**THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**

**THE VISITORS OF JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY**

#### Minutes of the Athletics Committee

The Athletics Committee met on November 17, 2022 in Ballroom B of the Festival Conference and Student Center. The meeting was called to order at 2:47 p.m. by John Lynch, Chair.

# Present:

Lynch, John, Chair

Bell, Dickie

Herod, Maribeth

Major, Lara

Tompkins Johnson, Deborah

White, Jack

## Others:

Alger, Jonathan, President

Miller, Dr. Tim, Senior Vice President (and student guest)

Bourne, Jeffrey, Director of Athletics

Knight, Jack, University Counsel

LaPorta, Stephen, Assistant A.D. for Compliance

Molina, Rudy, Vice Provost Acad & Enroll Mgt, VP Student Academic Success/Enroll. Mgt

Phillips, Jennifer, Senior Associate A.D. for Student-Athlete Development/SWA

Representatives from IMPACT

Renkin, Scooter, Associate A.D. for Development

Warner, Kevin, Assistant A.D. for Communications

White, Kevin, Associate A.D. for Sports Programs

Soenksen, Roger, Faculty Athletics Representative

Mr. Lynch called for a motion to approve the minutes. It was moved by Deborah Tompkins Johnson and seconded by Lara Major to approve the minutes of the September 15, 2022, meeting of the Athletics Committee.

**Sports Update**

Jeff Bourne, Director of Athletics, provided the Committee with an overall Sports Update. JMU has noticeably elevated itself and established itself in the sport of football in the state of Virginia. Mr. Bourne noted this speaks to university commitment and praised the work of coaches and student-athletes. JMU Athletics is ahead of pace for overall winning percentage even compared to what has recently been high levels of achievement. Both women’s and men’s soccer played for the Sun Belt Championship in November, finishing as runner up. Volleyball will open in the Sun Belt Championship tomorrow after winning the regular season. Lauren Steinbrecher was named Coach of the Year and JMU has the 20th best record in the nation. Field hockey went 10-7 and ranked No. 22 in the nation, which was a fantastic year as an independent. Cross Country placed third in the Sun Belt. Men’s basketball is off to a terrific start with a chance to have a special season. Women’s basketball is 2-1 and expected to be competitive. It was noted that the Sun Belt hosts both basketball championships at the same time, during the same week and at the same venue in Pensacola, Fla. Swim & Dive is 3-2. JMU was extremely pleased to receive three key Sun Belt graduation rate awards in Atlanta a few weeks ago, some of the conference’s top academic honors. Mr. Bourne credited Jenn Phillips & Dr. Roger Soenksen for their leadership on the academic front. A brief reference was made to the continued work of the NCAA waiver process prior to a later agenda item. Mr. Bourne noted a waiver would make a difference of about $2 million in increased revenue for the department in FY24. Following questions and comments from Committee members, Mr. Bourne concluded his update.

**2021-2022 Academic Report,**

Jennifer Phillips, Senior Associate A.D., Student-Athlete Development/SWA, provided an update on the department’s academic achievements and benchmarks. She further noted that JMU won all three major academic awards from the Sun Belt and that JMU was grateful for the Sun Belt including us in 2021-22 awards. JMU has observed itself to be leaders within the Sun Belt from an academic sense, elevating the league’s academic profile. Many institutions have asked JMU about its academic methodologies and how it is achieving high scores. Ms. Phillips noted the 89% NCAA GSR from last year while a new, higher number of 92% for the most recent year was just released on Nov. 15. The 92% puts JMU 2% ahead of the national rate and the number required for revenue distribution. A year-over-year chart showed significant gains in JMU’s departmental GPA and recent trends over the last two years placing athletics ahead of the university average. Phillips spoke highly of JMU’s tutoring system, which matches student-athletes with tutors in the same classes and sections. She also promoted JMU’s new mentorship program to help student-athletes with various key skills (organization, planning, etc.). The JMU SAAC group has been very active within the student-athlete leadership of the Sun Belt, with JMU SAAC President Felicity Ryan chairing the Sun Belt’s mental health subcommittee. JMU won the month of October for most hours of community service within the Sun Belt. Ms. Phillips also noted that 10% of student-athletes are international vs. the campus rate of 1%. Following up a previous topic, it was noted that JMU agreed to early registration for student-athletes, with great success this fall. Mr. Lynch inquired about previous discussions around a missed class policy. Ms. Phillips noted on-going discussions and upcoming conversation in the next Faculty Senate agenda. President Alger spoke highly of recent numbers and praised the academic performance of athletics, noting that a well-run athletics program helps students stay in school and achieve success, that athletics can balance with academics, not work in conflict with one another. Following additional questions and discussion by Committee Members, Ms. Phillips concluded her update.

**NCAA Waiver Update**

Stephen LaPorta, Assistant Athletics Director for Compliance, and Jennifer Phillips, Senior Associate A.D., Student-Athlete Development/SWA,provided an update on the NCAA waiver process. Ms. Phillips acknowledged Mr. LaPorta’s involvement on various committees on the national level as an aid to JMU to be tied into the issues. The committee was reminded that the NCAA mandates a two-year reclassification period. JMU submitted an application packet on June 1, 2022 to initiate that transition. The Strategic Vision & Planning Committee reviewed that application and accepted JMU into the reclassification process. JMU completed a mandated orientation process led by NCAA staff this Fall. JMU will submit materials for a waiver from two years to one on June 1. The NCAA will announce the outcome of its review in August. JMU trying to be proactive throughout process but NCAA requiring specific timeline. It was noted that JMU is trying to be proactive and early on deadlines, but that attempt is being held up by strict enforcement of established dates and meeting timelines. Mr. LaPorta further explained that there are two possible waivers for JMU. A postseason play waiver for the current 2022 season could not be pursued due to the timeline of JMU achieving bowl eligibility requirements falling outside the window of the scheduled meetings for the Football Oversight Committee in early November. He noted there is also no case precedent for bowl eligibility in year one of transition. The second waiver JMU will attempt is a reduction of the two-year transition period to one year. Mr. LaPorta noted several hurdles, including: the NCAA Transformation Committee currently is outlining new membership requirements for Division I, which places JMU in a holding pattern until that work is complete; timeline issues for JMU being forced to follow agenda schedules and meeting calendars with no ability to escalate the process; no case precedent for FBS-to-FCS transitioning schools to reduce the two years to one year (in fact, all schools transitioning from Division II to Division I have previously been denied eligibility for NCAA Championship participation. In JMU’s favor, it was noted: most schools are not in position to schedule a full FBS schedule like JMU did in 2022; the landscape of changes in college athletics have forced many to questions policies not in the best interest of student-athletes; many broadcasts this fall have spoken in favor of JMU being ready to compete at the FBS level and obtaining eligibility. Mr. LaPorta further noted how NIL and the transfer portal have substantially altered the overall environment of college athletics and the impact on student-athlete well-being. Ms. Herod noted the additional impact of mental health and the role of the pandemic in further being a student-athlete well-being concern. Ms. Phillips noted that JMU is a holistic institution supporting all sports vs. many prior transitioning institutions emphasized football. She highlighted the work that JMU is doing across many sports with facilities and other areas to help all student-athletes. Mr. Bourne noted that the pandemic’s impact on eligibility means that football is carrying a roster size already near FBS level. President Alger noted the challenges of getting support from other institutions and conferences as JMU’s eligibility may be a detriment to the success of others, but he keyed on the changing landscape of student-athlete well-being as well as the work that JMU did in advance to ensure it could check all the boxes (feasibility study, Title IX, scholarships, schedules, infrastructure, etc.). JMU has no work to do to be FBS-ready, which is counter to nearly every previous transitioning institution. Mr. LaPorta noted the additional checks-and-balances JMU had with the state oversight committee process and the rubber stamp from the state supporting the move. Ms. Phillips noted the academic benchmarks further adding to JMU being poised for all-around success. Finally, Mr. LaPorta reviewed the timeline for the waiver process. Mr. Lynch thanked Athletics staff for their planning and work to be in position to even attempt the waiver. Following additional discussion, Mr. LaPorta concluded his update.

**Development Update**

Scooter Renkin, Associate Athletic Director for Development, provided a fundraising update. Mr. Renkin shared that the Duke Club’s Annual Fund, which combines its seat contribution and Proud & True funds, as of October 21 has collected $635,760, which is $84,000 ahead of year-to-date comparisons. He further noted as of Nov. 11 the fund was $174,000 ahead. Mr. Renkin noted considerable growth and coordinated effort behind growing athletics restricted giving directly to sport programs. While collections related to Capital project are behind pace, it was noted that significant agreements are in the works right now that could surpass previous totals. He added that Event-based contributions were up after a highly successful Friday Night Flights event this Fall. Mr. Renkin announced that, as of a Nov. 11 report, the Duke Club was pleased to surpass $1M in total giving. He reminded the committee that the majority of Athletics giving is cyclical with most gifts occurring in the spring of each fiscal year with Athletics currently at 20% of its fiscal year goal. Mr. Renkin noted that the spring will be a re-parking and reseating year for football, a process that traditionally produces additional revenue and with increased interest this year with FBS status. Mr. Renkin was particularly excited to share that year-to-date total donors were 2,326, representing the largest year-to-date total in Duke Club history and 860 donors higher than this time last year, with the Duke Club on pace to hit the 5,000-donor goal for the first time. He cited the excitement for FBS football as a key contributor to the growth. Mr. Renkin shared that the Duke Club filled a key vacant position, naming Kate Burke as Director of Internal Development to lead marketing and communications efforts for development. Finally, it was stated that the Duke Club is finalizing a new benefits chart to be unveiled in December, which will increase donor levels to further expand revenue streams. Mr. Renkin anticipate an additional $500,000 for the annual fund under the newly proposed chart. Following addition questions from Committee Members, Mr. Renkin concluded his update.

There being no further business, Mr. Lynch us then called for a motion to adjourn. It was moved by Lara Major and seconded Deborah Tompkins-Johnson. The meeting was adjourned at 4:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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John Lynch, Chair

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Donna L. Harper, Secretary to the Board