

Dear Students, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, and Parents,

The magnitude of developments on the national front can make it difficult to focus on other matters. But it is important, perhaps more important than ever, that we also advance the work of our institutions and do what's necessary to keep them strong. I am writing today about one particular aspect of our College life—the role of athletics, an area that was studied by a special committee that completed its work at the end of this past academic year. I write to share their report. The committee, which I commissioned, was co-chaired by Shirley Tilghman, Amherst trustee and president emerita of Princeton University, and Patrick Williamson, Edward H. Harkness Professor of Biology. The committee included several students, two additional faculty members, a coach, a trustee who was a varsity athlete at Amherst, and the dean of students.

Given the prominence, popularity, and professionalization of college athletics in American society, it is important to step back periodically and take a careful look at our athletics programs to ensure their strength, integrity, and contribution to Amherst's overall educational mission. The special committee's report does just that and finds that Amherst has a strong, even exemplary, program in athletics, one that enhances the experience of student-athletes, avoids the excesses of college sports at other levels, and contributes positively to the life of the College. The committee bases that view on the experiences and levels of satisfaction of student-athletes; the academic seriousness and success of student-athletes; and the competitive success of our teams. The committee also underscored the loyalty of alumni who were student-athletes.

It is a very positive report, but one that also points to areas of concern and makes recommendations for addressing them. The report has been reviewed by the Committee of Six, which discussed it this past fall, and by the faculty at their December meeting. The faculty will discuss it again in early February.

There will inevitably be differences of opinion about the report's findings and recommendations. Given the erosion nationally of informed, truthful, and respectful exchanges of opinion, I can think of nothing more encouraging than the ability on our campus, and among the wider Amherst community, to engage in discussions that keep faith with the basic values of liberal arts education. This is a time to model the virtues that are becoming too rare, but that we need to keep alive at this college—thoughtful, open, critical, evidence-based reasoning and respectful conversation that moves us forward together. Having had time to reflect on the report and on recent events on our campus and others, I want to share some of my thoughts in this letter.

Athletics has long been integral to the residential liberal arts experience, both for student-athletes and for those who enjoy sporting events from the sidelines or bleachers. I know from my own experience playing basketball that athletics teaches indispensable lessons. These are lessons about team work and the necessity of placing a higher priority on the success of a group than on one's own individual performance or gain; the shared joy of succeeding as a team; the importance of discipline and repetition to learning; and finding a way to succeed when the odds seem stacked against you. Such lessons are bodily as well as cognitive; they involve emotional learning that yields pride and pleasure in improvement over time. Participation in sports builds the psychological resilience that comes from high aspirations and from the need to deal with disappointment and defeat. At its best, sports can also teach us how to make appropriate use of

aggression and how to control it. For those of us who are not athletes, sports can offer the thrill of witnessing the feats human beings can accomplish with their bodies and also what well-coached teams can do with complex, well-designed, and well-executed game plans and plays. Finally, athletics builds community by deepening friendships and connecting alumni across generations with current students and with their college.

As we all know, athletics can also end up teaching negative lessons when sports becomes an obsession; when winning is valued over the welfare of athletes or pursued at any cost; when loss is treated as devastation; when team bonds are predicated on the exclusion or denigration of one outside group or another; when athletes live in a world of their own at institutions that do not provide them with a serious education or ensure that they earn a degree; when the money involved in big-time athletics becomes a corrosive influence throughout society; when aggression is not confined within the boundaries of the game.

Recent events involving our men's cross country team and similar events on other campuses remind us that we must ensure the integrity of our athletics programs and the well-being of those who participate. These events also underscore the importance of accountability when individuals or team behaviors cause harm. The problems that have been revealed of late, here and elsewhere, are not new; they are not limited to particular individuals, to athletics teams, or to colleges and universities. If they were, they would be much easier to uproot. They are deeply embedded, society-wide problems that we must approach on campus by exemplifying the habits of mind we teach in the classroom.

Our athletics teams have taken part in Title IX, sexual-respect, and bystander training—as have students who are not varsity athletes. This spring we are stepping up our efforts, enlisting outside professionals to augment what our own staff is already doing and taking a hard look at what encourages problematic group behavior, how it can be changed, and what forms of engagement we want as a community. There are no immediate solutions or top-down fixes. On this issue, as with others, the most worthwhile progress, and the only progress worth pursuing, comes from conversations that require learning and unlearning, hard work, and practice with the crafts of thinking and speaking. Those are the conversations we are going to have; that is how we do things here. Although the progress will inevitably be slow and uneven, it will be real. And it will keep faith with what is best in our college's history and tradition.

The special committee was particularly interested in whether the professionalization of athletics across American society had affected the place of athletics at Amherst. The report affirms that the New England Small College Athletics Conference (NESCAC) helps member colleges avoid the excesses of other divisions and leagues. NESCAC institutions do not offer or allow athletics scholarships, and they place limits on recruitment activities and on the length of playing seasons. The conference regulates other aspects of sports as well. At NESCAC institutions, academics comes first.

Nonetheless, the report cites several instances of intensification at Amherst, including growth in the roster sizes of a few teams and the fact that the number of varsity athletes has grown faster than the rate of growth in the student body as a whole. The report shows that student-athletes tend to cluster in particular majors. We will explore the reasons for those patterns and consequences for

students and departments. The report points out that fewer student-athletes take advantage of opportunities to write a senior thesis, for understandable reasons, given time constraints, but with the lost opportunity for an invaluable experience.

The report also focuses attention on the grouping of student-athletes on campus in ways that separate them from students who are not involved in varsity sports. The report recommends that we take measures to lessen the divide between student-athletes and non-athletes in residential and social life. In fact, the College has already begun to make changes that will help ensure that social and residential programs and events involve the initiative and participation of students from all over campus. Our efforts to date include the design for our new residence halls; a new online room-draw system that modestly limits the ability of any one group to occupy any one dorm; and the mixing of class years in residence halls. These steps, together with new gathering spaces and party policies, will make it easier for all students to move outside their comfort zones and get to know new people throughout their time at Amherst. We are designing conversations for this spring about the kind of community we want to be and what skills are necessary for bridging differences.

The report points out that our athletics teams are less socioeconomically and racially diverse than the student body as a whole. Once again, the causes are society-wide. NESCAC schools have historically recruited student-athletes from New England schools, and that pattern still affects recruiting to some degree. In addition, NESCAC limits coaches' access to young athletes, restricting when and how they can make contact with them. The league regulates the amount of money that member colleges should spend on recruitment-related travel. These constraints are intended to prevent the kinds of abuses that have affected other leagues and divisions, and to ensure equity across the teams in our league. They have also had the inadvertent consequence of making it harder to achieve diversity on our teams. NESCAC presidents recently relaxed some restrictions on a trial basis in order to give our coaches a better chance to succeed.

In addition, certain sports are still less diverse at every age and educational level. It will take a longer time to increase diversity in those sports. Coaches in lacrosse, squash, and soccer, among other sports at Amherst, have designed successful programs aimed at involving children and adolescents from less privileged backgrounds in their sports and encouraging those already involved to visit Amherst. In part as a result of our coaches' determination, Amherst has considerably greater diversity among its student-athletes than all of its peers in NESCAC. Nevertheless, in order to make greater progress in this area, the athletics department will need to develop recruitment strategies that are even more focused and creative.

There are two additional points I want to emphasize here. First, the committee recommends that we consult experts on concussive and sub-concussive injury to ensure we are following the best possible practices. I am working with NESCAC's chief medical adviser, Dr. Paul Berkman, to arrange for a NESCAC symposium on this subject that Amherst would host. Second, for reasons of time, the committee was not asked to do a Title IX gender equity review, but we intend to consider the organization of our athletics programs in this light as well. We have engaged the services of a specialist in Title IX compliance, Janet Judge, president of Sports Law Associates, LLC, who will conduct a review this spring.

The Committee of Six has decided on a process for consideration of the report on campus. It will involve three key governance committees—the College Council, the Faculty Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid, and the Committee on Education and Athletics. Faculty, staff, and students are represented on these committees. They will help develop mechanisms for broader conversation on campus. I am asking colleagues in Alumni and Parent Programs to help organize conversation among alumni and parents and to provide meaningful ways for them to offer their views. “The Place of Athletics at Amherst” report will be publicly available for a limited time and, going forward, will be accessible to our on-campus community under password protection.

I wish you all well.

Biddy

THE PLACE OF ATHLETICS AT AMHERST COLLEGE

A. Executive Summary

In the fall of 2014, President Biddy Martin charged a committee of trustees, faculty, administrators and students to “weigh...the extent to which our athletic programs are consistent with the overall purpose of the College”. In her charge, she posed a number of questions that aimed to test whether participation in athletics was contributing to, or ideally enhancing, the educational and social experience of Amherst students. This report comes 15 years after a report on the same topic, chaired by trustee Colin S. Diver ‘65, concluded that “as a general matter, we believe that Amherst has kept its athletic program in a proper balance with its educational mission”. At the same time the Diver committee noted that forces outside Amherst’s control had created a challenging environment in which to maintain the delicate balance between academic and athletic achievement, and recommended that the College review the status of athletics at Amherst every three to five years. This report summarizes the first of those stock-taking exercises.

Our committee believes that Amherst’s athletic programs are rightly among the most admired in the nation. From the student athletes’ perspective, Amherst affords them the opportunity to pursue their passion for their sport while obtaining a stellar liberal arts education, embodying the student/athlete ideal. Athletes succeed academically, and graduate with their classmates on time. They benefit from having a built-in community from the moment they arrive on campus, with upper class teammates to mentor them and coaches and faculty liaisons who are dedicated to their success and wellbeing. Overall athletes report a high degree of satisfaction with their Amherst education – both inside and outside the classroom - and remain loyal and generous to the College in the years following graduation. There are very few colleges that can make such claims.

In reviewing many aspects of the athletic program, our Committee concluded that the evidence is mixed with regard to escalation since the Diver Report in the intensity with which athletics is pursued at Amherst. While the number of varsity teams has not increased in number, the overall roster size has increased by ~12%, in parallel with an 10% increase in the size of the student body as a whole. However it should be noted that the number of “athletic factor” athletes, for whom athletic prowess plays a significant role in the admission process, has actually declined, from 75 to 67 athletes admitted per year. Neither the length of the official season nor the number of mid-week games that cause students to miss classes has increased. What *has* increased is Amherst’s success on the playing field in many sports, which has led to

more contests, primarily in the post-season. We also learned that the captain's practices and "lifting" sessions in the off-season no longer seem voluntary to most varsity athletes, as the policy of the Department of Athletics suggests they should. Thus for most athletes their participation in a varsity sport does not begin at the start of the season nor conclude at its end. For this reason:

The Committee recommends that the NESCAC Presidents pay particular attention to the impact of playing schedules, particularly post-season play and out-of-season practice on the academic experience of athletes.

Of greater concern to the Committee was the frequency with which we heard that there is a perceptible "divide" between athletes and non-athletes that inhibits their ability to take full advantage of the educational benefit of living and learning together. This divide is a long-standing one, and it was highlighted as a concern in the 2001 Diver Report. The perception of the divide is exacerbated by the fact that athletes represent by far the largest extracurricular cohort at Amherst (between 35-38% of the student body are on the rosters of varsity teams) and thus are more visible than any other group. These differences between groups of Amherst students, based on their participation in varsity sports, would have less impact on the student body as a whole if athletes were a smaller percentage of the student body.

The Committee recommends that there should be no further increase in the number of varsity athletes or varsity teams, even if the Amherst college student body increases in the future. Further, we recommend that periodic reviews be conducted to ensure that varsity teams are viable and their roster sizes are necessary for the team's competitiveness.

The divide is fueled by the ways some athletes choose to congregate in the social dorms. Students report that athletic teams dominate the social life of the college, particularly the dorm "party scene", leaving some students feeling excluded. It is also fueled by the lack of diversity (relative to the student body) of varsity athletes.

We recommend that every effort be taken by administrators and student leaders to ensure that student living environments, and community activity more broadly, provide for good and healthy mixing of students of every interest.

The committee recommends strongly that increasing the diversity of student athletes and coaches should be a high priority for the athletic department and admissions office.

We also documented patterns of engagement with the curriculum that distinguish athletes, especially male athletes in high-profile sports, from the rest of the student body. High profile male athletes tend to major in a small number of departments, take fewer science classes and classes with small enrollments, and are less likely to elect to write a senior thesis.

The Committee recommends that the Faculty Education and Athletics Committee undertake a study to understand the underlying causes of the academic decisions that lead

some student athletes to concentrate in a small number of departments and to suggest remedies for any policies and practices that may discourage or deter student athletes from experiencing the full benefit of an Amherst education.

Athletes report that they have on occasion felt stereotyped, stigmatized or penalized for their participation in athletics. In that sense both non-athletes and athletes feel aggrieved in one or more ways by the perception of a divide. A powerful antidote to negative stereotyping of athletes is provided by the faculty athletic liaisons, who act as links between the teams and the faculty.

The Committee notes that the Faculty Liaisons Program is of significant benefit to Amherst College, and should be encouraged, supported and expanded.

President Martin asked the Committee to examine the incidence of injuries, especially concussions and sub-concussive injuries, to student athletes at Amherst. Football and both men's and women's rugby report levels of these injuries which raise concerns for the Committee.

Given the absence of comprehensive research on the nature and long term consequences of concussions and sub-concussive injuries, the Committee recommends that Amherst convene a panel of medical experts to develop best practices in this critical area of student health and wellness.

Rugby is a club sport, organized and managed by student players, with some oversight by the Department of Athletics. With the dramatic increase in the number of students participating in club sports in recent years, the Department of Athletics has been forced to triage the attendance of trainers and medical personnel at practices and games.

The committee recommends that the Department of Athletics apply the same safety standards to Club sports as Varsity sports. Given the risks of injury in rugby, the Committee recommends that either additional resources be provided to the rugby teams with trainers and coaches who are attuned to the risk of injury by inexperienced athletes, or the sport be discontinued.

The committee heard from students and coaches alike that the joint oversight of club sports by the student government and the Department of Athletics is not working as smoothly as it could, and does not meet the needs of these sports.

The Committee recommends that the processes for governance of club sports be reviewed by the Department of Athletics and the Dean of Students with the goal of ensuring that oversight by the College and the club sports coaching staff is consistent with the potential risks to both student athletes and the College.

An unintended consequence of Amherst's success in supporting popular varsity, club and intramural sports programs is the chronic and fierce competition for practice and playing time. This Committee did not undertake an analysis of this problem, except to note the universal concerns from students, coaches and athletic administrators.

We recommend that the College undertake an assessment of the current and future use of our athletic facilities, to ascertain whether they are being optimally and fairly utilized by the campus community, and to identify additional facilities that may be needed in the future.

May 2016

B. Introduction

In the fall of 2014, President Bidy Martin charged a committee of trustees, faculty, administrators and students¹ to “weigh...the extent to which our athletic programs are consistent with the overall purpose of the College”². In her charge, she posed a number of questions that aimed to test whether participation in athletics was contributing to, or ideally enhancing, the educational and social experience of Amherst students.

This is not the first time a president of Amherst College has asked a group to reflect on this question. In 2000 then-President Tom Gerety formed a similar committee, chaired by Trustee Colin S. Diver '65. Their report, issued in the spring of 2002, provided a comprehensive look at the state of Amherst's athletics programs, and concluded that “as a general matter, we believe that Amherst has kept its athletic program in a proper balance with its educational mission”³. At the same time the committee noted that forces outside Amherst's control had created a challenging environment in which to maintain the delicate balance between academic and athletic achievement, and recommended that the College review the status of athletics at Amherst every three to five years. This report summarizes the first of those stock-taking exercises.

In approaching its charge the committee met on six occasions, and heard from students (both athletes and non-athletes), faculty, the Director and members of the Athletics Department and the Dean of Admission. Our schedule of meetings and the individuals with whom we spoke are included in Appendix C⁴. We took advantage of a report by an external review committee of the Department of Athletics and Physical Education that had been commissioned by then-President Anthony Marx and then-Dean of the Faculty Gregory Call in 2005. With the expert assistance of Jesse Barba in the Office of Institutional Research, Dean Cate Zolkos in the Office of Admissions and Athletics Director Don Faulstick, we collected data regarding the number and demographic characteristics of students who participate in both varsity and club sports; the success record of each team; the academic performance and disciplinary record of athletes and non-athletes; the number of class conflicts associated with participation in varsity athletics; housing patterns of athletes and non-athletes; and practices employed to recruit and admit athletes. In our analysis, we were particularly sensitive to changes since the 2002 Diver report that reflected escalation in the intensity with which

¹ Committee Roster, Appendix A

² President Martin's Charge to the Committee, Appendix B

³ The Place of Athletics at Amherst College: A Question of Balance. Report of the Special Committee on the Place of Athletics at Amherst, 2002

⁴ Meeting schedule and speakers, Appendix C

athletics is pursued. President Martin also asked the committee to gather information on the frequencies of injuries to student athletes, paying particular attention to concussions.

This report is not intended to replicate the Diver report. Much of the excellent narrative in that report regarding the place of athletics at Amherst, and its relationship to the New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) in which it competes and to the larger landscape of the National College Athletic Association (NCAA) is as relevant today as it was in 2002. Rather our purpose is to update the analyses in the Diver Report, and to make our own recommendations for enhancing the experience of students – athletes and non-athletes alike – at Amherst College.

One defining characteristic of Amherst that influenced much of our deliberations is its small size, considered by all to be an enormous strength of the College. The small community and its intimate rural setting afford students many opportunities to establish close relationships with one another and with the faculty both inside and outside the classroom. Ironically, that strength is at the core of the challenge of achieving a balance between academics and athletics. For its size Amherst hosts a large number of varsity teams (13 men’s and 14 women’s), and students who play on varsity teams constitute the largest and most visible extracurricular “interest group” on campus – between 35-38% of the student body in any given year.⁵

Perhaps because they are the largest cohort on campus, there is a perception held by many students of an athlete/non-athlete divide. Such a divide could affect the ability of students – both athletes and non-athletes - to take full advantage of the educational and personal growth that come from living within a broadly diverse community for four years. Students report that athletic teams dominate the social life of the college, and particularly the dorm “party scene”, leaving some students feeling excluded. The visibility of athletes has a negative effect on athletes themselves. Some report that they have at times felt stereotyped, stigmatized or penalized for their participation in athletics, with both faculty and students assuming that they are less able to undertake the rigorous academic work that Amherst asks of its students. In other words both sides of the divide feel aggrieved in one or more ways.

The perception of a divide within the Amherst student body created by participation in athletics was very much in evidence at the time of the Diver Report, and there is little sign that the divide has lessened. At a time when Amherst has achieved an historic level of diversity within its student body, and is focused on improving the quality of residential and extra-curricular life for its students, it is an opportune moment for stock-taking of how far we have come, and how far we still need to go to create the kind of learning community that is described in the 2015 Strategic Plan.

⁵ By using this term we do not imply that all “varsity athletes” are identical, any more than all “non-athletes” are inherently similar. At the same time, the general prominence of athletes on campus, and in the life of students, must be noted.

The Diver Report identified four ambitious aspirations of the College that are affected by its hosting athletic teams: (1) the quality and success of the academic programs; (2) the personal growth and social interaction among its students; (3) the diversity of the student body; and (4) the level of college spirit and support. Our new committee reviewed data that are relevant to one or more of these goals.

C. Analysis of the Impact of Athletics at Amherst

1. Admission of Athletes

In discussing roster athletes in this report, we make distinctions between “athletic factor” athletes, “coded” athletes and “walk-ons”. Athletic factor athletes are identified by coaches and endorsed by the Department of Athletics as prospective students who truly excel at their sports, and whose presence would have a significant impact on the success of the teams. Their athletic prowess weighs prominently in the admission decision of these applicants, and their numbers are regulated by NESCAC rules according to a formula based on the number of varsity teams that the college sponsors. That number for Amherst is 67 per year, with 14 of the slots designated for football, figures which are lower than the 75 and 20 slots, respectively, at the time of the Diver Report.

Coded athletes are academically high-achieving students (termed academic 1’s and 2’s on a 7-point reader’s scale used by the admissions office) who are excellent athletes, and have been so identified to the admission office by the coaches. These students are admitted at a much higher rate than the general admission rate for students rated academic 1’s and 2’s. There is no limit imposed either internally or by NESCAC on the number of students identified in this way, but in general coded athletes who are admitted to Amherst number between 60-90 per year. It should be noted that athletics is just one of the many factors taken into consideration when assembling an Amherst College student body. There are prospective students who are excellent athletes, but who are also priorities for admission to the college for other reasons, such as students of color, first generation college attendance, legacies, those from low socioeconomic backgrounds or who have stellar academic qualifications. Coaches may bring these students to the attention of the Admission Office without having them count against their total.

Walk-ons are students who have been admitted without any recommendation from a coach, but have successfully tried out for the team. One of the major changes in college athletics over the past two decades has been the decline in the number of walk-ons in any sport. Amherst is no different. There are ~20 walk-ons per class, but few of them see much playing time, and many drop the sport after freshman year.

The benefit at the time of admission that athletic factor athletes receive is substantial. In contrast, the coded athletes look much like the rest of the student body in terms of academic performance before matriculation.

An oft-voiced concern among the faculty with whom we spoke about the admission preferences that are given to varsity athletics is the degree to which the athletics department is influencing the admission of a significant fraction of the student body – between 125 and 150 students out of an incoming class of ~450 (between 27 and 33% for the Classes of 2010-2016). They do not argue that the students are less able or worthy, but rather that the college pays an opportunity cost for having such a significant fraction of the student body engaged in a single extra-curricular activity. In their view, this imbalance in student pursuits and passions adds to the perception of a cultural divide that would be less pronounced if the student body were larger, or the number of student athletes were smaller.

2. The Number of Participants in Varsity Sports

Amherst College offers an impressive number of varsity sports in intercollegiate competition for its size: 13 for men and 14 for women, figures that have not changed since the Diver Report. In 2014-2015, 607 individuals were counted on varsity sport rosters, compared to 541 individuals in 2001-2, representing a 12% increase in the number of athletes. Given that the size of the student body increased by ~10% during this interval, the percentage of varsity athletes in the student body has stayed roughly constant, although the number of athletic factor athletes has declined, as noted above.

Some sports, particularly men's lacrosse, have experienced a steady increase in roster size over the last decade, from 30-33 in the early 2000's to 45-46 in the last several years. The number of women playing lacrosse has also increased from 21 in 2002 to 28 in 2015. It is not clear to the Committee why these increases occurred, and it is worrisome that one explanation provided by the Department of Athletics is the frequency of injuries in these sports. Similar growth is evident with both men's and women's track, which were also increasing in size at the time of the Diver report. In this instance we learned that the expansion reflects the addition of a coach to focus on women's track, and an increase in the number of walk-ons. It should be noted, however, that neither expansion led to greater gender equity among athletes, and thus did not accomplish the goal of bringing the College into closer alignment with Title IX requirements.

3. Diversity of Athletes

In 2002 the Diver report noted that the varsity athletic program “has contributed very little to the racial, ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of the Amherst student body”⁶. In the Class of 2003, 12% of varsity athletes were students of color and only 6% were from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Despite the 15 intervening years when Amherst has successfully attracted a richly diverse student body, that statement continues to have some validity today. Although the number of students of color on varsity teams has almost doubled since the Diver report, low income and first generation students remain strikingly under-represented (Table 1). These data illustrate an important component of the athletic/non-athletic divide: namely, that the student athlete population has a strikingly different demographic profile than the overall student body.

Table 1 Demographics of Varsity Athletes for the 2011-2015 Cohorts

Students	International	Students of Color	White	Low Income	First Generation
Men’s teams	4%	23%	73%	6%	4%
Women’s teams	2%	24%	74%	2%	2%
Non-athletes	12%	53%	35%	31%	20%
All students	9%	44%	47%	23%	15%

This disparity is not uniform across all teams. Several sports teams deserve recognition for having a more diverse cadre of students. The men’s soccer team, for example, has a roster in which students of color and white students are equally represented, and both men’s and women’s tennis teams are significantly more diverse than other teams (32% and 74% students of color, respectively).

Nevertheless, these striking overall disparities in the ethnicity and socioeconomic backgrounds of athletes and non-athletes, combined with the substantial fraction of students who are athletes, contribute in significant measure to the sense on campus that there is a “divide” between the two student populations. In this sense, the perception of a division between athletes and non-athletes is exacerbated by the differences in their demographics. Our committee believes that it is urgent to develop new strategies to reduce this imbalance.

Admission policies at Amherst can reward those coaches who are successful at recruiting a diverse group of athletes. As mentioned above, when a coach identifies a student of color, low income or first generation student, the student can be brought to the attention of the admission office without that student counting as a coded or “athletic factor” athlete.

⁶ Diver Report, page 33

It must be acknowledged that the coaching staff faces certain external challenges in recruiting diverse athletes. One such challenge is the “perfect storm” of racial and socioeconomic inequality coupled with the intensification of athletics in adolescence. As participation in athletics has intensified during middle school and high school years, children are specializing in their chosen sport at much younger ages. They are increasingly expected to take part in costly summer camps, engage personal trainers and pay for their expenses on traveling teams. All these trends “advantage the advantaged”, and make it harder for students from low income backgrounds to compete successfully for places on college rosters.

Further, certain aspects of recruitment, regulated by NESCAC rules, prevent the Amherst athletics staff from approaching potential diverse athletes during periods in which other schools in both Division I and Division III may actively recruit, admit and offer financial aid to these students. Amherst thus may never have the opportunity to attract some of these candidates.

Finally the Committee noted the lack of diversity among Amherst’s coaching staff. At a time when the College is focused on bringing greater diversity to its faculty, the Committee believes that this initiative should include the coaching staff.

4. Housing Patterns

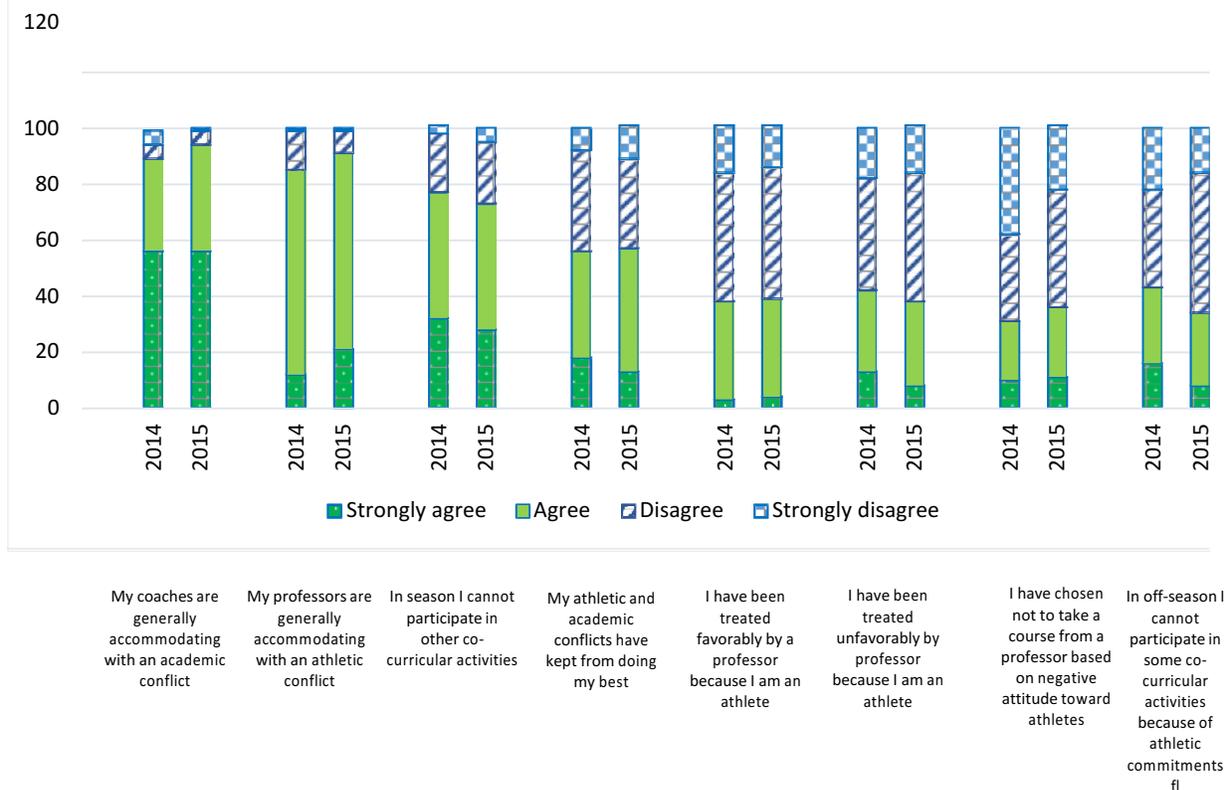
Direct evidence for a separation between athletes and non-athletes can be found in the housing patterns of male athletes, who cluster in the “social dorms”, Pond, Stone, Crossett and Coolidge. It is striking that in the fall of 2014, 85% and 80% of the residents in Pond and Stone, respectively, were athletes, particularly male athletes. Given that these dorms are configured in such a way that they are the ideal spaces to host parties, the concentration of athletes in them all but guarantees that athletes dominate at least this one element of the social life of the college - the weekend party scene. This domination of social life is reflected in the fact that athletes are more likely to be cited for minor rules infractions, and especially noise and underage drinking, even though athletes are not more prone to be cited for serious infractions such as property damage, theft or sexual assault. With the decommissioning of the social dorms and the opening of the “Greenway” dorms in the fall of 2016, there is a golden opportunity to rebalance the housing patterns of students. With room draw for 2016 just concluded, there is very encouraging evidence that students have indeed redistributed much more broadly throughout the campus.

5. Graduation Rates and Student Satisfaction

Participation in athletics does not affect the ability of Amherst students to successfully navigate the academic program and graduate on time. Six-year graduation rates were obtained for the students entering between the fall of 2005 and 2009 (corresponding roughly to the classes of 2009-2013), which revealed that the graduation rate of male and female roster athletes was 97.9%, significantly higher than for non-athletes (93.8%).

At graduation Amherst students who participated in NCAA athletics report high levels of satisfaction with their undergraduate education, as high and at times slightly higher than non-athletes (4.34 versus 4.04 on a scale from 1-5 in 2014). When athletes from the Classes of 2014 and 2015 are queried about their experiences *as athletes*, they gave high marks to both their coaches and professors for their willingness to accommodate a conflict between their athletic and academic pursuits. Nevertheless, equal numbers reported that they were treated favorably or unfavorably by a professor because they are athletes at least once (38 and 39% vs. 42 and 38% for 2014 and 2015, respectively). A significant minority (30-36%) also reported that they had chosen not to take a course solely because of their perception that the professor has negative attitudes toward athletes. So while athletes are clearly pleased with their overall educational experience at Amherst, a significant number of them either perceive and/or experience negative attitudes from the faculty (Figure 1). The Committee believes that the faculty needs to consider these concerns, which are experienced by a significant fraction of student athletes.

Figure 1
The Student-Athlete Experience



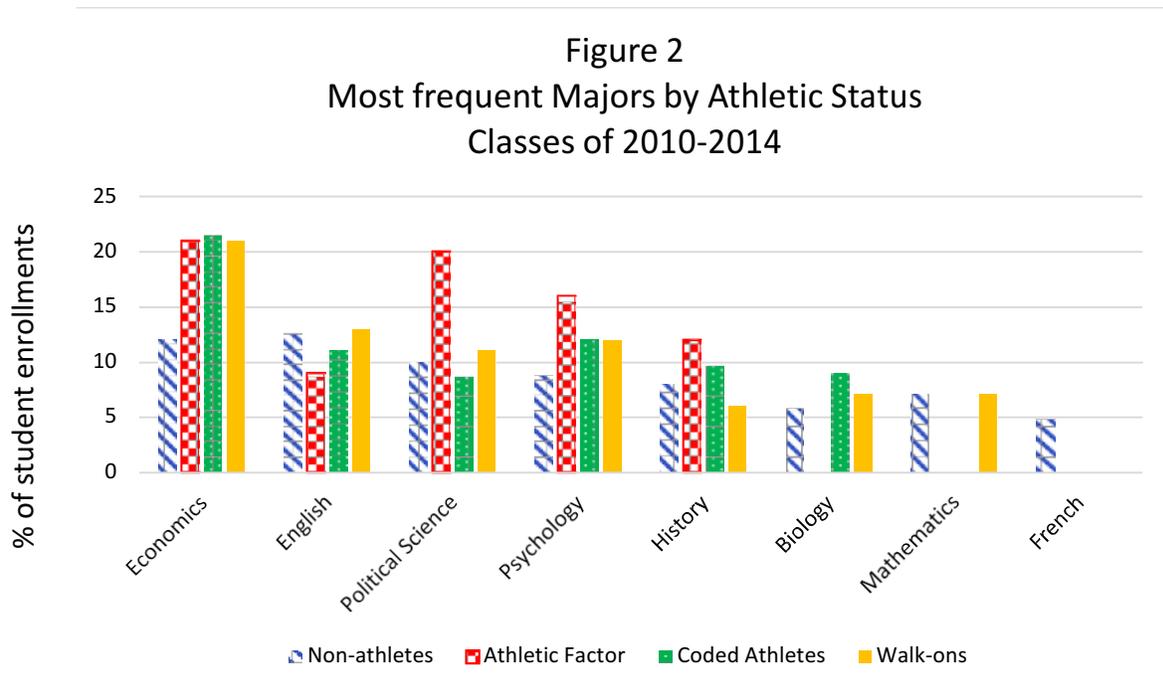
6. Postgraduate Outcomes

A 2013 Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE) survey of postgraduate outcomes of Amherst graduates of the Classes of 1938-2008 suggests that athletes have historically been more likely to pursue careers in business (28%) than non-athletes (18%), and half as likely to undertake careers in the arts (6% vs. 11%).

Since the 1960s, athletes have been frequent and generous donors to Amherst, consistently eclipsing non-athletes in participation percentage as well as level of support. For example, among members of the Classes of the 1960s 76% of athletes donated to Amherst in 2015, compared to 56% of non-athletes. This trend is replicated in the most recent classes that have graduated in the 2010s, in which 43.8% of athletes and 36% of non-athletes have made gifts to Amherst. Former athletes represent 48% of the alumni body, but they constitute 78% of Founders Society members (donors who have made cumulative gifts of \$1 million or more). Furthermore, former athletes volunteer for alumni roles at Amherst at a rate that is greater than non-athletes. One conclusion from these data is that participation in athletics increases alumni allegiance to Amherst College.

7. Course of Study for Athletes

While many student athletes are as well prepared as their peers when they matriculate, there are differences in the ways in which they approach and take advantage of educational opportunities at Amherst. For example, as shown in Figure 2 for the Classes of 2010-2014, athletes are almost twice as likely to concentrate in Economics (21-22%) compared to non-athletes (12%). This disparity is true even for walk-on athletes, suggesting that decisions about

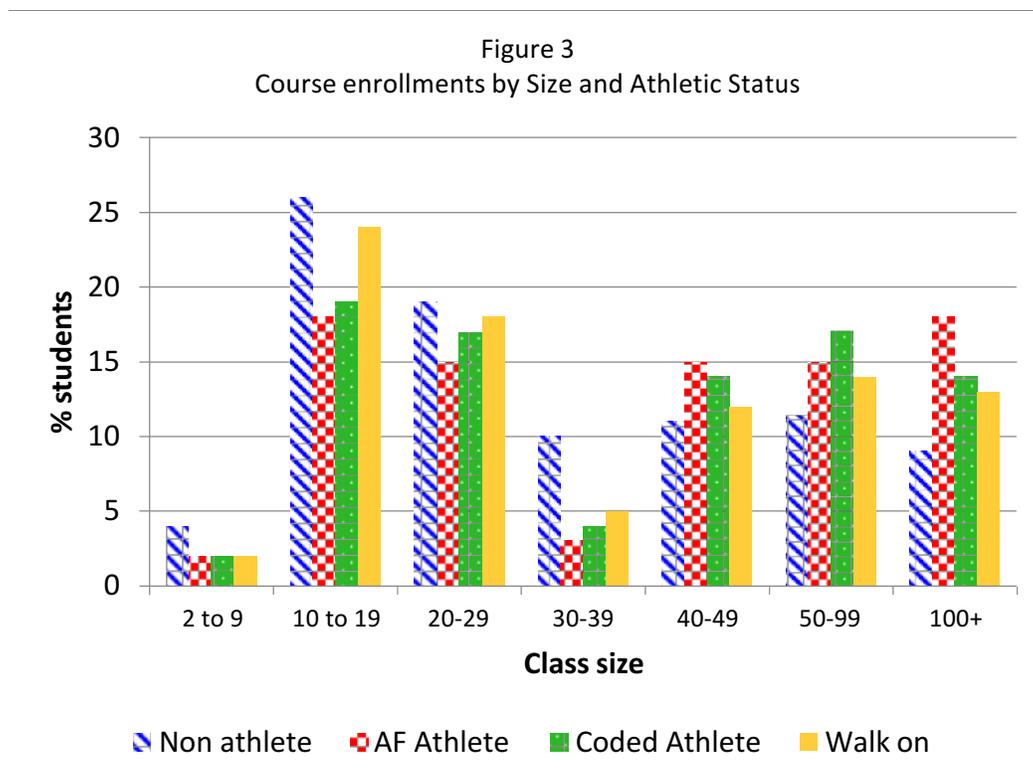


courses of study are being affected by the culture of the teams. The disparity is particularly evident in the high-profile sports, such as men’s basketball, baseball, football, and lacrosse. Students participating in those four sports represent 33% of Economics majors, 37% of those in political science and 27% of history majors in the Classes of 2011-2015, even though they represent just 11.8% of students. The distribution of students across the curriculum was not addressed in the Diver report; thus we do not know whether this bias is a long standing one or not. Nevertheless, the concentration of athletes in a few academic departments is another sense in which there is “divide” among athletes and non-athletes.

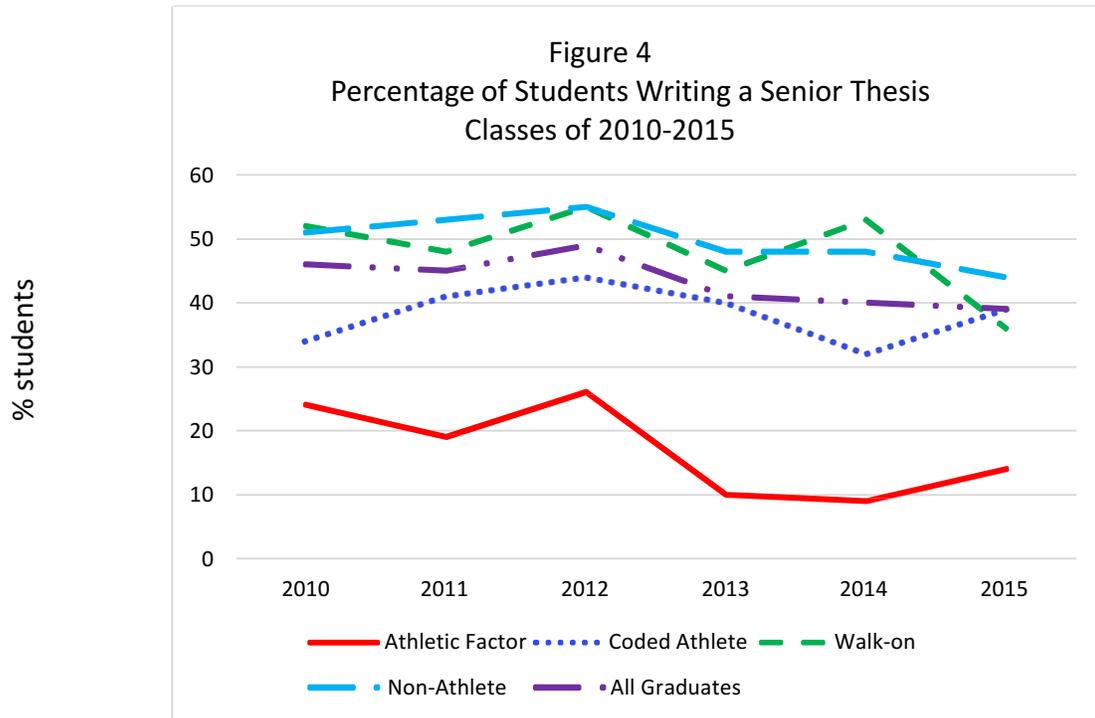
A second pattern is apparent for athletic factor athletes: they are less likely to pursue study in a scientific discipline that requires long hours in laboratories (among the science disciplines, only environmental studies reports a significant number of athletic factor athletes (8%)). This difference is not apparent with either coded athletes (19% in biology, neuroscience and chemistry) or walk-ons (21% in biology, chemistry and environmental studies). These data

would seem to indicate that the difference with athletic factor athletes does not rest with the practical difficulties of combining scientific study with athletics, but possibly with their perception (or that of the faculty) that their preparation before college was not sufficient for them to succeed in STEM fields.

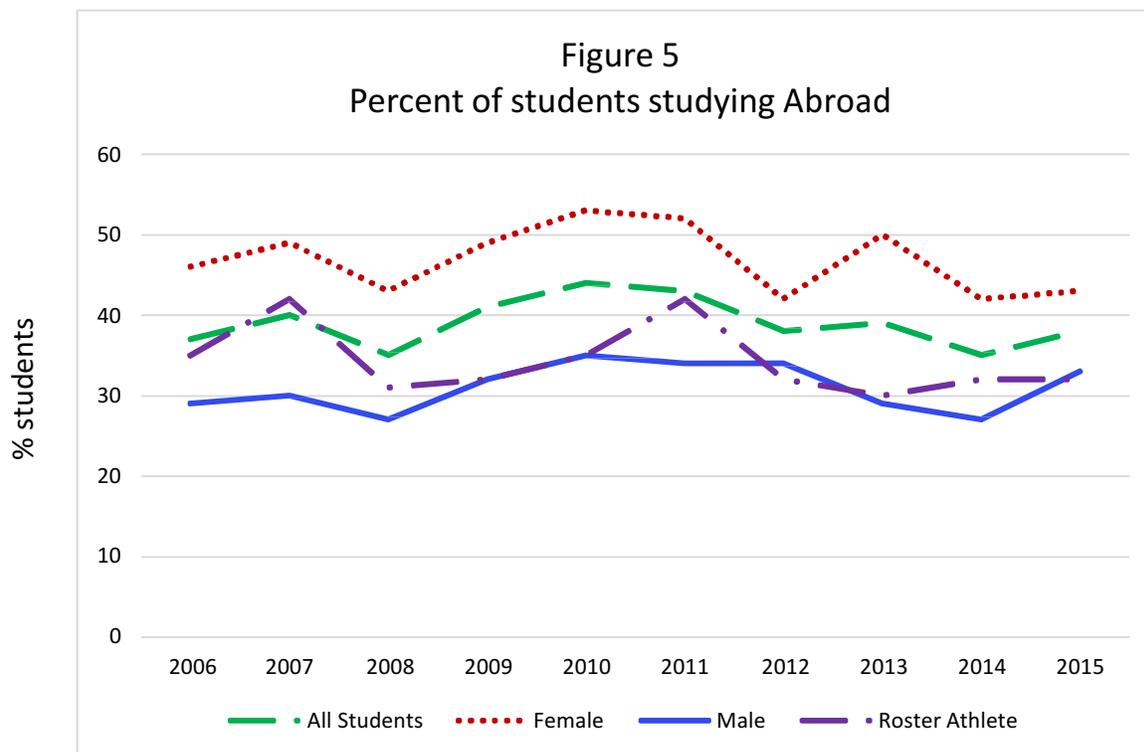
One other difference in the academic experience of athletes is that they are less likely to participate in small classes (Figure 3). As illustrated for classes in the spring of 2014, coded athletes (38%) and athletic factor athletes (35%) spend less time in small classes with fewer than 30 students than non-athletes (49%), and significantly more time in large classes. The discrepancy declines for walk-on athletes (44%). This difference may be consequential as smaller classes lead to more meaningful interactions among faculty and students, and are rightfully a source of pride for the college.



One of the most striking academic differences between athletes and non-athletes was the likelihood of writing a senior thesis. As shown in Figure 4 for the Classes of 2011-2015, both male and female athletic factor athletes were significantly less likely to elect to write a senior thesis (16%) than non-athletes (49%). Furthermore, the likelihood appears to be declining over the five-year time period we surveyed. The thesis participation rates for coded athletes and walk-on athletes are far more variable, making it difficult to identify a trend, although it is apparent that in general male (but not female) coded athletes are less likely to write a thesis. Such a gender difference is not evident among non-athletes.



The decision whether to write a senior thesis is a complex one and is not the only indicator of an intense academic experience. The choice to forego the experience may be motivated by positive factors such as the desire to explore the curriculum more broadly in one's senior year, or to pursue independent work. Yet such considerations do not explain why athletes make different choices than non-athletes. It seems likely that weaker preparation or the large time commitment that athletics requires makes it daunting for some to undertake a major piece of work.



A large fraction of Amherst students elect to study abroad - 39% of students in the Classes of 2006-2015 took advantage of the opportunity. Roster athletes in the same classes were somewhat less likely to study abroad (34%). Interestingly, roster athletes exhibited the same gender bias as the student body as a whole, with women far more likely to study abroad than their male classmates (Figure 5). Predictably the likelihood of studying abroad was influenced by the season of the sport, with participants in the winter and two-semester sports such as basketball, hockey, golf, track and swimming among the least likely to have studied abroad.

8. Academic Performance of Athletes

It is not surprising, given the difference in academic qualifications at the time of admission, that athletic factor athletes graduate with slightly lower cumulative grade point averages (GPAs) than coded athletes. However, there is no evidence that participation in athletics disadvantages athletic factor athletes, for they actually perform significantly better than non-athletes admitted with similar credentials of reader's rating of ~4. Athletic factor students complete senior theses at a significantly lower rate than comparable non-athletes (18% vs 26%), but they graduate at a higher rate than non-athletes who matriculated with equivalent academic credentials. As with athletic factor athletes, there is no consistent GPA difference between coded athletes and walk-ons and non-athletes with similar academic credentials at matriculation, reinforcing the conclusion that participation in athletics does not compromise the ability of athletes to excel academically at Amherst.

9. Time Commitment of Athletes and Academic Conflicts

The Diver report noted in 2002 a worrisome nationwide trend of escalation in the time demands on students who participate in varsity sports. That trend has not diminished in the intervening years. Within the NCAA, some Division I and III leagues have exhibited a willingness to lengthen seasons, increase the number of practices and games, and extend the travel distances across leagues. These demands for greater commitment to athletics inevitably reduce the time available for meaningful academic experiences, and may interfere with attaining it.

In many respects, Amherst is protected from the worst of these pressures by its membership in NESCAC, a Division III league whose colleges and universities are relatively well aligned with respect to the goal of academic/athletic balance. Playing seasons are significantly shorter than those allowed by NCAA rules. The prohibition on athletic scholarships ensures that student athletes are not beholden to the Department of Athletics for the funds to attend Amherst and that college scholarship funds are awarded on a needs basis only.

Nevertheless, Amherst and NESCAC are not immune to these outside trends. While the length of the official season has not increased over the past 15 years, it is apparent that the extent of post-season play, as well as the amount of travel and game times, and expanded expectations of out-of-season practices have together increased the required commitment of varsity athletes. For example between 2001 and 2015, the number of contests has increased significantly in a number of sports – baseball has grown from 32 to 42 contests; women’s basketball showed a jump from 25 to 33 contests after the 2007-8 season; men’s lacrosse has grown from 16 to 21 in recent years.

A significant fraction of the increase in the number of games is due to post-season play in both NESCAC as well as NCAA Division III. Amherst teams are remarkably successful within NESCAC, with only arch rival Williams outpacing their record of NESCAC championships in recent years. Some teams, such as men’s baseball, basketball, soccer, swimming and tennis, regularly compete in both NESCAC postseason tournaments and receive bids for NCAA postseason competition. Likewise, women’s basketball, field hockey, ice hockey, lacrosse, soccer, swimming, tennis and volleyball are perennial favorites to go on to post-season play. With that success comes greater time commitment from students, and the possibility of more frequent conflicts with classes and other academic activities.

Post-season play is particularly problematic, as it often involves significant travel and often comes at the end of a semester when student work loads tend to increase and exams are scheduled. In addition, the extent of post-season play in any particular year for any given sport is difficult to anticipate in advance. The Diver Report documented an average of 18 class conflicts per year due to post-season play between 1999 and 2001; the total for 2014-15 is 29 conflicts, reflecting both Amherst’s success on the playing field as well as increased options for post-season play over the last 15 years.

Every team, with the exception of football, has for many years scheduled mid-week

games. The number of these games, which are the most likely to lead to class conflicts, especially when the game requires traveling to another campus, has stayed relatively constant. Across all sports, the Diver Report estimated that there were 50 regular season mid-week class conflicts identified by coaches in each of the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 seasons. That number for the 2014-15 academic year is approximately 45. Overall the coaching staff has been able to limit this source of tension between students and faculty.

When they do occur, missed classes are a significant source of tension between student athletes and some faculty. In some cases, conflicts may require a faculty member to write and proctor separate exams to accommodate the students' absences. Both the faculty and coaches work to resolve scheduling conflicts, employing late vans for students who could not miss a class or exam, while others arrange travel independently. Some students are able to make individual arrangements with their professors to catch up with class material or assignments.

Some faculty feel that a decision to forego class is a sign of disrespect for the academic mission of the college. We did not hear echoes of such disrespect among the student athletes with whom we met; to the contrary, they expressed a deep commitment to their academic work. The faculty liaisons to the sports teams expressed the view that their student athletes are committed to their academic work in spite of having difficulty resolving these scheduling conflicts from time to time. It must be noted, as more than one faculty did, that students miss classes for a variety of reasons, such as conflicts with music and theater performances and job interviews, or simply by choice. However, there appears to be heightened sensitivity to athletically-motivated conflicts. This may be in part because student athletes are such a large and visible cohort and/or because athletes are enjoined to inform their professors when they miss class.

10. Safety of Student Athletes – the Issue of Concussions

Since the Diver Report there has been a growing and alarming body of scientific evidence that points to the long lasting negative effects of concussions among student and professional athletes, including chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE). CTE is caused by repetitive brain trauma that could result from both concussions that cause symptoms, and sub-concussive hits to the head that cause no symptoms and thus go undetected. The CTE symptoms include memory loss, confusion, impaired judgment, impulse control problems, aggression, depression, anxiety, suicidality, parkinsonism, and, eventually, progressive dementia.⁷ Although these symptoms accelerate in severity with age, they have been observed in young college football players, including a football player at the University of Pennsylvania who committed suicide, and whose brain displayed signs of CTE at autopsy, yet had never reported having experienced a concussion⁸.

⁷ Boston University CTE Center. <http://www.bu.edu/alzresearch/ctecenter/chronic-traumatic-encephalopathy-faqs/>

⁸New York Times September 13, 2010.

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/14/sports/14football.html?_r=0

The absence of a history of concussions in this young man illustrates two concerns about participation in potentially violent sports. One is that the players who start the sport at an early age are likely to receive multiple hits to the head before college, none of which may rise to the severity of a concussion, and thus go unreported. The second is that players are reluctant to report hits, fearing that they will not be allowed to continue to play. Those concerns point to the need for vigilant attention by medical personnel at both practices and contests, in order to identify head contact that may be sub-concussive, and therefore unreported.

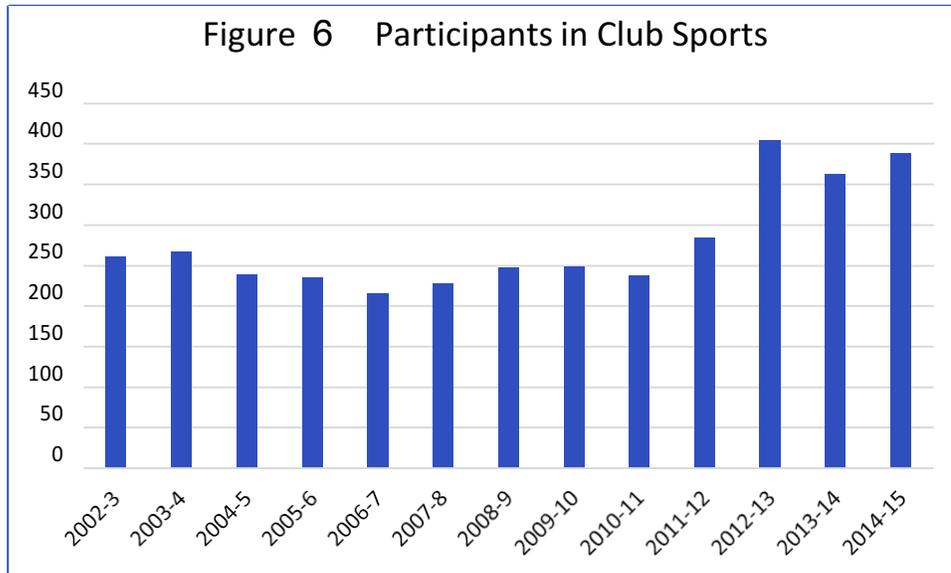
Concussions pose an especially serious issue at academic institutions, as students who have been diagnosed with a concussion are required to refrain from any serious intellectual work for periods of time that can extend to weeks. Those students are then at a severe disadvantage in the classroom as well as on the playing field, especially given the short length of the semester.

Athletic Director Don Faulstick provided the committee with the head injury protocol that is followed at Amherst and the other NESCAC schools. The plan outlines the steps taken on the playing field to diagnose head injury, and the guidelines that are followed before a student may return to practice or playing. This committee does not have the expertise to judge whether the protocol is state-of-the-art in the field, but we do question whether students who have received 3 concussions should *ever* be allowed to resume play, even when symptoms have disappeared. This standard should be reviewed by outside medical experts and their findings reported to the President and Athletic Director.

At Amherst, the football team has been reporting on average 6 concussive and sub-concussive events each season, with a range from 1-12. The number in men's hockey has been increasing in recent years, to 4 and 6 for the 2013 and 2014 seasons, respectively. Most worrisome to the committee is the number of reports of concussion and sub-concussions in two club sports, men's and women's rugby. Although the Department of Athletics provides access to the sports-medicine staff and facility to all students, it does not currently have the resources to provide athletic trainers for all practices and matches for even the 27 varsity teams. Instead the department prioritizes their coverage based on the number and severity of injuries. It is clear to the Committee that rugby is a club sport that needs extensive coverage in the future. More generally, we urge the college to regularly review the policies relating to detection, treatment and monitoring of concussive and sub-concussive events, and to ensure that appropriate resources are allocated to this key safety concern.

11. Club and Intramural Sports

In addition to varsity competition, Amherst students can choose among a rich menu of club sports in which to participate and compete. Indeed, the number of students who participate in these sports is quite high. In 2014-15 approximately 390 students, nearly 22% of the student body, took part in sports ranging from archery to wrestling (Figure 6). That number has been rising rapidly over the past five years, from 245 in 2010-11 to an all-time high of 404 students in 2012-13. This increased interest in playing a club sport, which is a healthy addition to student life at Amherst, has put new pressure on the athletic department and its facilities.



Unlike varsity teams, club sports teams are overseen jointly by the student government and the Department of Athletics. In order to be recognized as a club sport a group needs to establish that there is an active cohort of students interested in the sport, and receive approval from the Student Activities Office and funding from the student government (AAS). The Department of Athletics assists with vetting coaches, who are identified and hired by the teams themselves. The Department also provides, in addition to medical assistance, hazing awareness training, and maintains rosters and schedules.

A number of Club sports have long-standing and dedicated coaches, and the students' commitments to these sports, which often are typically full varsity sports at peer schools (for example, crew and rugby), may mirror that of varsity sports. For those who wish to participate in athletics, but do not want to compete on club sports teams, there are intramural leagues in basketball, dodge ball, kickball, soccer, softball and volleyball in 2014-15. Approximately 323 Amherst students participated.

The scheduling of athletics facilities is reported to be challenging for out-of-season captains' practices, as well as for club and intramural sports. The fact that varsity teams are given preference for fields and courts, especially during their playing seasons, while logical, is a source of tension between varsity athletes and everyone else. These limitations also put pressure on less formal athletic activities – such as exercise programs, individual workouts and small-group casual games -- which are also important to the College community. While Amherst is fortunate to have generally attractive athletic facilities and fields, finding space for all those interested in engaging in athletics appears to present many challenges.

D. Conclusions and Recommendations

The 2002 Diver Report concluded that “Overall the Committee finds that Amherst operates an excellent and very successful varsity athletics program that provides substantial benefits not only to those who participate directly, but also to the College as a whole”. We agree with this assessment. In many respects Amherst’s athletic programs are among the most admired in the nation. From the student athletes’ perspective, Amherst affords them the opportunity to pursue their passion for their sport while obtaining a stellar liberal arts education, embodying the student/athlete ideal. Athletes succeed academically, and graduate with their classmates on time. They benefit from having a built-in community from the moment they arrive on campus, with upper class teammates to mentor them and coaches and athletic faculty fellows who are dedicated to their success and wellbeing. Overall athletes report a high degree of satisfaction with their Amherst education – both inside and outside the classroom - and remain loyal and generous to the College for years following graduation. There are very few colleges that can make such claims.

Much of the credit for the success of our athletic programs goes to the Department of Athletics, which has a long-established tradition of respecting the prime importance of academics at Amherst while seeking excellence both on and off the field. Indeed, at least one of the College’s most admired co-curricular programs, Amherst LEADs, started as an athletics program and has since been introduced across the campus. Likewise, we heard many examples of coaches demanding the highest standards of ethics and good conduct from their team members, and we met student athletes whose records were equally impressive on and off the field.

At the same time, some of the College’s success in athletics comes at a cost to the College and to her students, and leads us to ask, as the Diver Committee did in its report, “whether the costs bear a proper proportion to the benefits.”⁹ Below we discuss those costs, and offer possible remedies designed to tip the balance in the direction of the benefits of athletics to Amherst.

1. The Perceived Divide Between Athletes and Non-Athletes

Throughout this report we have highlighted the significant number of ways in which the experiences of athletes and non-athletes deviate from one another, which lead to a pervasive sense among students that there is a “divide” between the two groups. Male athletes in particular congregate in the social dorms, which furthers the sense among many students that athletes dominate a large sector of the social life of the College. Athletes stand out in part

⁹ Diver report, pg. 38

because they are, in general, less diverse than the student body as a whole, both ethnically and socioeconomically. They distribute across the academic departments in very different ways from their classmates. Some athletes are less likely to work closely with faculty in small classes or to write a senior thesis.

These differences between groups of Amherst students, based on their participation in varsity sports, would have less impact on the student body as a whole if athletes were a smaller percentage of the student body. Representing 35-38% of the student body, varsity athletes constitute the largest group of students as defined by extra-curricular interests, which means that the differences are highly visible and can become amplified in the minds of students and faculty alike. Moreover, there is a very real opportunity cost to the College in having such a large fraction of its student body engaged in a single pursuit - less breadth in the interests and passions that students bring to campus. At a time when Amherst is dedicated to improving the quality of student residential life, and to ensuring that students are able to take full educational benefit from the extraordinary diversity of its student body, addressing the perceived divide among the student body will be critical to achieving that goal.

The divide is an inevitable consequence of the number of varsity teams and their interest in being highly competitive within NESCAC and beyond. It follows that one way, albeit controversial, to reduce both the opportunity cost and the divide is to reduce the number of students participating in varsity athletics— by eliminating some sports, for example those that are chronically unsuccessful on the playing field, or problematic because of the frequency of injuries, or have difficulty attracting a roster of capable students inside the classroom or on the playing field, or contribute very little to engendering interest in or loyalty to the College.

Alternatively some team rosters may have become larger than is necessary for the team to be competitive, and could be reduced. That approach seems far preferable to reducing roster sizes across the board, which would threaten some teams' long-term competitiveness. For a college that is committed to excellence in everything it chooses to do, it would be difficult to argue that in this one respect – athletic achievement – it would be acceptable to underperform.

The Committee recommends that there should be no further increase in the number of varsity athletes or varsity teams, even if the Amherst College student body increases in the future. Further, we recommend that periodic reviews be conducted to ensure that varsity teams are viable and their roster sizes are necessary for the team's competitiveness.

At the same time the Committee believes that there are opportunities to identify and reduce differences in the experiences of athletes and non-athletes that seem most problematic, and most likely to contribute to the divide. This would involve, for example, limiting some of the more extreme clustering of athletes in certain dorms, and encouraging a broader intermingling in living spaces. We are also aware that the College is focused on creating additional social spaces and opportunities to promote a broader social menu for athletes and non-athletes alike. Student leaders on both sides of the “divide” need to take ownership of

these issues, and work together to build stronger connectivity and community among athletes and non-athletes. Many students with whom we met indicated a genuine enthusiasm for this undertaking.

We recommend that every effort be taken by administrators and student leaders to ensure that student living environments, and community activity more broadly, provide for good and healthy mixing of students of every interest.

Another step to reduce the appearance of a divide would be to increase the diversity among varsity athletes so that it more closely resembles that of the student body. There has been progress on this issue since the Diver Report, and the committee recognizes that it is not realistic to have every team reflect every dimension of diversity among the broader student body. With the College's strong reputation of attracting a talented and diverse student body, we would expect that Amherst can exploit this competitive advantage further in its athletic recruiting. We urge the Department of Athletics, coaches and the Admissions Office to explore more creatively opportunities to increase diversity among varsity athletes.

The committee recommends strongly that increasing the diversity of student athletes and the coaching staff should be a high priority for the athletic department and admissions office.

While the overall academic performance of varsity athletes at Amherst is generally comparable to that of the student body as a whole, we observed certain patterns that may suggest, at least on average, student athletes do not have the same academic experience as their non-athletic peers. The Committee did not have the time to explore the underlying causes of these differences. We can speculate on possible factors: the advice passed down each year by their upper class teammates to incoming freshmen; the scheduling of classes and laboratories that are incompatible with athletics; the scheduling of athletic contests that are incompatible with academic pursuits; varying levels of preparation for certain subjects among athletic-factor athletes; perceptions that there are differences in the receptiveness of faculty to athletes; or the work load of a particular course of study.

We would note that at least some of the solutions to many of these concerns do not rest entirely, and perhaps not even primarily, with the student athletes themselves. We urge the faculty and Department of Athletics to deepen the open and constructive dialogue that we have witnessed, and to reflect on ways to address these concerns. All Amherst students should feel that they are able to take full advantage of the curriculum, and opportunities to work closely with faculty.

The Committee recommends that the Faculty Education and Athletics Committee undertake a study to understand the underlying causes of the academic decisions that lead some student athletes to concentrate in a small number of departments and to suggest

remedies for any policies and practices that may discourage or deter student athletes from experiencing the full benefit of an Amherst education.

The Committee heard from student athletes that they occasionally encounter negative attitudes of faculty based on their participation in athletics, and some students believe they have been penalized by faculty for their athletic participation. The survey shows that this is not a pervasive problem at Amherst; at the same time, ideally this is a problem that should not exist at all. A powerful antidote to negative stereotyping of athletes is provided by the faculty athletic liaisons, who act as links between the teams and the faculty. The Committee met with a group of liaisons, some of whom are motivated by past experience as student athletes, some of whom are fans of specific sports, others who had no athletic propensity but simply wished to connect with a new group of students and even some who are looking to attract more students to their discipline. These faculty unanimously expressed respect and support for their student teams, and for the quality of the coaches, while recognizing that small conflicts (primarily relating to scheduling) inevitably arise. They also expressed great confidence in the potential of the student-athlete model to be realized at Amherst. These faculty serve a crucial role in bridging a potential divide between faculty and students, and providing wise advice and support to student athletes and coaches alike.

The Committee notes that the Faculty Liaisons Program is of significant benefit to Amherst College, and should be encouraged, supported and expanded.

2. Escalation in the Intensity of Athletic Competition

As early as 2002 the Diver report noted that Amherst is not immune to the national trend toward intensifying competitive pressures in collegiate athletics. That pressure has, if anything, increased in the last 15 years. Stories about scouting and recruiting students in middle school are becoming common¹⁰, and cheating scandals at academically highly regarded universities are no longer surprising¹¹. Happily we detect no evidence of either of these trends at Amherst.

With its membership in NESCAC, Amherst is buffered from the worst practices within the larger NCAA universe. NESCAC imposes far more stringent rules than the NCAA regarding recruitment of prospective students, admissions standards, the length of the playing season, the number of contests, the academic qualifications and the size of rosters, and the extent of post-season play. In one respect, however, Amherst is a victim of its own success. As our teams have become more and more successful within NESCAC, winning far more than our fair share of league championships, the ambition to go on to the NCAA Division III playoffs, and on occasion

¹⁰ http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/27/sports/committing-to-play-for-a-college-then-starting-9th-grade.html?_r=0

¹¹ Cheated: The UNC Scandal, the Education of Athletes, and the Future of Big-Time College Sports. JM Smith and M Willingham. Potomac Books (2015)

even win a national championship, becomes ever stronger. That entails competing against teams who play by very different non-NESCAC rules.

During its deliberations the Committee uncovered some evidence of intensification in the pursuit of athletics at Amherst. In particular, we noted a 12% expansion in the number of varsity athletes since the Diver Report without a change in the number of varsity teams due to the expansion of the roster sizes in lacrosse and track. At a time when a 10% increase in the size of the student body might have caused the proportion of varsity athletes on campus to decline, the proportion has actually grown slightly.

There are also signs that the athletic experience has become more intense, and requires a greater commitment of the athletes due to post-season play and out-of-season practices. The Committee documented a number of instances in which the number of contests played by a team has escalated since the Diver Report. These include baseball (~33 to ~41); men's lacrosse (~15 to ~21); and women's basketball (~25 to ~33). A significant fraction of the escalation is due to post-season play, which has created more class conflicts than in the past. We also note that both baseball and softball have significantly more contests, including mid-week games, than most other sports. As these are issues that must be resolved at the league-wide level:

The Committee recommends that the NESCAC Presidents pay particular attention to the impact of playing schedules, particularly post-season play and out-of-season practice on the academic experience of athletes.

No aspect of college athletics is more problematic or fraught, or more subject to escalation and abuse, than the issues surrounding recruiting. Once again we were pleased to detect no change in the rigorous and ethical rules that Amherst and NESCAC apply to this process. Schools typically compete fiercely amongst themselves according to rules set by the league, and they frequently compete for students with the Ivy League, the only other league that does not offer athletic scholarships. It must be recognized that the timing of the NESCAC-recruiting process, the absence of athletic scholarships, and the lack of timeliness in providing financial aid offers, result in the exclusion of a large number of potential athletic candidates from the Amherst admissions pool. We suspect this includes many candidates who would increase diversity.

3. The Safety of Amherst Athletes

The Committee commends President Martin for including an examination of injuries, especially concussions, in our charge. In the 15 years since the Diver Report it has become increasingly evident that students who play contact sports such as hockey, lacrosse and football may incur injuries to their brains from both frank concussions as well as repeated sub-concussive hits, often with consequences not evident until midlife.

Given the absence of comprehensive research on the nature and long-term consequences of concussions and sub-concussive injuries, the Committee recommends that Amherst convene a panel of medical experts to develop best practices in this critical area of student health and wellness.

At Amherst football is of the greatest concern, with annual *reported* concussions and sub-concussive reports increasing from 1 and 2 (in 2006-7 and 2007-8, respectively) to 12 in 2012-13, with an average of 6 per year. This spring the Ivy League announced that it was limiting the number of full pad/contact practices during football season, enhancing education of students on the risks of repetitive brain trauma, and instituting more stringent post-game review of helmet-to-helmet hits¹². We encourage the NESCAC presidents to adopt similar practices.

In exploring the rationale behind the growth in the men's and women's lacrosse rosters, we learned that it was largely driven by injuries to players. The Committee feels that the response to increased injuries is to understand and ameliorate the nature of the problem, not to increase the size of the roster.

A third sport of considerable concern for Amherst is men's and women's rugby, a popular club sport. In the 2014-15 season, 6 males and 2 females reported a concussive or sub-concussive injury, continuing a worrisome trend in which both men and women were reporting between 1 and 7 injuries per season. As a club sport rugby attracts students who have never played the sport, and freshmen are often the most injury prone as they are learning the game. A recent report by a group of health experts in the United Kingdom called for a ban on tackling by teenagers in rugby, based on the kinds of injuries that occur in the sport¹³.

The College must apply the same safety standards to Club sports as Varsity sports. Given the risks of injury in rugby, the Committee recommends that either additional resources be directed to providing the rugby teams with trainers and coaches who are attuned to the risk of injury by inexperienced athletes, or the sport be discontinued.

4. The Oversight of Club Sports

Club sports provide opportunities for students to pursue competitive athletics in sports outside the 27 varsity sports, such as badminton, crew, fencing, wrestling, Ultimate Frisbee and rugby. Many of these sports are among the oldest at the College; others reflect more recent popularity among students. Because of its popularity with students, men's and women's club soccer teams have been added to the list in recent years as well. The number of students who

¹² http://www.ivyleaguesports.com/sports/fball/2011-12/releases/ivy_league_presidents_approve_concussion-curbing_measures_for_football

¹³ <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/mar/02/uk-health-experts-call-for-ban-on-tackling-in-school-rugby>

participate in club sports has steadily risen in the last decade, with 388 players involved in 2014-15, with very little overlap with varsity team members. Some of these students pursue their sport with the same level of intensity as varsity athletes, and thus contribute to the size of the population of students at Amherst who view athletics as a primary activity outside the classroom.

We heard from students and coaches alike that the joint oversight of club sports by the AAS and the Department of Athletics is not working as smoothly as it could, and does not meet the needs of these sports. The Committee applauds the student-initiated and student-governed nature of club sports, which give students opportunities to have ownership and assume leadership in the organization and management of their teams. This also ensures that the club sports that are supported by the College are those that have significant student interest. On the other hand, club sports incur potential risks for the College, including travel off campus to matches, injuries to players and compensation and performance of coaches. The Department of Athletics is eager to work with student groups in order to reduce these risks to both students and the College, but the Committee heard numerous times that the coordination between the AAS, club sports leaders and the Department is uneven, and needs improvement. The lack of communication at times makes scheduling practice and playing fields problematic, and the vetting of coaches and negotiating their contracts is not uniformly managed.

We note that many Club sports have coaches with a long history at Amherst, while others seem to have difficulty maintaining these roles (still others have no coach at all). There may be useful lessons for the broader Club sports program from some of these successful relationships.

The Committee recommends that the processes for governance of club sports be reviewed by the Department of Athletics and the Dean of Students with the goal of ensuring that oversight by the College and the club sports coaching staff is consistent with the potential risks to both student athletes and the College.

5. Athletic Facilities

No visitor to the Amherst campus can fail to be impressed with the quality and beauty of our athletic fields and field houses. However, an unintended consequence of Amherst's success in supporting popular varsity, club and intramural sports programs is the chronic and fierce competition for practice and playing time. It is understandable that varsity teams in season are given first priority, which can add resentment to the athlete/non-athlete divide, but that often leave club sports, intramural teams and captains' practices of varsity teams out of season scrambling for space to practice and play. A further concern, acknowledged by the Department of Athletics itself, is the strain these sports put on certain facilities which are intended to be used by the larger student body as well, for personal exercise, group classes, informal sports activities and general athletic leisure use. This Committee did not undertake an analysis of this problem, nor are we in the position to make a recommendation about the need

for expansion or rescheduling of current facilities, except to note the concerns from students, coaches and athletic administrators.

We recommend that the College undertake an assessment of the current and future use of our athletic facilities, to ascertain whether they are being optimally and fairly utilized by the campus community, and to identify additional facilities that may be needed in the future.

Appendix A

The Special Committee on the Place of Athletics at Amherst

Patrick L. Williamson, Edward H. Harkness Professor of Biology (Co-chair)
Shirley M. Tilghman, Trustee and Professor of Molecular Biology and Public Affairs, Princeton University (Co-chair)
Ryan M. Arnold '15 (until June 2015)
Carlos de Bracamonte '16 (since April 2015)
Mercedes MacAlpine '16 (since April 2015)
Gregory S. Call, Peter R. Pouncey Professor of Mathematics
Andrew J. Nussbaum '85, Trustee and Partner, Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen and Katz
Monica M. Ringer, Associate Professor of History and Asian Languages and Civilization
Justin Serpone, Men's Soccer Coach
Christopher M. Tamasi '15 (until June 2015)
Alex Vasquez, Dean of Students

Dianne Piermattei, Secretary to the Committee

Appendix B

AMHERST COLLEGE
The Special Committee on the Place of Athletics at Amherst
Committee Charge

The Special Committee on the Place of Athletics at Amherst will weigh over the next academic year the extent to which our athletic programs are consistent with the overall purposes of the College. The ideal at Amherst is that our athletic teams and indeed all of our extracurricular activities should enhance the intellectual and social experience of our diverse student body. How well do they perform this complex function?

To answer this question the committee should scrutinize the experience of all students, but especially those participating in varsity and club athletics at the College. What are the advantages and disadvantages of such participation for our students? Do they vary according to the backgrounds and interests of students at Amherst today? Does participation in either varsity or club athletics foster intellectual and social life at the College? Does participation foster our diversity? Do the athletes at Amherst thrive as much as the non-athletes?

Do the varsity teams play a different role from the club teams or from other extracurricular activities such as the student radio or newspaper? How much time do the various forms of athletic practice and preparation require of undergraduate participants? Has the time commitment expanded significantly over the last 20 or 30 years with special attention paid to the period since the Diver report? Has it taken away from the time devoted to study and classroom attendance? As a small college, Amherst has an active roster of varsity and club sports: Is the number of such teams appropriate for a college of Amherst's size and ambition? Would a smaller number ease the tensions between academic promise and extracurricular talent in admissions? Has Amherst done enough in striving for equity between the sexes in the club and varsity sports we now offer? How should Amherst address the emerging scientific understanding about the long-term health risks of concussion? Has the College worked effectively to mitigate the danger posed to student-athletes by concussions? How does Amherst's approach to this issue and the policies that the College has put in place compare with those of peer institutions?

The role of coaches at the College has evolved over the last decades, often in response to forces in our larger culture and in our athletic conference. To what extent and in what ways has this evolution affected the place of sports in undergraduate life? To what extent has it affected the relationships between the coaches and their colleagues on the Faculty and in the administration? Are there reforms that might improve the relationship between coaching and the many other roles on campus that contribute to teaching and learning?

Amherst's athletic conference, the New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC), brings together eleven colleges and universities in the northeast. Its rules provide for competition under the more general rubric of Division III of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Is NESCAC or the NCAA itself a desirable and helpful venue for our varsity competitions, particularly with our historic rivals such as Williams or Wesleyan?

Appendix C

Special Committee on the Place of Athletics at Amherst Meeting Schedule

January 22, 2015

Don Faulstick, Director of Athletics

March 26, 2015

Don Faulstick, Director of Athletics

Gregg DiNardo, Assistant Director of Athletics

Cassie Funke-Harris, Head Coach (Women's Cross Country and Track and Field)

Jen Hughes, Head Coach (Women's Soccer)

Jessica Johnson, Head Coach (Women's Softball)

Mark Klingensmith, Associate Athletic Trainer

Carol Kneer, Head Coach (Field Hockey)

EJ Mills, Head Coach (Football)

Nick Nichols, Head Coach (Swimming)

Cate Zolkos, Dean of Admission

May 21, 2015

Buffy Aries, Clarence Francis 1910 Professor in Social Sciences (Psychology)

Don Faulstick, Director of Athletics

Catherine Sanderson, Manwell Family Professor of Life Sciences (Psychology)

Austin Sarat, William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Jurisprudence and Political Science

October 15, 2015

Louise Atadja '16 (Track, Neuroscience)

Yeva Berkovich '18 (Sociology)

Charlotte Chudy '16 (Swimming, English and European Studies)

Christopher Gow '16 (Football, Mathematics and Religion)

Eileen Harris '16 (Ice Hockey, Economics)

Mohamed Hussein '18 (Cross Country & Track, Undeclared)

Rashid Kosber '17 (Economics/Chemistry)

Nico Pascual-Leone '16 (Soccer, Chemistry)

Chris Roll '17 (Ice Hockey, English and Psychology)

Savannah Sutherlin '18 (undeclared)

Frank Tavares '18 (English)

George Ward '17 (Lacrosse, Economics, Political Science)

Sydney Watts '17 (Field Hockey, Psychology)

January 11, 2016

Rhonda Cobham-Sander, Emily C. Jordan Folger Professor of Black Studies and English

Steve George, Manwell Family Professor of Life Sciences, Emeritus (Biology and Neuroscience)

Lawrence Douglas, James J. Grosfeld Professor of Law, Jurisprudence and Social Thought

Molly Mead, Senior Advisor to the Dean of the Faculty

Joe Moore, Professor of Philosophy

Matthew Schulkind, Professor of Psychology

Sarah Turgeon, Professor of Psychology

Vanessa Walker, Joseph W. and Diane Zerbib Assistant Professor of History

Frank Westhoff, Professor of Economics

March 31, 2016

Committee Meeting