

**Report of Faculty Senate Committee on Scheduling Athletic  
Competitions during the Final Exam Period or Designated Reading  
Days**

**April 2002**

**In response to issues raised in the Report of the Athletics Advisory Board on Athletics and Academics, the Faculty Senate established a committee comprised of the following members:**

**Senator Yngve Ramstad, Chair**

**Senator Peter Blanpied**

**Senator Jim Loy**

**Senator Sherri Wills**

**Senator Marian Goldsmith**

**Associate Director Lauren Anderson, Department of Athletics, *ex officio***

**This committee was charged to review and consider regulations that concerned the scheduling of athletic competitions during the final exam period or designated reading days (sections 8.51.30-31 of the University Manual) and to draft language for any warranted changes. These sections read as follows:**

**8.51.30 Final Examinations and Athletic Events. Intercollegiate athletic contests at the University of Rhode Island shall not be scheduled (at home or away) during either the final exam period or designated reading days. Compulsory practice sessions shall not be scheduled during the final exam period.**

**8.51.31 Issues regarding Conference championships, special tournaments, and other athletic competitions not controlled through University scheduling that occur during the final exam period shall be forwarded to the Athletics Advisory Board for their recommendation to waive the above policy and permit participation. The board's recommendation shall be forwarded to the University President for final action.**

Despite 8.51.30's clear language not granting it such authority, the AAB has in recent years recommended to the President that both the men's and women's basketball teams be given waivers to participate in competitions that are "controlled" by University schedulers on reading days prior to the Fall semester final exam period. These requests for waiver have been consistently approved by the President. The AAB has further interpreted the "final exam period" to exclude the weekend dividing the days on which Fall semester final exams might be scheduled, and hence in recent years has not objected to the scheduling of men's and women's basketball competitions during this period. In response to queries about the aptness of these scheduling practices, President Carothers communicated the following by memorandum to Director of Athletics Ron Petro on January 4, 2002: "After due consideration, I am notifying you that I will no longer approve intercollegiate athletic events by URI teams during the final examination periods. This policy decision is effective immediately. No future competitions may be scheduled during the periods designated on the University calendar as exam periods. Exceptions to this policy will be made only on the recommendation of the Athletic Advisory Committee (sic) and then only in the case of Atlantic Ten Conference Championship competition or NCAA playoff competition." Clarifying his intention, President Carothers stated before the Faculty Senate at its February meeting that he includes the intra-exam period weekend under the meaning of the term ""final examination period."

Furthermore, in recent years the Athletics Advisory Board (AAB) has reviewed numerous requests for a waiver under 8.51.31 when teams have qualified for Atlantic-10 championships, which have frequently conflicted with the Spring final exam period; in principle, participation in the NCAA Div. 2 I-AA football playoffs might similarly conflict with the Fall final exam period. The Athletics Advisory Board has routinely approved waivers to participate in such competitions without dissent. The committee considered whether 8.51.31 should be reworded to eliminate the need for AAB waivers necessitated by "contractual obligations."

The committee considered whether the language of 8.51.30 should be altered to exclude reading days from the period during which no competitions are to be scheduled (thereby partly restoring the

status quo) and/or whether it should be strengthened to make explicit whether the weekend is included in the meaning of the term "final exam period." The committee agreed unanimously that whereas the student-athlete's student role (going to class, taking exams when they are scheduled, etc.) must frequently be subordinated to his or her athlete role (participating in competitions, etc.) during the regular portion of the academic semester, during the final exam period the opposite should be true to the degree that decisions are under the control of the university. Some members of the committee stated they thought it was important for students to have both the time and the "mental space" needed to make final exams their number one priority and that for this reasons the weekend should explicitly be included under the meaning of the term "exam period" (as President Carothers had directed). At the same time, some members of the committee were sympathetic concerning the non-trivial scheduling difficulties faced by, in particular, men's and women's basketball due to factors over which they have little or no direct control. (For example, in addition to commercial&mdash;revenue&mdash;considerations, the men's basketball non-conference schedule must conform to criteria mandated by the Atlantic-10 conference, including the requirement that a sufficient non-conference "strength of schedule" be maintained. It is important to keep in mind that games are scheduled only after an agreement is reached with another school, not by fiat. Significantly, it is in reaching agreements with the "quality" opponents needed to attain the requisite strength of schedule that very serious constraints are often introduced into the scheduling process.) It was proposed that when there is a two-day intra-exam period weekend, a "local" game on Saturday would in no way undermine the "academics first" philosophy just enumerated, yet it would simplify considerably the scheduling problems faced by those two teams.

After some discussion, the committee agreed by a non-unanimous vote to recommend language allowing "local" Saturday competitions rather than language prohibiting games during the entire exam period defined to include both days of any intra-exam weekend. The committee thought that it was important to similarly proscribe travel during the exam period. Hence, with regard to scheduling events during the final examination period, the

committee recommends that the Faculty Senate amend 8.51.30 to read as follows (Additions and changes are in **boldface**):

**8.51.30 Final Examinations and Athletic Events.** Intercollegiate athletic contests at the University of Rhode Island shall not be scheduled **so as to require travel or competition during either the final exam period, on designated reading days, or on Sunday of the intra-exam weekend. Games may be scheduled on Saturday of an intra-exam period weekend provided it is not a designated exam day and that all off-campus travel, if necessary, is limited to that day.** Compulsory practice sessions shall not be scheduled **on designated reading days, final exam days, or Sunday of the intra-exam period weekend.**

As noted, 8.51.31 establishes a procedure for dealing with competitions during the final exam period whose scheduling is not under University control. The committee unanimously supported language making it unnecessary to secure an AAB waiver for participation in league-scheduled competitions and in league or NCAA championships. It was acknowledged that to some degree this posture conflicts with the philosophical stance taken previously in regard to the putative priority of the student-athlete's "student role" during the final exam period. However, it was agreed that the purpose of competition within league and NCAA structures is to become champion if possible and that, if league membership is entered into, such participation, even if it could be avoided without sanction, ought to be allowed, as it always has been. Rather than turning the AAB waiver process into essentially a "rubber stamp" operation, the committee voted to limit the waiver process to major competitions (such as the rowing Dad Vail Classic) occurring outside the Atlantic-10 conference (or in the future any other conference with which the university is affiliated) and NCAA structures. At the same time, the committee thought it in order to modify the language of 8.51.31 to make it consisted with the recommended revised language of 8.51.30. Thus the committee recommends that the Faculty Senate amend 8.51.31 to read as follows: (Additions and changes are in **boldface**):

**8.51.31 No waiver shall be required for participation in conference-scheduled competitions, conference championships, and NCAA championships; however, the Athletics Advisory Board must be notified in advance on a timely basis when such participation, or**

associated off-campus travel, is scheduled to occur during the final exam period, on designated reading days, or on Sunday of the intra-exam period weekend. Issues regarding special tournaments and other major athletic competitions not controlled through University scheduling that occur, or require associated off-campus travel, during the final exam period, on designated reading days, or on Sunday of the intra-exam period weekend shall be forwarded to the Athletics Advisory Board for their recommendation to waive the above policy and permit participation. The board's recommendation shall be forwarded to the University President for final action.

The committee recommends that these changes go into effect for the spring semester 2003.