September 28, 2018

UW ATHLETICS SAFETY REVIEW COMPLETE

MADISON, Wis. – A review of the University of Wisconsin Department of Intercollegiate Athletics’ health and safety-related policies and procedures both affirmed the success of most of the department’s practices and offered recommendations for an even greater level of care for UW Athletics’ student-athletes and staff.

The wide-ranging review, requested by UW Director of Athletics Barry Alvarez last February, was conducted under the direction of Walter Dickey, UW-Madison Professor of Law Emeritus and Special Assistant to the Athletic Director and included representatives from campus units, faculty, the Board of Regents and the UW Athletic Board.

It yielded numerous recommendations around the physical environments in which student-athletes and staff operate; healthcare, including mental health, of student-athletes; and communication and reporting.

“The health and safety of our student-athletes and staff are my top priority,” said Alvarez. “I am both thankful that we have much already in place that addresses those needs and appreciative of the thoughtful recommendations the review has yielded. The bottom line is that this review will make Wisconsin Athletics better.”

“I appreciate the hard work of our review group as well as the cooperation of the student-athletes and athletics staff,” Dickey added. “Their honesty was critical in helping us form the recommendations we are making to the athletic department. This was an important process to undertake and one that I believe will serve as the foundation for improvement across the department.”

The review included in-person meetings and interviews – both in group and individual settings -- with student-athletes and staff members, including coaches, athletic trainers, doctors, UW Athletics senior staff and the head of every support unit in the athletic department. In addition, nearly 700 current student-athletes and approximately 400 UW Athletics staff members were invited to participate in a healthy and safety-related survey that informed the review.

The review will be presented at the UW System Board of Regents meeting on Thursday, Oct. 4 at UW-Parkside and again at the UW Athletic Board meeting on Friday, Oct. 5. Some of the recommendations in the review have already been implemented or are in the process of being implemented. Still others will be addressed in the weeks and months to come.

Among the specific findings and recommendations …

* One of the most common observations from student-athletes and staff related to the need for greater monitoring of access to, and traffic in, UW athletics facilities. UWPD has agreed to audit athletics facilities and make recommendations about how to improve safety in them.
* While staffing of athletic trainers has increased significantly, a further analysis of staffing in this area is needed to ensure that the needs of UW student-athletes are being met.
* Student-athletes desire improved mental health services, which reflects a similar need across the student body as a whole. UW Athletics will survey appropriate staff and students to determine the adequacy of the department’s services in this area.
* The department will work to improve the communication of its processes to student-athletes and staff so they are clear on how (and to whom) to report health and safety concerns, including sexual assault and harassment. The department is already at work on this.

Joining Dickey for the review process were Alvarez, Claire Dalle Molle and Andrew Norman of UW-Madison’s Office of Legal Affairs, Professor Ann Sheehy of the UW-Madison School of Medicine, UW-Madison Police Chief Kristen Roman, Professor Richard Davidson of the UW-Madison Department of Psychology and founder of the Center for Healthy Minds, UW System Board of Regent Regina Millner, UW Athletics Director of Student-Athlete Engagement Alando Tucker and Peter Miller, UW-Madison Professor of Education and Chair of the UW Athletic Board. Brady Minter and Dan Rohrer of the UW Athletics Compliance Department and Katherine Wodajo, UW Athletics’ Director of Student-Athlete Recruiting, helped staff the review.

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