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To: Members of the Faculty Senate
From: Clay Stoldt, Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR)
Kevin Saal, Director of Athletics (AD)
Date: April 2, 2024
Re: Annual Update from FAR and AD

Please accept this brief in fulfillment of the annual reporting requirement for the Faculty Athletics Representative to the Faculty Senate. As has become custom for such reports to key university stakeholders, FAR Stoldt and AD Saal collaborated on this update. In the following sections, we provide brief updates regarding the academic success of our student-athletes, the latest progress toward the full activation of the recommendations in the Athletics Policy and Culture Task Force report, and assessment and improvement of overall student-athlete experiences.

Academic Success of Student-Athletes

This has been a record-setting year regarding the academic success of our student-athletes. When AD Saal arrived in 2022, he and Athletics leadership established five-year strategic objectives (see Appendix A) pertaining to academic performance, community engagement, and competitive success. The stretch goal for academic success was to in 1 of the next 10 semesters, and for the first time ever in Shocker Athletics, attain a department-wide semester GPA of 3.40. Our student-athletes attained that lofty goal in the Spring 2023 semester, securing a 3.406 GPA. That all-time high did not last long however, because in the Fall 2023 semester, our student-athletes achieved a remarkable 3.450 GPA. Equally impressive, and again for the first time, every team in the department secured a 3.0 or better semester GPA. Three teams—Baseball, Men’s Basketball, and Women’s Tennis—attained their highest semester GPA (see Appendix B).

The department is also performing well on other key indicators relating to the academic success of our student-athletics. The department sustained its qualification for NCAA Academic Enhancement Funds¹ (AEF) by meeting two of the association’s three possible eligibility criteria. The department’s overall Academic Progress Rate² (APR) of 988.3 exceeded the association’s AEF benchmark of 985. And all teams in the department exceeded the NCAA’s minimum APR requirement of 930. Further, the department attained a Graduation Success Rate³ of 90% in 2022-23 for the second time in three years.

¹ The [NCAA Academic Enhancement Fund](#) financially supports athletic academic services at qualifying NCAA Division I institutions.

² The [Division I APR](#) is an annual team and program-based score based on student-athlete eligibility and retention for each academic term.

³ The [Graduation Success Rate](#) is a NCAA-created success score that accounts for unique aspects of the college athletics environment, such as transfers.

Activation of Recommendations from Athletics Policy and Culture Task Force

Progress continued this year in fully enacting the 41 recommendations stipulated in the 2021 Athletics Policy and Culture (APC) Task Force. As you may recall, in our Spring 2023 update to the Faculty Senate, we reported that 37 of the recommendations had been substantially completed. As of this report date, 39 have been enacted with good progress being made on the other two recommendations. We will provide additional details about our work in 2023-24 in our next report to the Senate in Fall 2024.

For now, we'd like to highlight one particularly important advancement regarding the recommendation about expanding outcomes-oriented, holistic student-athlete development. The Department of Sport Management, in collaboration with Athletics leadership, has proposed and received approval for a new First-Year Seminar (FYS), titled The Shocker Way, which will launch in the fall semester. In addition to meeting the general education and student success outcomes applicable to all FYSs, the Shocker Way will integrate course content specific to the priority developmental areas specified in the APC Task Force report, including Athletics reporting processes, leadership development, inclusive excellence, and student-athlete mental health.

Given the proliferation of new challenges and opportunities that are part of the evolving student-athlete experience, the Shocker Way FYS will be a critical resource in support of our incoming, first-year student-athletes. And looking ahead, we are committed to keep living the APC Task Force's work and allow for natural adaptation to the student-athlete development service framework.

Assessment and Improvement of Student-Athlete Experiences

WSU Athletics has developed a comprehensive, outcomes-based quality assurance/continuous improvement system. As it pertains to student-athlete experiences, several sources of feedback inform assessment and decision-making. They include (1) continuous student-athlete communication via the Real Response reporting application, (2) student-athlete program surveys administered twice per year, (3) survey and exit interview feedback from student-athletes departing via the transfer portal, and (4) exit survey and interview data secured from student-athletes who are completing their eligibility. While each of these sources provide critical information, the program surveys have been particularly valuable in measuring student-athlete perceptions, comparing them with a national peer group, and tracking changes over time.

The Fall 2023 semester program survey offered strong evidence that student-athletes are enjoying successful experiences and perceive high levels of support (see Appendix C). These findings are particularly notable in light of comparisons on identical survey items with a national peer group of approximately 100 NCAA Division I programs, 40% of which are programs in "Power 5" conferences. Overall, WSU student-athletes rated their experiences at a 4.3 on a scale of 0 (worst)-5 (best). The comparative national benchmark is a 4.1. Other survey results highlights:

- WSU student-athletes reported satisfaction scores of 4.0 or better (0-5 scale) on all but four items.
- WSU student-athletes indicated higher levels of satisfaction than the national benchmark in 33 of 40 categories (three of the remaining seven items were even with the national score).



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- Student-athlete overall ratings of head coaches and position coaches exceeded the national average, thus indicating a high-quality staff both in terms of coaching skill but also commitment to student-athlete well-being.
- Student-athlete evaluations in the areas of Athletic Training and Mental Health Resources improved from trailing the national average in 2022-23 to exceeding it in Fall 2023.

We have shared these survey results with our Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and sought their feedback specifically regarding the items with lower scores. We are collaboratively working to identify actions that will improve experiences in those areas and anticipating additional actions necessary to ensure high levels of student-athlete satisfaction.

Please let us know if you have questions, concerns, or comments about anything shared in this report. You can reach us ksaal@goshockers.com and clay.stoldt@wichita.edu. Going forward, and as per our correspondence with Senate President Jolynn Dowling, we look forward to bringing an in-person update to the Faculty Senate next fall. Until then, thank you for your sustained support of our student-athletes and your engagement with Athletics leadership to ensure our student-athletes have transformative experiences at Wichita State.



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Appendix A - The Shocker Way: Five-Year Strategic Objectives

WICHITA STATE ATHLETICS
FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

ACADEMIC:
3.00 3.30 3.40
10 OF 10 SEMESTERS *GPA* 5 OF 10 SEMESTERS *GPA* 1 OF 10 SEMESTERS *GPA*

COMMUNITY:
1000
COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS ANNUALLY BY THE ATHLETIC DEPT. STAFF AND STUDENT-ATHLETES

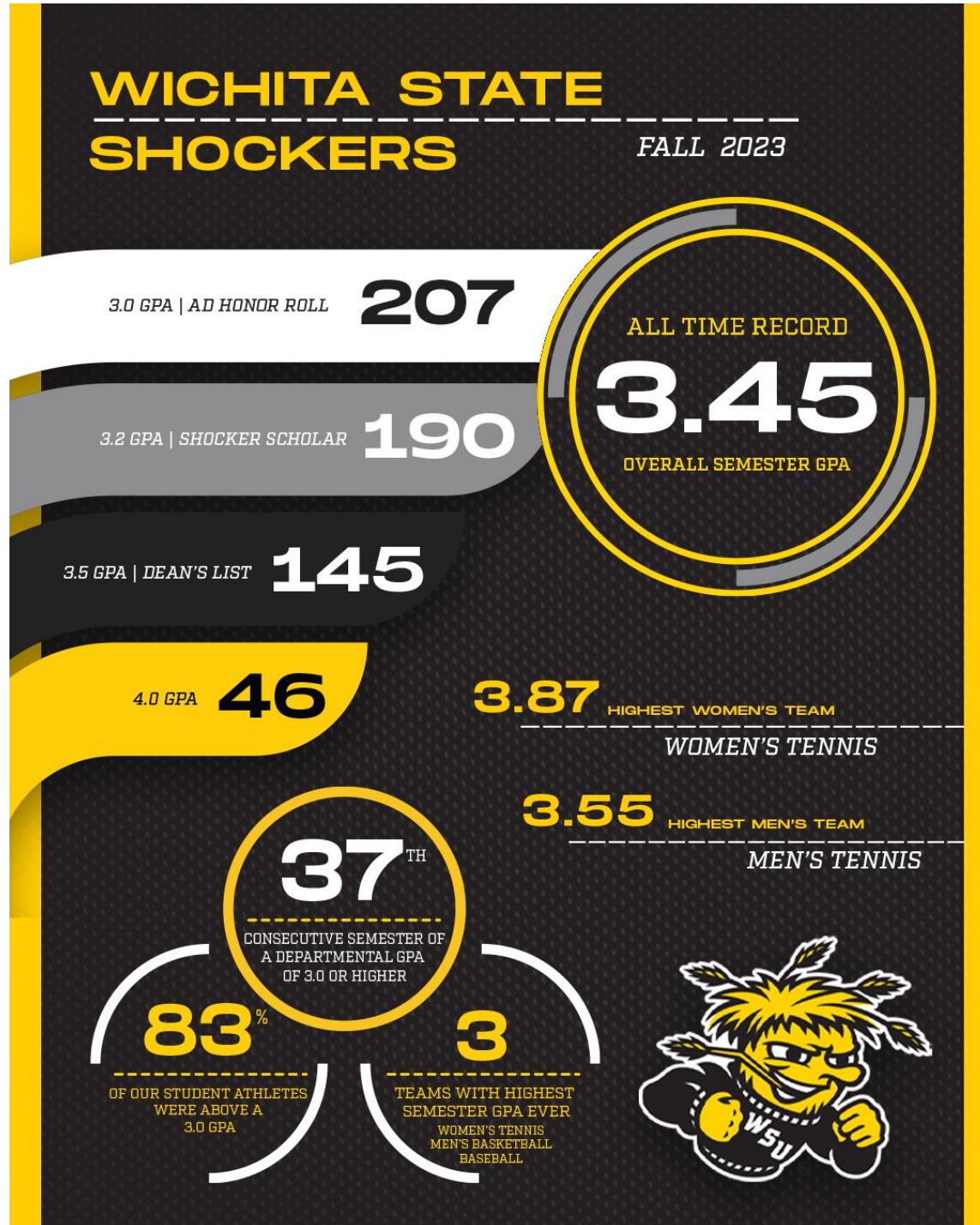
COMPETITIVE:
15 2
AMERICAN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHIPS NACDA/LEARFIELD TOP-100 FINISHES

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Appendix B – Fall 2023 Academic Success of Student-Athletes





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Appendix C – Student-Athlete Experience and Success Highlights

