

**Athletics Committee
Minutes
9 October 2025**

Attendees

Voting Members Present:

- Cindy Black - Assistant Professor, Counseling Department (newly elected Chair)
- Jedediah Bragg - Assistant Professor, School of Social Work (newly elected Secretary)
- Seonsook Park - Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Rio Rancho
- Mario Gonzales - Professor, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice

Ex-Officio Members Present:

- Ben Bencomo - Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR), Associate Professor, School of Social Work
- Selena Foster - Athletics Chief of Staff

Transitional Facilitator:

- Katherine Jenkins - Outgoing Chair, Faculty Senate Committee Member

Call to Order

- Katherine Jenkins called the meeting to order at 8:01 AM, noting her role was to facilitate the election of a new chair and secretary, then notify the Faculty Senate of the results.

Chair and Secretary Elections

- **Chair Election Process:**
 - Katherine Jenkins explained that only voting committee members (Seonsook Park, Jedediah Bragg, Mario Gonzales, and Cindy Black) were eligible for chair positions
 - Ex-officio members (Ben Bencomo and Selena Foster) were not eligible to serve as chair
 - Seonsook Park noted she would be unavailable due to sabbatical next semester
- **Nominations and Elections:**
 - **Motion:** Seonsook Park nominated Cindy Black for Chair
 - **Second:** Motion accepted by Cindy Black
 - **Motion:** Self-nominated Jedediah Bragg for Secretary
 - **Vote:** Unanimous approval via Zoom reactions for both positions
 - **RESULT:** Cindy Black elected Chair, Jedediah Bragg elected Secretary
 - Katherine Jenkins departed after completing the election process and turning meeting control to the new chair.

Review of Previous Meeting Minutes

Committee Introductions:

- Due to new membership, introductions were conducted:
 - **Cindy Black:** Assistant Professor, Counseling Department, second year at Highlands
 - **Selena Foster:** Athletics Chief of Staff, second year in position
 - **Seonsook Park:** 16 years at Highlands, third year on Athletic Committee, stationed at Rio Rancho; Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, School of Education
 - **Mario Gonzales:** 22nd year at Highlands, Cultural Anthropologist, new to Athletic Committee (joined end of last semester)
 - **Jedediah Bragg:** Third year at Highlands, School of Social Work, specializes in human-animal interaction and animal-assisted interventions
 - **Ben Bencomo:** Associate Professor, Social Work, second year as FAR, previously served as committee chair

Minutes Approval:

- **Motion:** Jedediah Bragg moved to approve previous meeting minutes
- **Second:** Seonsook Park
- **Vote:** Approved unanimously
- **Note:** New members approved based on review, acknowledging they were not present at the previous meeting

Standing Reports

- **Athletic Director Report (via Selena Foster):**
 - New men's basketball coach hired and recruiting actively
 - Women's track and field performing well
 - End of year gala planning underway
 - Search initiated for new softball coach

FAR Report (Ben Bencomo):

- NCAA survey completed and submitted as required
- Ongoing coordination between Faculty Senate and Athletics
- Title IX procedures oversight continuing

Ongoing Business

- **Academic Support System Development:**
 - **Background:** Committee discussed developing a standardized grade check system beyond midterms and finals.
 - **Current Challenge:** Need for early intervention (4-5 week mark) to support struggling student-athletes without overburdening faculty.
 - **Proposed Solutions Discussed:**
 - **Student-Initiated Grade Checks:** Athletes responsible for obtaining and submitting grade verification forms to coaches

- **Faculty Survey System:** Brief 2-3 question electronic surveys for faculty to report student-athlete progress
- **Hybrid Approach:** Combination of student responsibility and streamlined faculty reporting
- **Action Items:**
 - Jedediah Bragg will obtain examples from previous institution's grade check system
 - Cindy Black will provide high school-level grade check materials and processes
 - Committee will develop faculty-friendly system for next meeting
- **GPA Reporting:**
 - Jim Deisler (Senior Associate Athletic Director for Compliance) prepares semester GPA reports
 - **Decision:** Committee will request GPA reports to monitor overall student-athlete academic performance

New Business

- **Stadium Renovation Project: Presenter: Selena Foster**
 - **Timeline: Two-year renovation project beginning Spring 2025**
 - **Phase 1 (Spring 2025 - Fall 2025):**
 - Demolition of east grandstands
 - Track and football field renovation
 - Installation of regulation-size track (first ever for university)
 - New turf installation
 - Regulation soccer field creation (allows soccer to return to campus)
 - **Phase 2 (Following year):**
 - Westside grandstands demolition and replacement
 - Full stadium construction with concourse
 - Press boxes and VIP/Presidential suites
 - Estimated capacity: approximately 4,500 seats
 - J-shaped seating configuration
 - **Phase 3 (Future):**
 - Baseball and softball stadium renovations
 - Indoor batting cages
 - Indoor throwing areas for track and field
 - Covered grandstands for baseball/softball
 - **Current Impact:**
 - Soccer currently practices on-campus but plays games at Old Memorial Middle School
 - Track and cross-country teams use various locations (track on golf course for meets)

- Baseball and softball currently adequate but scheduled for future renovation
- **Action Item:**
 - Scott Noble (Athletic Director) will provide complete renderings at next meeting

Clinical Support Services Proposal: Presenter: Jedediah Bragg

- **Concept:** Develop master's-level social work internships within Athletics Department, modeled after successful programs at University of Oklahoma and University of Alabama.
 - **Proposed Services:**
 - Program evaluation support
 - Student connection to needed resources
 - Support group facilitation
 - Academic progress monitoring assistance
 - Clinical resource provision for budget-constrained environment
 - **Current Resources: Ben Bencomo**
 - HU Cares provides clinical interns (supervised by Felicia Martinez, MSW) serving all students
 - High number of student-athletes already access HU Cares services
 - Counseling Department also provides internship placements
 - **Potential Benefits:**
 - Specialized support for student-athletes
 - Understanding of unique athletic pressures and scheduling challenges
 - Early intervention capabilities
 - Cost-effective clinical resource
 - **Available Resources:**
 - Two current student-athletes (wrestler and volleyball player) will be seniors needing practicum placements
 - Potential collaboration between Social Work and Counseling programs
 - Ben Bencomo offered co-supervision support with Felicia Martinez, if this were to happen
 - **Action Items:**
 - Jedediah Bragg will research and provide information from Alabama and OU programs
 - Committee will explore feasibility and implementation strategies
 - Cindy Black noted potential counseling student with coaching background
- **Title IX Coordination: Presenter Cindy Black (Clarifications by Ben Bencomo)**
 - Ruth Marion Polsky serves as Title IX Coordinator
 - **Committee Role:** Focus on Title IX compliance regarding equity in men's and women's sports, particularly for new sport proposals

- **Clarification:** General Title IX investigations/support separate from committee purview
 - **Decision:** Invite Title IX Coordinator to October meeting for general compliance report
- **Future Sport Considerations:**
 - Discussions ongoing for potential new sports in approximately 3-year timeframe
 - Any new sport proposals must go through Faculty Athletic Committee
 - Athletic Director Scott Noble will provide more details at future meeting

Administrative Matters

- **Meeting Schedule:**
 - **Requirement:** Three meetings per semester (per Faculty Handbook)
 - **Scheduling Constraints Identified:**
 - Wednesday afternoons: Education department meetings, Social Work rotating meetings
 - Afternoons generally: Athletics conflicts
 - Mondays/Tuesdays: Athletic Director unavailable (meetings/cabinet)
 - Fridays: General faculty conflicts
 - **Agreed Schedule:** Thursday mornings at 8:00 AM
 - **Next Meetings Scheduled:**
 - **October 30, 2025** at 8:00 AM
 - **November 13, 2025** at 8:00 AM
 - *Note: Seonsook Park will be absent from November meeting due to conference*
 - **Committee Membership:**
 - Current voting members: 4 (minimum 5 recommended)
 - Faculty Senate working to add 1-2 additional members (Business and/or Arts & Sciences)
 - Quorum requirement: 3 voting members (if we have the minimum of a five voting members serving)
 - Kathy Jenkins noted replacements needed before she departed meeting
- **Administrative Responsibilities:**
 - **Chair Duties (Cindy Black):**
 - Meeting agenda preparation
 - Zoom link distribution
 - Calendar invitations to all participants
 - Minutes submission to Katie Gray and Jennifer Lindline for Faculty Senate website posting
 - **Secretary Duties (Jedediah Bragg):**
 - Meeting minutes preparation and distribution to chair

- Committee correspondence as needed
- **Additional Invitees for Future Meetings:**
 - Scott Noble (Athletic Director)
 - Craig (Student Athlete Achievement Coordinator/Assistant Athletic Director)
 - Jim Deisler (Senior Associate Athletic Director for Compliance)

Action Items Summary for October 30, 2025 Meeting:

- **Jedediah Bragg:** previous institution's grade check system examples and clinical internship program information from Alabama/OU
 - Will consult with Ben Bencomo to aid in institutional knowledge at Highlands
 - **Cindy Black:** Provide high school-level grade check processes and materials
 - **Scott Noble:** request presentation complete stadium renovation renderings
 - **Cindy Black:** Coordinate invitation to Ruth (Title IX Coordinator) for general compliance presentation

Adjournment

- **Motion to Adjourn:** Seonsook Park
- **Second:** Jedediah Bragg
- **Vote:** Approved unanimously
- **Time:** 8:57 AM MDT