

**Senate Athletics Committee Meeting**  
**December 12, 2008**

**Members:**

**Present**

X	Timothy Averch
X	David Brienza
X	Jean Ann Croft
X	Lou Fabian, Chair
X	Donna Nativio
X	Jamie Pardini
X	Leonard Plotnicov
	Patrick Smolinski
X	Dennis Swanson

**Staff Association**

**Member:**

Carol Hodgkiss

**Pro-Tem Members:**

X	Dan Bartholomae
X	Toby Chapman
X	Tony Eichelberger
	Nat Hershey
X	Jay Irrgang, Vice Chair
	Don Martin
	Kevin McLaughlin
X	Ken Metz
X	Donna Sanft

**Chancellor's Liaison**

**Appointments:**

X	Susan Albrecht
	Robert Pack
X	Steve Pederson

**Senate Liaison**

**Appointments:**

John Baker  
Lisa Bernardo  
Lori Molinaro

**Student Members:**

Rosey Natale  
Chris Wermerson  
Jimmy Priestas

Chair Lou Fabian welcomed the group to the final meeting of the Fall 2008 term and requested approval on the November 14<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes. After the meeting minutes were unanimously approved, Lou announced that the rest of the meeting would be

dedicated to a presentation by Athletic Director Steve Pederson. Lou then turned the meeting over to Steve.

### **Athletic Department Review – Athletic Director Steve Pederson**

Steve began his presentation by noting that instead of the regular update on Fall sport seasons, he would instead present to the group an review of the past twelve years in University of Pittsburgh Panther athletics.

Steve emphasized that the theme of the Athletic Department is “Only Big Dreams”, and noted the department’s mission to develop the best overall athletic program in the Big East Conference with an attitude that reflects the values of our University, the City of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania. Within the athletic department’s mission is a philosophy that while athletics is not the most important function on campus, it is important to the University’s mission, and therefore is an important part of the University community. Also within our mission is the goal to win, but not at the cost of integrity and ethical decision making.

Steve noted that dramatic change in facilities over the past twelve years. The Petersen Events Center is not only the best basketball facility in the country, but it also has become a center for campus student life. Heinz Field is one of the best football facilities in the country, and was host to the largest attended BIG EAST Conference football game of 2008 (Pitt vs. WVU). The Fitzgerald Field House has seen new and improved locker rooms, as well as the 2008 renovations which added new blue back seating and a new floor to the facility. Gymnastics has moved from the old “cage” to a state of the art facility in Trees Hall, while the competition equipment for meets in the Field House has improved. Toby Chapman noted that we used to have to borrow a floor from WVU just to have home meets. Trees Pool recently was renovated to improve the quality of the pool and swimming facility. The renovation will drive the University’s goal to host the BIG EAST Swimming Championships. Additionally, a space for a softball field was added to Trees Field when Softball was added as a varsity sport. Steve noted that all of this was done without a large debt service and was done in a fiscally responsible manner.

Steve also noted the athletic excellence we experienced over the past twelve years. Men’s Basketball has renewed its tradition of excellence, going 132-40 in the Jamie Dixon era. Agnus Berenato has sparked a resurgence in the Women’s Basketball program, going 70-31 during her tenure, taking Pitt to its first NCAA tournament berth, and receiving national exposure with a Sports Illustrated cover in 2008. Football regained its status as a premier BIG EAST program, going 9-3, winning five contests on the road and earning a bid to the Sun Bowl in El Paso, TX. As of December, Pitt was one of four institutions to have all three of these programs ranked in the top 25. This athletic success has carried over to other programs as well, with Wrestling crowning an NCAA Champion in 2008 (Keith Gavin), Men and Women’s Track and Men and Women’s Swimming being among the most competitive programs in the BIG EAST. The hiring of new Volleyball Coach Toby Rens led to a successful BIG EAST season and an upset of

2<sup>nd</sup> seeded Cincinnati in the BIG EAST Championships. Baseball also remains among the more competitive programs in the BIG EAST.

In addition to the excellence in our athletic programs, Steve noted that the Band and Cheer programs serve as a significant source of pride for our athletic program.

The academic success of Pitt student-athletes has also been a source of pride for the University, as several students are named BIG EAST academic all-stars on a yearly basis. In addition, the Graduation Success Rate and Graduation rates continue an upward trend, as does the NCAA APR. Most recently, diver Jeremy Stultz was named the 2007-08 BIG EAST Scholar-Athlete of the Year. Student Life has also seen a dramatic improvement in addition to the academic success of our student-athletes. Thanks to the efforts of Executive Associate Athletic Director Donna Sanft, the Panther Game Plan has grown to one of the best life skills programs in the country and has its own facility with the construction of the Hearst Life Skills Resource Center. Each year for the past four years, Pitt student-athletes have contributed more than 3000 hours of community service and in 2006 Tyler Palko was named a Coca-Cola Community All-American.

Attendance remains one of the most important focus points of Pitt athletics. Within attendance, the mission is to create an atmosphere that engages both the student and local community. The student involvement in Men and Women's Basketball has made the Petersen Events Center one of the most exciting basketball venues in the country, while football had 42,000 season ticket holders in 2008. Student football tickets increased 100% in 2008 as well. In addition to attendance, development figures have increased dramatically as well, with our annual fund increasing to 7 million in 2007-08.

In conclusion, Steve told the story of former Pitt football student-athlete Ryan Smith, who had come to Pitt from Roxborough High School in Philadelphia, and was able to seize his opportunities at Pitt by achieving a degree and participating in a study abroad program. After graduation, Ryan participated in the Peace Corps and travelled to Tonga, and has now returned to teach high school in the area where he grew up. Steve noted that stories like these propel his message to recruits that if they attend Pitt, the opportunities of a lifetime will be there for those who wish to take advantage of them.

Chair Lou Fabian asked Steve to update the group on the Robinson Court construction project. Steve stated that the land acquisition phase was complete, and the University was in the competitive bid process for the site work. The University is not sure of the start date of the site work.

Lou then concluded the meeting and stated that Dan Bartholomae would be attempting to schedule the Spring 2009 meetings.

The meeting was adjourned.

