

Report by the University Committee on Athletics

A REVIEW OF THE 1997-98 VIRGINIA TECH ATHLETICS RULES-COMPLIANCE PROGRAM

The 1998 NCAA review of the Virginia Tech Athletics Program produced a number of recommendations, including the following relating to the Principle of Rules-Compliance Evaluation:

"The peer-review team concurs with the institution's recommendation that the University Athletics Committee annually evaluate the rules-compliance program and report the findings to the president and athletics director."

To meet this recommendation, the chair of the University Committee on Athletics formed a Rules Compliance Subcommittee to evaluate the university's compliance program. The subcommittee was composed of the following members: Bennet Cassell (Chair), Fred Lutze, Mike Moore, Jeff Long, Tim Parker, and Derita Ratcliffe. This group met on October 27 and November 10 to plan strategies for the evaluation. During this time, it was agreed to develop a report consisting of three parts. The first part of the plan called for documentation of educational efforts made to inform parties involved in Virginia Tech athletics of rules-compliance issues. The second required the subcommittee to review a summary of reported rules violations. The third section focused on the need for a review of compliance procedures through the inspection of records kept to document rules compliance efforts.

An outline of educational efforts supporting rules compliance for the 1997-98 academic year was provided to the subcommittee by Parker. The educational effort expended was extensive and targeted a diverse group of coaches, student athletes, boosters, prospective student athletes and their advisors, teachers, coaches, and parents. Many members of the Athletic Department are involved in relaying information through these educational programs, further serving to educate key personnel in rules compliance issues. The summary of rules-education efforts is included as Attachment A.

A summary of reported rules violations was also provided by Parker. No major rules infractions were reported during the 1997-98 academic year. The University reported three secondary violations along with the resulting action taken to correct each problem. The NCAA ruled that in each case, action by the University was sufficient and that no further action was necessary with respect to these secondary violations. The summary of rules violations is included as Attachment B.

The rules compliance subcommittee took an active, "hands-on" approach to the final section of this report, actually inspecting documentation regarding procedures used and efforts made to achieve rules compliance. Lutze and Moore met with Parker on November 12 to develop audit procedures. Cassell joined the group on November 17 to perform an inspection of documents supporting rules compliance efforts. The subcommittee chose to evaluate records pertaining to 13 randomly selected policies or procedures used by the Athletic Department to comply with NCAA rules. For each of the 13, we recorded the location of the documentation, the type of evidence examined, the name of documents examined, the number of documents actually checked, who did the checking and the date checked, a yes or no evaluation of the structure in place to insure

compliance, and comments on observations as necessary. A table containing these data is included as Attachment C.

In the examination, the subcommittee found easy-to-follow audit trails to document compliance in most policies or procedures examined. Communication between the Financial Aid office, Registrar's office, and the Athletic Department appears to be thorough and timely, giving the subcommittee confidence that squad lists and Eligibility Certification Forms were accurate, that compliance with full-time enrollment requirements were being met, and that financial aid restrictions were properly followed. A few potential problem areas were noted. For instance, no independent verification exists regarding the participation of specific student-athletes in away-from-home contests for many "Olympic" sports. Recruiting phone logs for three sports were examined, and the subcommittee felt that a signed record of "non-entry" (no phone calls) should be made when coaches go for several months without using the phone in recruiting. Some phone logs were not signed. One incident was discovered where an addendum to an Eligibility Certification Form was not on file to indicate that a student-athlete was eligible to compete. Subsequent investigation of this incident by Parker verified that the student-athlete involved never participated in that team's competition.

Conclusions:

The staffing and effort required to create and maintain documentation of rules compliance efforts are considerable. The Athletic Department appears to have made sufficient commitment to rules compliance over the past academic year to give us confidence that rules infractions would be minor in nature if they occurred and that reasonable efforts have been made to prevent infractions. This is a large and unending job. The omission of what appear to be minor details can result in failure. While the job is never finished, it appears to the Rules Compliance Subcommittee that it is being done well at the present time.