

MINUTES

BOARD OF REGENTS COMMITTEE ON INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS MEETING

MARCH 3, 2021

Note: On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a public health emergency of international concern, subsequently declaring it a pandemic on March 11, 2020. On March 16, 2020, Governor David Y. Ige issued a supplementary proclamation that temporarily suspended Chapter 92, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, relating to public meetings and records, "to the extent necessary to enable boards to conduct business in person or through remote technology without holding meetings open to the public."

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Simeon Acoba called the meeting to order at 9:58 a.m. on Wednesday, March 3, 2021. The meeting was conducted virtually with regents participating from various locations.

Committee members in attendance: Chair Simeon Acoba; Vice-Chair Robert Westerman; Regent Kelli Acopan; Regent Eugene Bal; and Regent Wayne Higaki.

Others in attendance: Board Chair Benjamin Kudo; Regent Randy Moore; Regent Alapaki Nahale-a; Regent Jan Sullivan; Regent Ernest Wilson (ex officio committee members); President David Lassner; Vice President (VP) for Community Colleges Erika Lacro; VP for Legal Affairs/University General Counsel Carrie Okinaga; VP for Research and Innovation Vassilis Syrmos; VP for Information Technology/Chief Information Officer Garret Yoshimi; VP for Budget and Finance/Chief Financial Officer Kalbert Young; UH Mānoa (UHM) Provost Michael Bruno; UH Hilo (UHH) Chancellor Bonnie Irwin; UH West O'ahu Chancellor Maenette Benham; Executive Administrator and Secretary of the Board of Regents (Board Secretary) Kendra Oishi; and others as noted.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regent Higaki moved to approve the minutes of the November 5, 2020, committee meeting and minutes of the February 4, 2021, joint meeting with the Committee on Budget and Finance, seconded by Vice-Chair Westerman, and the motion carried with all members present voting in the affirmative.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Board Secretary Oishi announced that the Board Office did not receive any written testimony, and that no individuals signed up to provide oral testimony.

IV. AGENDA ITEMS

A. Coaches Corner: Todd Graham, UHM Head Football Coach

UHM Athletic Director (AD) David Matlin introduced Todd Graham, the UHM head football coach, who would be providing a report on the 2020 football season and some insights into the successes of the football program.

Coach Graham began by stating that 2020 was a unique and challenging year and thanked the Regents, administration, and athletic department staff for the support that was given to the UHM football program and players. He spoke about a number of the difficulties and challenges faced in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic which had tremendous negative implications for intercollegiate athletics across the nation including the cancellation of entire seasons for some sports. In addition to causing uncertainty regarding whether a fall football season would materialize, COVID-19 health and safety protocols resulted in the football program encountering a number of difficulties including challenges with recruiting, conducting training camps and practices, and developing in-person bonding opportunities between players and coaches. Nevertheless, the football program was able to persevere and experienced success both on and off the field due to the resilience, effort, and work ethic of players and staff.

Despite early announcements in spring 2020 by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), as well as the Mountain West Conference, that football would not be played in the fall, it was decided in the late summer that the football season would take place with an abbreviated schedule and enhanced safety protocols. This decision created a host of logistical and scheduling issues for the football program that needed to be addressed within an extremely condensed timeframe. Even with these challenges, the football program was able to successfully compete in a nine-game season, which culminated in a bowl game victory. Coach Graham considered this to be an incredible accomplishment given the lack of practice time and noted that UHM football was one of only a few programs across the nation to compete in its full complement of games.

While the football program experienced success on the field, Coach Graham stated that he found greater satisfaction with the accomplishments of the players off the field, particularly in academics. He highlighted that the grade point average for players increased from 2.7 to 3.0 in 2020 and attributed this success to the academic staff of UHM Athletics in addition to the hard work put in by the players themselves and the continued emphasis by coaching staff on achieving academic excellence.

Coach Graham noted that the football program is anticipating the return to a more normalized schedule for 2021, stating that both players and coaches are excited about the upcoming football season. He also stated that the football program is beginning to get back into rhythm and that the goal for 2021 was not only to continue to improve in on-field competition but also to excel academically and in life outside of football.

Regent Higaki left at 10:12 a.m.

Regent Sullivan arrived at 10:13 a.m.

Chair Acoba stated that the Regents are committed to athletics because board bylaws indicate that the athletics program is an educational function of the university.

He commended AD Matlin, Coach Graham, athletics staff, and the entire football program on the exceptional job it has done on managing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and congratulated the program on an outstanding 2020 season that was capped by a bowl game victory. The football program provides much of the fiscal support for many of the other sports at UHM and so its success is key to the overall success of UHM athletics.

B. Update on Health and Safety Matters Relating to Student Athletes, Coaches, and Staff

AD Matlin acknowledged the efforts of the UHM Athletic Department (UHM Athletics) medical, training, and strength and conditioning staff in meeting the health and safety needs of student-athletes, coaches, and staff and Jonathan Sladky, M.D., the university's team physician, who would be providing an update on various health and safety matters involving UHM Athletics.

Dr. Sladky stated that UHM Athletics monitors COVID-19 response actions throughout the country and continues to collaborate with, and receive guidance from, entities at both the national and local levels to ensure that its response efforts are consistent and maintain the flexibility to quickly adapt to ever-changing situations. Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also serves as a valuable resource when establishing COVID-19 plans and protocols. Additionally, a number of interdepartmental groups such as the UHM Athletics COVID-19 Committee, Student-Athlete Well-Being Committee, and Student-Athlete Advisory Council play a vital role in formulating response efforts.

Screening and testing protocols for COVID-19 that have been implemented by UHM Athletics, as well as the various means of COVID-19 testing and resources being used to conduct testing, were reviewed. As of February 24, 2021, UHM Athletics has conducted about 9,740 tests, 24 of which have been confirmed as COVID-19 positive. Dr. Sladky noted that no evidence exists of community spread occurring among student-athletes as a result of participating in athletic activities.

As increased athletic competition begins to commence across the country, UHM Athletics continues to hone and refine its testing and travel protocols for its sports programs with Dr. Sladky reporting that protocols implemented in the fall for the football program functioned well. It was stated that the UHM Athletics' travel protocol program was established in accordance with recommended guidelines and uses a multilayered approach that includes regular COVID-19 testing, health screenings and monitoring, and contact tracing. He also reviewed protocols that were developed for teams traveling to Hawai'i for athletic competition in addition to those for a return-to-play and conducting of athletic practices.

Dr. Sladky noted that all of the UHM Athletics medical staff and primary athletic trainers have been fully vaccinated and that the remainder of department personnel will be vaccinated in accordance with university-established protocols and timelines.

During a time in which mental health concerns are on the rise globally, Dr. Sladky spoke on the importance of ensuring the mental well-being of the student-athlete in addition to their physical well-being. UHM Athletics has initiated a comprehensive program that uses a multilayered approach in addressing the mental health needs of its student athletes. Proactive and preventative mental health measures being taken include the use of TalkSpace, a web-based mental health platform that strategically pairs an athlete who enrolls in the service with a psychologist who best fits the athlete's needs, and the provision of Counseling and Student Development Center (CSDC) therapists in residence halls to support on-campus residents after hours and on weekends. Reactive measures and treatment for acute mental health issues are also provided through a number of counseling and crisis hotline services provided by CSDC as well as third parties.

UHH AD Patrick Guillen provided an update on the various health and safety issues involving UHH Athletics reviewing some of the risk mitigation measures currently in place, as well as protocols regarding screening and testing, return-to-play, travel, and athletic practice, that have been implemented. He stated that, to date, UHH Athletics has conducted 2,135 COVID-19 tests, five of which have been confirmed as positive. All of the student-athletes who tested positive followed established protocols and strict quarantine guidelines and were cleared by the Hawai'i Department of Health once subsequent testing indicated that they were no longer positive for COVID-19. It was noted UHH Athletics has implemented similar travel protocols and testing strategies as UHM Athletics for both its student-athletes and visiting teams. UHH Athletics will continue to remain up-to-date on current best practices and strictly monitor its protocols and guidelines to ensure effectiveness and efficiencies and create contingencies as needed.

Chair Acoba asked if UHH Athletics would participate in baseball and softball during the spring season. AD Guillen responded in the affirmative.

C. Update of the Athletic Budget and Financial Integrity of the UHM and UHH Athletic Departments

AD Matlin stated that UHM Athletics, like other institutions, is facing a dynamic and uncertain situation that is unprecedented in intercollegiate athletics. Despite UHM Athletics' efforts to reduce costs and increase revenues, fiscal challenges continue to be an issue. He provided an update to the fiscal report given to the committee on February 4, 2021, stating that, after taking into consideration smaller than anticipated general fund reductions and adjusting anticipated television and radio revenues because of recently released sports schedules, UHM Athletics' projected net deficit has decreased slightly from \$8.3 to \$8.2 million for fiscal year (FY) 2021. UHM Athletics continues to search for opportunities to decrease expenses and enhance revenues including implementing some of the recommendations of the Strategic Visioning Committee (SVC).

Chair Acoba questioned whether the budget for UHM Athletics included funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. AD Matlin replied that UHM Athletics has received some CARES Act funding for testing and items such as

cleaning supplies but are still working with the administration in possibly obtaining additional CARES Act funds.

AD Guillen reported on the FY 2021 fiscal projections for UHH Athletics. He stated that UHH Athletics is anticipating net revenues of \$2,404,728 and net overall expenses of \$2,022,335 which will result in a surplus of \$382,393 being experienced for FY 2021. It was noted that the reduction in expenses and resultant surplus was mainly due to decreased travel costs for athletic teams as a result of limited competition or canceled seasons due to the pandemic.

D. Scheduling of Athletic Events for UHM and UHH

AD Matlin reported that the uncertainty and wide-reaching impacts of the pandemic continue to affect the scheduling of athletic events and the situation remains fluid. Although UHM Athletics controls some aspects of scheduling, outside influences such as the NCAA and various athletic conference scheduling criteria, television and other media contracts, and financial considerations have a tremendous impact on the scheduling of athletic events. Mercurial public health guidelines and protocols, as well as varying government rules and regulations, across the nation regarding the resumption of athletic competition in 2021 have also impacted scheduling. Nevertheless, the overall goal of UHM Athletics is to provide as many opportunities as possible for its athletes to participate in athletic competition while ensuring their health and safety.

Spring sports schedules that were just approved and released anticipate that UHM teams will compete in 203 events in the 2021 season. By comparison, UHM teams took part in 409 events during spring 2019, the last year in which complete athletic seasons took place. He noted that the decrease in competition was due mainly to a reduction in non-conference games, as well as the cancellation of seasons for some sports.

Chair Acoba asked whether AD Matlin was encouraged by the UHM spring schedule. AD Matlin responded in the affirmative. Although it was disappointing that seasons for sports such as women's volleyball and soccer were ultimately canceled, he believed that UHM Athletics staff did an outstanding job in securing the number of contests it did for the Spring 2021 season given the multiple factors that needed to be considered with regard to scheduling. While the situation was not optimal, UHM Athletics succeeded in attaining its goal of scheduling as many athletic contests as possible in which student-athletes could compete.

AD Guillen stated that, like UHM Athletics, the scheduling of spring 2021 events for UHH Athletics teams has been challenging and remains fluid. He noted that spring sports are beginning to start up with baseball and softball scheduled to play 24 games each, mainly within their respective pods. Basketball, which has already begun competition, is finishing its season and is on the verge of making its first appearance in NCAA post-season competition in 16 years. The Pacific West Conference (PacWest) has also begun discussions on the establishment of a framework for fall competition which may be a hybrid of pod and regular competition although a final decision on this matter is not expected for several months. He also acknowledged the outstanding work

of the UHH Athletics staff in developing the athletic schedules and thanked the other NCAA Division II schools in Hawai'i for collaborating with UHH Athletics in formulating schedules that would meet the needs of student athletes at their respective institutions.

E. Update on SVC Recommendations

AD Matlin provided an update on the recommendations of the SVC which were outlined in a report to the committee on February 4, 2021, and reviewed some of the recommendations being implemented by UHM Athletics. He also stated that UHM Athletics has also been advocating for an increase in the university's role with regard to the development of a new stadium by supporting efforts to elevate the university president to a voting position on the Stadium Authority and communicating the university's desired business model regarding any new stadium to the Stadium Authority and other State officials. UHM Athletics will continue to build on the efforts of the SVC and pursue any recommendations it determines to be feasible and in the best interest of the university.

F. Aloha Stadium and Football Facilities Update

AD Matlin provided an update to the report on Aloha Stadium and football facilities that was provided to the committee on February 4, 2021. As previously noted, the decision to demolish Aloha Stadium required UHM Athletics to find a venue that would potentially allow fan participation to host home games for the university's football team for the foreseeable future, possibly three to four years, and that the venue selected as the most suitable location was the Clarence T.C. Ching Athletic Complex (Ching Athletic Complex) on the UHM campus. He summarized the most current information available on necessary facility upgrades and improvements; the budget for the upgrades and improvements; fiscal implications for UHM Athletics; and timelines for completion. It was noted that bleachers for the Ching Athletic Complex, which UHM Athletics initially considered renting, will now be purchased as it was decided that this would be the most fiscally responsible course of action.

Home football games have historically resulted in an estimated \$3.4 million net positive contribution to the UHM Athletics budget which helps support the football program in addition to all other sports. While the ability to play games in front of a full complement of fans at a large venue such as Aloha Stadium would be the best-case scenario, AD Matlin stated that it is still more financially advantageous to play games, with or without fans in attendance, no matter the location, than not playing any games.

UHM Athletics will continue dialogues with the Stadium Authority and others in establishing partnerships regarding a new stadium facility, as the development of a new, modern stadium complex is a game-changer for any college football program and could provide significant revenue-generating activities that would not only be beneficial for UHM Athletics, but for the entire university system.

Vice-Chair Westerman requested clarification about the efforts of UHM Athletics in determining the feasibility of using existing off-campus facilities or neighbor island venues for hosting home football games, including costs-benefit considerations, prior to the selection of the Ching Athletic Complex as the most feasible option. AD Matlin

replied that a wide range of factors were considered in identifying and selecting a suitable location to host home games. Some of these factors included overall costs and potential for revenue-generating opportunities, as well as the ability to address the health and safety needs of players, students, and fans; meet NCAA and Mountain West Conference requirements or obtain waivers from these requirements; and accommodate anticipated fan attendance while providing facilities that were easily accessible for both students and fans. He also noted that playing all home games away from Honolulu for the next three to four years would not be economically feasible in terms of operational and capital expenses; would be physically, emotionally, and academically challenging for the student-athletes; and would have negative impacts on the football program in terms of recruitment and retention of student-athletes.

Vice-Chair Westerman agreed that the selection of the Ching Athletic Complex was the most feasible and stated that there would be long-term benefits realized by an on-campus stadium in terms of increased student engagement that could translate into a larger fan base for the program, as well as revenue-enhancement possibilities through the rental of facilities for external events, even after the football team returned to play at a larger venue like a new Aloha Stadium. AD Matlin concurred with this assessment.

Stating that it was her understanding that both capital improvement project-repair, improvement, and maintenance (CIP-RIM) funds as well as private donations would be used for the improvements at the Ching Athletic Complex, Regent Sullivan asked for an update on these funding efforts. AD Matlin replied that UHM Athletics will be using a mixture of CIP-RIM funding and private donations for the capital improvements to the Ching Athletic Complex and stated that fundraising efforts are ongoing. He noted the receipt of over \$2 million in private donations so far and that several more substantial private donations are anticipated.

Chair Acoba asked whether the first home football game of 2021, which is scheduled for September 4, will be held at the Ching Athletic Complex. AD Matlin replied that UHM Athletics is working as quickly as possible and prioritizing improvement projects at the Ching Athletic Complex to at least meet the minimum requirements to host games. Although it will be challenging given the timelines, he was optimistic that the facility will be ready to host its first football game in September.

V. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Vice-Chair Westerman moved to adjourn, seconded by Regent Bal, and noting the excused absence of Regent Higaki, and with all other members present voting in the affirmative, the meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

/S/

Kendra Oishi
Executive Administrator and Secretary
of the Board of Regents