

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
AMHERST•BOSTON•DARTMOUTH•LOWELL•MEDICAL•LAW**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ATHLETICS COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, April 8, 2025; 11:00 a.m.

Remote Meeting via Zoom

**Pursuant to Sections 20 and 30A of Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021,
as most recently amended by Section 1 of Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025,
as signed by the Governor on March 28, 2025**

Committee Members Present: Chair Brunelle; Vice Chair Burns (UMass Board); Trustees Delgado, Matias, Raymond and Sullivan

Other Trustees Present: Trustee Oliveira

Committee Members Absent: Maguire Keches

University Administration: President Meehan; General Counsel Lowy; Senior Vice President Calise and Walker; Chancellors Reyes, Suárez-Orozco, Fuller and Chen; Athletics Directors Bamford, Schuman, Hendricks and Coutts (joined at 11:20 a.m.)

Faculty Representatives: Professor Marchand, UMass Lowell

Documents Used:

- Meeting Minutes: September 16, 2024 (Open & Executive Session)

Chair Brunelle convened the meeting at 11:04 a.m. and announced that the open session portion of this meeting will be audio and video recorded by a member of the media.

He stated that the Committee continues to meet remotely pursuant to Sections 20 and 30A of Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, as most recently amended by Section 1 of Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025, as signed by the Governor on March 28, 2025. Any member of the public wishing to address the Committee regarding an agenda item or issue related to the agenda, or to make an audio or video recording of the open public session of the Committee meeting, was provided notice by the Secretary of the Board through a posting indicating that such written requests needed to be received no later than 24 hours prior to the meeting.

Consideration of Minutes of the Prior Meeting of the Committee

Chair Brunelle stated that the Committee received a copy of the meeting minutes from the September 16, 2024 open and executive sessions. He stated that if there were no comments or corrections, the minutes were approved.

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Pursuant to Mass General Laws Chapter 30A and under the Office of The MA Attorney General, Open Meeting Law Guide and Educational Materials, General Counsel Lowy, under the delegation of the UMass Board of Trustees, has determined that the Executive Session minutes will not be released at this time, and should remain confidential because publication would defeat the lawful purposes of the executive session.

Chair's Report

Chair Brunelle welcomed new Trustee Juana Matias to the Committee, as well as Athletics Directors, Ryan Bamford, Jacqui Schuman, Lori Hendricks, and Lynn Coutts. He also thanked Board of Trustees Chairman Steve Karam for supporting the reinstitution of the Committee, noting its purpose is to make sure that Trustees are well-informed about the complex circumstances facing collegiate athletics across the country; including Title IX, Name-Image-Likeness (NIL), conference affiliations, and most recently the NCAA litigation. There was a hearing on the *NCAA v. House* proposed settlement yesterday, and while there was not a ruling on the settlement at this time, he knows that the University will respond appropriately when the time comes.

President's Report

President Meehan echoed Chair Brunelle's welcome to Trustee Juana Matias. He thanked the Committee and the Athletics Directors for their ongoing commitment, stating that these meetings provide an important platform to celebrate student-athlete success and address critical issues in collegiate athletics.

President Meehan noted highlights from across the University. UMass Amherst saw historic national finishes in men's soccer, field hockey, and men's ice hockey, alongside a record-high 90% graduation success rate for athletes; UMass Boston completed an \$8M renovation of the Clark Athletics Center and celebrated Aryianna Garceau's national title in the 60-meter hurdles; UMass Dartmouth saw women's basketball win its first-ever conference title, while volleyball and football repeated as champions; and UMass Lowell's student-athletes continue to excel academically, with 85% maintaining a GPA over 3.0 and multiple all-conference and all-academic honors.

Information Items:

Athletics Update, UMass Boston

Athletics Director Schuman highlighted how developments in Division I (DI) are trickling down and influencing Division III (DIII) programs. While NIL is not a current primary focus in DIII, it is becoming increasingly relevant. Student-athletes and coaches are aware of broader trends and want to remain competitive. She emphasized that many student-athletes come from diverse backgrounds, and NIL opportunities, if implemented carefully, could provide a competitive edge. However, this is complicated by financial aid regulations because DIII athletes are not on athletic scholarships and NIL earnings could potentially affect their aid packages. There is also growing interest from student-athletes in personal brand development, which creates pressure to allow NIL participation. Compliance becomes more complex when student-athletes appear in advertisements involving University branding and we must navigate legal and regulatory constraints while enabling student-athletes to enhance their collegiate experience.

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Athletics Director Schuman discussed the impacts of the transfer portal. There are some positive impacts, particularly from DI athletes who are seeking playing opportunities. However, she raised concerns about the impact on the four-year experience, financial aid, and academic continuity, especially given the potential for roster limits. Hockey, which does not have a DII opportunity, may provide an increase in DI transfers, which would create new opportunities.

She also discussed enrollment and revenue generation. In Division III, athletics are a driver of enrollment, yet also a cost center. Finding revenue through media rights and partnerships is essential. UMass Boston now has an agreement with FloSports which allows people to watch games, but the paywall has sparked backlash. Chair Brunelle inquired about media accessibility for families, questioning if passcodes were offered to allow supporters to view games. Athletics Director Schuman confirmed that FloSports recently implemented this approach, and she is monitoring the feedback.

Trustee Sullivan thanked Athletics Director Schuman for her insights and raised a concern about maintaining the “student” aspect in student-athlete within the NIL context. She acknowledged the concern but noted that UMass Boston student-athletes are successfully managing many responsibilities between academic, athletics, family and work responsibilities; the student aspect is very present.

Athletics Update, UMass Dartmouth

Athletics Director Hendricks highlighted the exceptional athletic talent and how athletics has become a vital part of both the enrollment strategy and student development. She discussed the positive impact of the transfer portal, particularly in sports like hockey, which lacks a DII tier and creates an opportunity for DIII programs to welcome athletes seeking more playing time. She emphasized the need for a clause in the event that roster limits are introduced, so that current student-athletes are not adversely affected by policy changes after they have committed.

Athletics Director Hendricks spoke about the shifting expectations among DIII student-athletes, who increasingly want to be celebrated and supported in ways that mirror the DI experience – championship rings, professional highlight videos, modern training facilities, and a visible culture of recognition and pride. She shared the story of Dante Aviles-Santos, a standout football player from UMass Dartmouth who was named New England’s most outstanding football player across all divisions, which underscores the caliber of talent in DIII.

She also discussed how UMass Dartmouth built creative partnerships and is leveraging existing resources to enhance the student-athlete experience without the financial burdens associated with DI budgets.

Trustee Delgado inquired about the team experience being diminished by frequent transfers, and the long-term impact of alumni connections and institutional loyalty. Athletics Director Hendricks shared that coaches are approached by students who want to transfer after a standout season, so the focus needs to be on building community where they are and academic continuity to retain them. There are also logistical and financial challenges of transferring, particularly in the STEM fields with rigid curriculums.

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Chair Brunelle voiced concerns about the transfer portal, where athletes are recruited but later told they won't play. Athletics Director Hendricks responded that this may be the case for DI and DII but was not her experience in DIII.

Chair Brunelle wished everyone success in the spring season and announced that the next meeting will include representatives from UMass Amherst and UMass Lowell.

Executive Session Announcement

Chair Brunelle asked for a roll call vote to enter into Executive Session to comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law necessitating confidentiality, as permitted under Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 30A, Section 21(a), Purpose 7, and Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 4, Section 7, Clause 26, subclauses (d) and (u), since public disclosure in an open meeting would compromise the purposes for which the executive session is being called and have a detrimental effect on the University.

Chair Brunelle stated that the meeting would not reconvene in open session and asked for a motion. It was moved by Trustee Sullivan and seconded by Vice Chair Burns (UMass Board).

The Secretary called the roll. Chair Brunelle voted for the motion as did Vice Chair Burns (UMass Board); Trustees Delgado, Matias and Sullivan.

The time was 11:48 a.m.

Chelsey L. Burke
Assistant Secretary to the Board