Recommendation to Modify the Athletic Admission process

While the working group has not finished its work, we have reached consensus on a proposed modification to the athletic admission process. It is designed to streamline the process without affecting the outcome.

This proposal has the unanimous support of the members of the working group and the current faculty readers of athletic application. The membership of both groups is listed at the end of this document.

Relevant aspects of the present process:

1. The Director of Admission or designee (DA in the rest of this document; Eric Heineman in the past few years and Keith Todd now) receives athletic admission applications from the Athletic Department.

2. The DA classifies each application as Phase 1, 2, or 3, depending on the applicant’s SAT/ACT/PSAT scores, # of solid courses competed in high school, GPA in those courses, and class rank. The Phase definitions are given below. Phase 1 identifies the most qualified applicants.

3. Three faculty readers for athletic applications (currently George Bennett, John Boles, and Dale Sawyer) are called to come to the Admissions office to read applications.

4. Each faculty reader reads each application (regardless of Phase), makes a recommendation to accept or reject, and may leave additional comments for the DA.

5. After the 3 faculty readers have given their opinion, the DA makes the admission decision.

Faculty issues with this process:

1. The 3 faculty readers are frequently called, at short notice, to come read one or a few “emergency” applications. They view this as an inefficient use of their time. They would prefer to read larger batches of applications, and to be able to do it at a time of their choosing.

2. Most of the applications receive 3 recommendations to “accept.” This happens because the DA and the athletic department cooperate to prevent many clearly unacceptable applications from being presented. The faculty readers would rather use their time on the applications that are at the bottom of the range.
Athletic Department issues with the process:

1. Coaches face great competition for true student-athletes. These are the students that both the Rice Athletic Department and the faculty seek. It is often critical that they be able to make an admission offer quickly when they have the opportunity to recruit a strong student athlete to Rice. They would like the process of making admission decisions to be quick. Having the applications read by 3 faculty readers is often a bottleneck in the process.

The working group recommends that the process be changed as follows:

1. Phase 1 applications would not need to be read by the faculty readers before the DA makes the admission decision.

2. All Phase 2 and Phase 3 applications will still be read by the faculty readers prior to the DA making the admission decision.

3. For any Phase 1 application, the DA may choose to seek recommendations or advice from the faculty readers before making the admission decision.

4. All Phase 1 applications will be read by the 3 faculty readers after the admission decision and at their convenience.

5. The three faculty readers, the DA, and the Chair of the Faculty Committee on Admissions will meet at the end of the academic year to discuss all aspects of the athletic admission process and provide a short written report to the President, VP for Enrollment, Athletic Director, and the Speaker of the Faculty Senate.

6. Annually, the Chair of the Faculty Committee on Admissions will present a report on athletic admissions at a Fall semester Faculty Senate meeting.

The proposed process helps the faculty readers:

1. Most of the applications can be read in bunches at the convenience of the faculty readers.

2. Faculty readers will focus their time and effort on the Phase 2 and 3 applications.

The proposed process helps the athletic department:

1. Coaches can get a quicker turn around on applications that are Phase 1. This makes it more likely that they will be successful in recruiting the best student athletes.

2. The quicker turnaround for Phase 1 applications provides an incentive to coaches to recruit students with strong academic backgrounds.
The proposed process helps the Enrollment Division:

1. Many athletic admission decisions are streamlined.

We assert that this change will neither diminish the academic quality of admitted student athletes, nor reduce the faculty oversight on the athletic admission process.

1. With the possible exception of some foreign applications, the definitions of Phases 1, 2, and 3 seem objective. The DA will have the final say in the Phase assignment to each application.

2. There is no change in the process for Phase 2 and 3 applications.

3. We have built a database that allows us to look at the likely affects of this change on Phase 1 applications.

The database includes matriculated student athletes from 2000 to 2006. For each student, we have the basic data relevant to their admission and their academic record. The database is not perfect. It has some data gaps, and despite our efforts it has some errors. However, we believe it to be representative.

There are 245 students in the database that meet the Phase 1 qualifications and for whom the faculty recommendation vote to accept or reject is recorded. Of these, a majority of the three faculty readers recommended acceptance for 244 applicants with 217 of these positive votes unanimous. In only one case was the vote to reject (2-1) and there were no unanimous negative votes.

Note: This student was admitted by the DA over the faculty recommendation. He/she is on track to graduate this year.

Over the past 7 years, faculty readers recommended rejection for fewer than 1% of Phase 1 applicants. We conclude that this small number does not justify the faculty and DA time spent to have these applications read prior to the DA making the admission decision.

4. Although it is not the purpose of this document to revisit the definitions of phases, we would like to note that other student qualities also predict the faculty committee vote. For instance, every student who was in the top 10% of their class and had an SAT score greater than 1000 received a positive faculty vote even though some did not qualify for phase 1 due to the GPA criteria. So, there are some combinations of student qualifications, including phase 1 criteria, that are so strongly correlated with a positive faculty vote that they greatly reduce the added value of the faculty vote. The reverse situation in which a simple set of criteria predict a negative faculty vote did not occur in the data. In other words, for students that are not so clearly qualified based on quantitative measures, the faculty vote may indeed provide additional, potentially valuable, information.
Definitions of Phases 1, 2, and 3

In some Rice documents, the word “Procedure” is used as a synonym for “Phase.”

Phase 1:
(i) An SAT score of 1100 or more, or a PSAT score of 1000 or more, or an ACT score of 24 or more, and
(ii) 14 or more solid courses in high school, with a GPA of 2.8 in these courses.

Phase 2:
(i) An SAT score of 920 or more, or a PSAT score of 820 or more, or an ACT score of 19 or more, and
(ii) a) 14 solid courses plus rank in upper 30% of class, or
    b) 15 solid courses plus rank in upper 40% of class, or
    c) 16 solid courses plus rank in upper 50% of class.

Phase 3:
Applicants who do not meet the criteria for Phases 1 or 2.

Note: Over the past 7 years, matriculated student athletes comprise 65% Phase 1, 30% Phase 2, and 5% Phase 3 applicants.

The membership of the Faculty Senate Working Group on Athletic Admissions
Dale Sawyer, Professor, Chair
Evan Siemann, Associate Professor
Nancy Niedzielski, Associate Professor
David Schneider, Professor
Chris Munoz, VP Enrollment
Keith Todd, Director of Admissions
Chris DelConte, Director of Athletics
Julie Griswold, Assistant Athletic director for Academic Services
Willis Wilson, Men’s Basketball Coach
Carol Quillen, Professor and Vice Provost for Academic affairs

Current Faculty Readers for Athletic Applications
Dale Sawyer, Professor
John Boles, Professor
George Bennett, Professor