

Hamilton College
Strategic Planning: Preliminary Report. February 2008
Subcommittee on Athletics

The task of our committee is to consider the role our athletic program should play at Hamilton, to consider how best to fulfill that role in the future, to educate the community about issues involving athletics, and to make recommendations where appropriate. While the primary mission of the College clearly is academic, athletics and academics should be complementary and mutually reinforcing. In the course of our discussions so far, we have focused on such specific issues as full membership and participation in NESCAC, assessment of facilities and resources, and better integration of athletics and academics on campus.

Our committee has considered several ways of developing intellectual connections between academics and athletics. These range from better informing students about courses with content relating to athletics, to sponsoring more public lectures and even debates on issues involving intercollegiate athletics, to sponsoring informal discussion groups for coaches, classroom faculty, and students to discuss books and articles on intercollegiate athletics. (The well-attended summer seminar series several years ago on the book The Game of Life might be the model.) A more long range goal adopted at some of our peer institutions would be to encourage closer contact between teams and faculty advisers and an expanded role for the faculty involved

Full membership in NESCAC would involve scheduling changes for 7 of our 28 varsity teams. Expected benefits from full membership include those of fuller association with schools we regard as our peers and enhanced identification by the public of us with them, increased visibility, marginal but not insignificant gains in our attractiveness to prospective student-athletes, including those with the strongest academic records, and competition with teams that operate under the same restrictions as our own. However, there are concerns about increased travel time, whether our teams would be as competitive in NESCAC as in the Liberty League, and whether athletic recruiting would need to be more intense for us to be competitive. We will explore whether these concerns might be alleviated or even removed by such factors as greater weekend play by NESCAC in some sports (minimizing missed class time), schedules that minimize long trips, and the recruiting advantage in attracting athletes who are also top students arising from full identification with NESCAC.

Resources available to and facilities for athletics are crucial both for the quality of the experience of student athletes at Hamilton and for recruiting prospective students, especially if we were to participate fully in NESCAC. Moreover, our facilities are widely used by participants in club sports, intramurals, and by those involved in various wellness and fitness endeavors as well as by many faculty and staff and so affect the quality of campus life for a large segment of our community. While a number of our facilities, including the pool, fitness center, and squash courts are excellent, there also are some severe deficiencies in other areas. Some examples follow. Offices for many coaches are inadequate. Lack of climate control in our Athletic Office makes working there virtually unbearable for coaches and support staff during warm weather. Indeed, the Athletic Offices are unchanged since 1984 and the office building is the only major building on campus without climate control. Locker rooms, also unchanged since 1984, are inadequate. Alumni Gym, used for intramurals, is in deplorable shape. Baseball and softball fields are inadequate and home games sometimes are played off campus as a result. The fieldhouse may no longer be sufficient to meet all the demands placed upon it. Parking for athletic events is limited which discourages attendance. We have no outdoor restrooms on campus so, of course, none are accessible from events at any of our outdoor fields or the golf course.

Our subcommittee will continue to explore these and other issues, such as adequacy of the budget for athletics, gender equity, and fitness and wellness programs, and exchange views with various constituencies including the Director of Athletics and coaches. Eventually, we

expect to have open meetings with the community to exchange views on the issues we are considering.

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