

**DEPARTMENT OF SYSTEMS &
INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING**

Engineering Building
1127 E. James E. Rogers Way
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<https://sie.engineering.arizona.edu/>



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
College of Engineering

To: UA Faculty Senate
Leila Hudson, Ph.D., Chair of the Faculty
Mona Hymel, J.D., Presiding Officer of the Faculty Senate
Katharine Zeiders, Ph.D., Secretary of the Faculty

Cc: Suresh Garimella, Ph.D., President
Desiree Reed-Francois, Vice President of Athletics
Intercollegiate Athletics Committee

From: Ricardo Valerdi, Ph.D., Distinguished Outreach Professor and Head, Department
of Systems & Industrial Engineering; Faculty Athletics Representative

RE: Faculty Athletics Representative Report for 2024-25 Academic Year

Date: May 5, 2025

As part of my role as UA's Faculty Athletics Representative, I hereby provide my report for the current academic year summarized in ten highlights.

1. Student athletes achieved the **highest overall Fall semester GPA** on record: **3.37** (led by women's tennis 3.87 and men's cross country 3.62; football also achieved highest GPA on record = 3.12).
2. UA is completing its first year in the **Big XII conference** (see attached map) thereby allowing travel comparison analysis to be done vs. Pac-12 destinations.
3. Big XII Faculty of the Year: **James Powell** (Economics).
4. Continued faculty engagement in **Intercollegiate Athletics Committee**: Spece (Law), Benson (Eller), Gehrels (Geosciences), Newmann (Eller), Salvesen (Student Retention), et al. and **Senate-appointed ad hoc committee on athletics finances** continues its analysis/benchmarking with participation from Lutrick (Family and Community Medicine), Fishback (Economics), Hartman (Animal

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and Biomedical Sciences), Torres (Agriculture Education), Schluntz (Aerospace & Mechanical Engineering), and Locke (Nursing)

5. Ongoing monitoring of NCAA violations and rules education via **Compliance, Eligibility, and Student Athlete Well-Being (CESAW)** committee. E.g., automating Dean of Students excuses for student athletes; FAR continues compliance oversight of academic (re)certification: progress towards degree, minimum GPA, full time enrollment, review of independent study courses, grade changes for student athletes, comparison of student athlete vs. non-student athlete grades, educational-related financial awards (i.e., Alston) appeals.
6. Athletics' Compliance Department underwent **external audit** by third party providing process improvement recommendations.
7. Faculty outreach events included the **CATS Academics Open House** in Feb 2025; brought together campus administration, faculty, staff, donors, coaches, student athletes, etc. and various guest coaches opportunities for faculty, notably **Breakfast and Ball** Football team with 40+ guests at practice in April 2025.
8. **Athletics Performance Summit** in November 2024 brought together sports medicine/athletics training personnel and researchers from medicine, nutrition, computer science, engineering and others to explore research collaboration opportunities.
9. **New Head Coaches** hired by Desiree Reed-Francois: Maymon (Women's golf), Loorz (Swimming & Dive), and Burke (women's basketball). Women's golf and men's tennis are UA's first Big XII Champions.
10. **Student athlete end of season surveys** provide a snapshot of team culture, opportunities for feedback, and insight into student athlete experience. Response rate increased from 14% → 70% compared to last year.

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