools. Consequently, the Standing Committee shall pursue contact, share information, and seek coordination with the faculties of NESCAC schools to promote the realization of the founding principles of NESCAC.

8. The Standing Committee shall evaluate and make recommendations on other issues that arise concerning the intersection of academics and athletics at Williams.

Motion: The faculty endorses a Standing Committee on Athletics to pursue these objectives.

II. Proposal for the Dean of Faculty.

- A. Develop more explicit standards for the evaluation of athletic faculty.

Justification: By College policy, varsity coaches are faculty. The Dean of Faculty's office and the Athletic Director have done considerable work to set forth the *procedures* for evaluating athletic faculty for promotion. But the *standards* setting forth what is to be evaluated, as opposed to the procedures setting forth how the evaluation is to proceed, need more clarification. As faculty, coaches need something akin to the College's standards for reappointment and promotion.

Motion: The Dean of Faculty shall inform the faculty meeting in 2002-3 on progress towards defining standards for the evaluation of coaching faculty.

III. The Faculty Affirms Athletes as Representative of Student Body

- A. The President's Council of NESCAC has affirmed the ideal of student athletes as "representative" of the student body as a whole. AGAFA currently is discussing what "representativeness" means and how to implement the ideal among colleges with their own distinctive admissions standards and methods. Moreover, the Provost's Office is studying the question of the self-selection of students. It is examining whether Williams has achieved a reputation as a school for athletes and, if we have, how this influences decisions about whether to apply to Williams.

Justification: The Ad Hoc Committee has decided independently that these are central issues and warrant the endorsement of the faculty.

Motion: The faculty ratifies the objective of making teams at Williams "representative" of our student body, encourages AGAFA to consult with the Standing Committee on Athletics about what "representativeness" means in the context of athletics at Williams, and endorses the decision to investigate the issue of self-selection in admissions on the basis of Williams athletic reputation.

IV. Endorse the Calendar and Schedule Committee's Proposal on "Exception 3" to the Division of the Day.

- A. Previous Calendar and Schedule Committees have issued “Exception 3” to the Division of the Day. It suggests that faculty may allow athletes to miss a week’s worth of classes for athletic events. The current Calendar and Schedule Committee is proposing to withdraw the exception. The Ad Hoc Committee endorses the withdrawal of “Exception 3.”

Justification: The exception, as discussed the Ad Hoc Committee’s Report, is inconsistent and unnecessary.

Motion: The faculty endorses the Calendar and Schedule’s Committee proposal to remove “exemption” from all College publications.

V. Selection and training of team captains

- A. The members of the Ad Hoc Committee have considered questions raised by team captains, and feels that captains should serve as leaders on the field as well as in the classroom. With better training and utilization of the newly formed captains council, we hope that the responsibilities of captains in both of these areas will be better realized. The Ad Hoc Committee disagrees, however, on whether the College should impose a minimum GPA standard for captains.

1. The members arguing against requiring minimum GPAs for captains make the following points.

a. Consistency: The College does not require minimum GPAs for any other leadership positions. Junior Advisors, College Council Officers, student representatives to committees, and officers of extracurricular groups are all selected without weight given (except in extreme circumstances in the case of JAs) to academic performance. Captains should not be considered any differently.

b. Implementation: Imposing a minimum GPA standard would present difficult logistical issues, some of which could have potentially destructive repercussions for individual student-athletes and their teammates. Two examples:

1) A player is elected captain her junior year when her GPA is above the standard. After the fall semester of her senior year it drops below the standard and her captaincy is stripped. Consider also here the case of a player who is denied the opportunity to be a captain but whose GPA rises after the fall semester and she is suddenly eligible mid-season.

2) A small team has only one senior and two juniors. The senior doesn’t meet the minimum standard, the juniors are studying abroad for all or part of their junior years, and as a result the team’s elected leadership falls to one or several sophomores.

c. Philosophy: Difficult decisions relating to team dynamics and leadership should be made by those faculty members who best know the students involved. Subjecting those decisions to minimum standards marginalizes the very important and less tangible factors which go into electing captains, and suggests a distrust of the value athletic faculty places on the balance between athletics and academics.

2. The members of the Ad Hoc Committee arguing in favor of a minimum GPA for captains make the following points.

a. Captains play an important role in organizing the team, in helping team members to balance the burdens of the Williams academic program with participation in athletics, and in conveying the general culture and ethos of athletics to team members. As such, it is expected that team captains be exemplars of the Williams “scholar athlete.” This means that they should be serious as athletes and as students. Academic seriousness must be a factor in selecting captains, and must be verified by the coach as part of the process of identifying team captains. Verification would include consideration of a variety of factors, including GPA and recommendations from academic faculty of the student’s intellectual engagement. These factors may combine in different ways for different teams, and the assessment for each team’s captains should be provided to the Standing Committee every year. We anticipate that students with GPAs exceeding 3.25 would be judged academically serious without further consideration. We also anticipate that no student with a GPA below 2.75 would be considered as a serious candidate to be team captain, without regard to other information that might be available.

b. Points in favor of requiring minimum GPAs. If we really take seriously the importance of balancing the role of athletics within the educational mission of the College, we need to make the point where it counts. Captains serve as role models, and it behooves the College, and especially younger team members, to affirm the primacy of the academic. Captains, moreover, lead off-season practices. Captains who themselves de-emphasize academics are more likely to schedule practices for teams irrespective of the educational consequences for players.

Discussion of pros and cons