



Memorandum of Understanding

This MOU has been read and approved by:

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Program Review Summary
Memorandum of Understanding

Bickerstaff Academic Center for Student-Athlete Services
February 2025

This document serves as a summary of the Program Review findings and a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the consensus reached by the Bickerstaff Academic Center for Student-Athlete Services (BAC) and the Division of Academic Affairs, based on the recently conducted program review with a Self-study received in June 2024. Director of Athletic Academic Services Allyson Kelly from the California State University, Fullerton completed the external review in November 2024. This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlines the goals to be achieved and the actions to be undertaken by all parties involved during the upcoming program review cycle. Progress toward goals is to be addressed in an annual report.

The BAC provides comprehensive advising and academic support services to NCAA Division I Student-Athletes at California State University, Long Beach. The Center offers specialized, comprehensive, holistic student athlete development programs and services, such as academic advising, peer mentoring, peer tutoring, academic support, and study hall. The BAC is within the Division of Academic Affairs and works closely with the Department of Athletics to ensure student-athlete academic success and compliance with NCAA Division I policies and procedures.

The BAC was previously reviewed in 2017, with an MOU in 2020. The previous BAC MOU established the following recommendations: 1) Continue to follow all NCAA guidelines necessary to maintain accreditation (in progress); 2) Continue to assess student success using multiple metrics. In addition to using student learning objectives (SLO) to assess student-athlete advising, consider expanding the SLO approach to the academic mentoring and tutoring programs (not met); 3) Continue to provide staff with ongoing professional development and training opportunities offered by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), the National Association for Academic Advisors of Athletics (NC4A), the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and CSULB (partially met); 4) Pursue certification for both the academic tutoring and mentor programs by the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) at the basic level (Level 1) (not met); 5) Consider development of a Faculty Liaison/Mentor Program to support and expand upon the work done by the University's Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) (not met); 6) Work with the Department of Athletics and Academic Affairs to address their needs for additional space as financial resources allow (in progress); and, 7) Work with the Department of Athletics and Academic Affairs to address their staffing needs as well as the need for ongoing and additional professional development and certification (in progress).

**Resources reviewed for the report:**

1. Self-study 2024
2. External review 2024
3. MOU 2020
4. Bickerstaff Academic Center website

Strengths were identified in the reports:

- **Graduation Success Rate.** The BAC has distinguished itself by contributing to an overall 87% Graduation Success Rate (GSR) for student athletes (first-time, first-year (FTFY) and transfer scholarship students combined). This is an increase of 6% since the last self-study. The academic tutoring, mentoring services, and study sessions have proven effective, as demonstrated by the 2022-23 all-student-athlete GPA of 3.1 and the steady rise in GSR scores over the past five years. This is in large part due to the BAC's focus on advising appropriately and providing a holistic academic support program for student athletes.
- **New Programs.** The BAC has developed several new programs in support of the students and the University:
 - BEACH Days Orientation program: BAC provides a ½ day program for incoming student athletes
 - Bickerstaff Academic Center Survey: This survey has evolved with a goal to provide advisors a holistic view of the needs of incoming student-athletes.
 - BEACHAMPION program: beginning fall 2023, this 4-year holistic program aims to provide student athletes with programming necessary for their academic, personal, and athletic success during each of their years on campus. They have 4 approved courses: ATHL 101: Freshmen Foundation, ATHL 201: Sophomore Success, ATHL 301: Junior Journey, ATHL 401: Senior Sendoff.
- **Peer Mentoring Program** aims to help at-risk incoming FTFY and transfers make a successful transition to a 4-year University. Peer Mentors meet weekly with their mentees to help them set academic goals, develop academic plans, and improve all aspects of their academic skill sets, e.g., time management, organization, and study skills. The number of students receiving these services has grown significantly, increasing from 40 in AY 2016-17 to 79 in AY 2022-23. On average, students experience an improvement in their GPA of 0.25 to 0.4 points and continue to perform well academically after completing the program.
- **Student-Athlete to Academic Counselor Ratio**
With a student-athlete to academic counselor ratio of no more than 80:1, combined with the quality of service provided in a positive cultural environment, the BAC can



focus on detailed advising to ensure that student-athletes consistently make progress toward their degree and maintain athletic eligibility requirements.

- **Faculty Support.** The BAC enjoys a strong relationship with the Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR), who supports and enhances the curricular aspects of the BAC and has been a key contributor to the development of the BeAChampion program, which is a program helps student-athletes develop skills and build a community.
- **Support for International Students and Students with Disabilities**
The BAC employs strategic academic advisement and support to help international student athletes improve their GPAs. Additionally, BAC partners with the Center for International Education (CIE) to navigate complex immigration policies related to F1 Visa sponsorship, including mandated health insurance coverage. The BAC has also observed an increasing number of student-athletes entering CSULB with diagnosed disabilities. In response, they have initiated partnerships both within and outside the institution to provide support for these student athletes with disabilities, including mental health resources.

Concerns were noted in the reports:

- **Pre-Transcript Evaluation Process & Procedures:** Since the inception of the NCAA Transfer Portal in 2018, the BAC has seen a marked increase in the number of student athletes transferring to other institutions and transferring from other institutions. BAC advisers are not NCAA initial eligibility experts, but they are still tasked with ensuring that prospective first-time freshmen meet both CSULB admissions criteria and NCAA initial eligibility requirements. The BAC assuming control of the pre-transcript evaluation process without adequate training and expertise in NCAA Compliance, admissions, and enrollment services can be a risk of unintended rule violations. For example, BAC academic advisors are seeing more FTFY student athletes entering CSULB via dual enrollment during high school which can make the prospective student athlete evaluation more complicated. Hence, BAC academic advisors have built great relationships with Academic Advising leadership in each of the College's Advising Centers in order to discuss and problem solve issues related to course equivalencies and course substitutions.
- **Relationship with Compliance Office and Athletics Administration**
Due to staffing changes within the Admissions and Athletics Compliance areas, the BAC has taken on additional responsibilities to ensure coaches and student-athletes receive the information they need to succeed. However, Compliance Office and the BAC are not always working in unison and, at times, are operating in silos.

Opportunities for Development were noted in the reports:



- **Advising Appointments:** Prior to the pandemic, BAC services were primarily in-person. During the pandemic and subsequent years immediately following BAC advisors started to communicate more via email and/or telephone, however contacts with students were not logged as an academic advising appointment. It is essential to continue monitoring how advising needs are addressed post-pandemic, including the delivery format, effectiveness of communication and advising sessions, and ease of scheduling advising appointments.
- It is recommended that a **Pre-Transcript Review Workflow** for both FTFY and transfer students is created collaboratively with Compliance Office and Enrollment Services. The workflow will ensure that Compliance Office is responsible for reviewing prospective student-athletes' transcripts from an NCAA perspective, while BAC counselors focus on offering guidance from a campus advising standpoint. Establishing process can help prevent prospective student-athletes from being overlooked until the final certification process at the beginning of the fall term.
- **BAC Tutoring:** Unlike other advising centers, the BAC provides tutoring primarily via individual appointments but also on a drop-in basis for writing or math. These sessions have decreased annually from a high of 4,192 in the 2017-18 AY to a low of 1,618 in the 2022-23 AY. The decrease in services should be monitored and analyzed to ensure the student tutoring needs are met
- **Co-Director Responsibility:** There appears to be an over-reliance on the co-directors to address every concern, rather than creating a systematic and collective effort to address issues efficiently through individual counselors. The workload should be distributed across the team. Additionally, clarifying the responsibilities of the co-directors will help streamline the decision-making process.
- **Assessment:** Although the BAC conducts multiple types of assessment (mostly indirect), specific results from the surveys are unclear. Also, the self-study reports several closing-the loop activities, but it is unclear how the results of these specific assessments led to corresponding changes.
- **Continue to Seek Funding** for Academic Support and Facility Upgrades: It is recommended that the BAC persist in applying for grants, including the NCAA Accelerated Academic Success Program (AASP) grant, to secure the necessary funding for renovating the BAC academic support space to better meet the needs of student-athletes.

Recommendations:

It is therefore agreed that the Bickerstaff Academic Center will collaborate with the Division of Academic Affairs to:



1. Continue implementing the program's comprehensive assessment plan in order to complete annual assessments using direct and indirect methods. Report on closing-the-loop activities to demonstrate how continuous learning outcome data inform decision making. Review trends to establish a path for improving student-athlete academic services using the BAC Student-Athlete Perceptions Survey. Provide an annual update (due August 1) on progress made towards MOU actions to the Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Studies, the Vice Provost for Academic Programs, and the Coordinators of Program Review and Assessment. BAC's review cycle will be from 2022-2029. A comprehensive self-study will be due June 2029 for a 2029-2030 Academic Year review process.
2. Determine how the trends in student-athlete admission and the recent shift in fiscal support for BAC have affected the provision of services.
3. Advising and Tutoring: BAC has a very high-touch model with multiple contacts for very few students. BAC will assess services provided to determine if a more traditional advising model can be used for student athletes. In addition, BAC is advised to analyze the recent decrease in students availing themselves of tutoring services and implement a plan to address any lapses in service provision.
4. Additional Trainings. Bi-monthly training sessions for advisors should be introduced, where co-directors can continue to guide counseling staff on best practices for advising.
5. Enhance Cross-departmental Communication and Collaboration
To promote collective and democratic decision-making, it is recommended that the BAC implement the following strategies:
 - Have one or both BAC Co-Directors attend Athletics Administration meetings.
 - Maintain monthly meetings with at least the Director of Athletics and the BAC Co-Directors.
 - Continue weekly meetings with Compliance Office and the BAC staff.
 - Streamline communication between Athletics Compliance, the BAC staff, and the coaches through a shared communication platform (e.g., group email, Teams).
6. Strategic Planning: carry through with implementation of recommendations from the NACADA site visit and the subsequent Advising Task Force to BAC advising and also continue to support the implementation and expansion of the BEACHAMPION program in a collaborative manner.

This MOU has been read and approved by:

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CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

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