



**COMMITTEE ON ATHLETICS
END OF SEMESTER SPRING 2020 REPORT**

Committee on Athletics

Before I begin 2020 year-end report, I would like to recognize and honor the incredible members of COA. I have been so very fortunate to have worked side by side and shoulder to shoulder with some of the most dedicated and diligent individuals that I have had the immense privilege and honor to travel with on this journey, serving the student athletes grounded in holistic health and well-being.

First Name	Last Name	Officer	Constituency	Term
Jerome	Agrusa		TIM	2019-21
*Faculty Peer Mentor for Men's Basketball				
Penny-Bee	Bovard	Chair	AA	2018-20
Francie	Julien-Chinn	Secretary	SOCWK	2019-21
Deborah	Mattheus	Vice Chair	SONDH	2018-20
Pallav	Pokhrel		ORU	2018-19
Kelley Withy	JABSOM			2019-21

COA LIAISON
Jennifer Griswold

FAR REPRESENTATIVE: Faculty Athletic Representative
Scott Sinnett

COIA REPRESENTATIVE:
Kelly Withy

All Unfinished Business from Previous Fall 2019 and Current Semester Spring 2020 are now in the stages of research and initial implementation

1. Career Development Program for Student Athletes: IPO: 'Ike Pilialoha 'Oihana
2. Holistic Health Care Support and Services for Student Athletes

Continued Business for New 2020-2021 Year

1. FOCUS: Holistic Health Care Support and Services for Student Athletes focusing on effects of COVID19 mental, physical, emotional, spiritual health
Career Development Program for Student Athletes: IPO: 'Ike Pilialoha 'Oihana:
Career Services Program

COA work closely with SAAS and Athletic Department, as well as on and off campus resources develop program based on best practices and needs. Work with student athletes to identify relevant career tracks based on their major (degree) through life skills training and personal development.

FOCUS: Holistic Health Care Support and Services for Student Athletes

COA was able to make great progress on this issue by speaking directly to the student athletes, Director of Student Athlete Support Services, Cindy Rote, Learning Specialist with Student Athlete Academic Services, Erika Huddle, UHM Health Center, Dr. Sladky with Athletics, and other key stakeholders to elicit their experiences and expertise.

Student Athletes articulated, honestly and without reservation the need for permanent, accessible and confidential mental health services on campus that addresses student athletes' unique challenges and stressors (all students). Agreed that all students at UH Mānoa need and deserve these services and support, however, student athletes face additional pressures related specifically to their sport; which also includes the heavy burden of being stigmatized by coaches and teammates associated with mental illness. Therefore, confidentiality in reporting is a major concern for student athletes. There is a legitimate fear of coaches, and teammates finding out that student athlete reporting depression or mental illness will be judged as not in condition to play their sport. One student athlete shared personal experience of trying to cope (unsuccessfully) with depression and not having on campus support and services that were needed to treat illness in timely and effective manner.

COA is dedicated to embracing the whole-body student-athlete. It is very easy to forget that the student athletes on the field are still young people – many still teenagers – learning to navigate the college experience (and life in general). One of our student athletes shared with me, that adjusting to life as a college athlete was “like walking through an obstacle course wearing a blindfold.” The pressure on young athletes – especially in those high-profile sports on the big stage – is certain to place a major toll on mental health.

And while studies show that college athletes have slightly lower rates of anxiety and depression than the general student population, they're also more likely to conceal it from coaches and training staff, according to an NCAA report. In that same report, Brian Hainline, NCAA Chief Medical Officer, explains the importance of mental health in student-athletes:

“As more media coverage, commentary and public scrutiny are devoted to what student-athletes do off the field, along with the accompanying pressures to perform (and win games) on the field, student-athletes are inundated with factors that may affect their mental health and wellness. And the ‘culture’ of athletics may inhibit student-athletes from seeking help to address issues such as anxiety,

depression, the stress associated with the expectations of their sport, and the everyday stress of dealing with relationships, academic demands, and adjusting to life away from home.”

That reluctance only exacerbates the issue, leading to added anxiety and decreased athletic performance. And when a school’s athletic training facility isn’t equipped to handle mental health as comprehensively as it treats an ankle sprain, the message to the student-athletes isn’t generally positive. Julie Kliegman elaborates in *The Ringer*:

“When players are expected to leave the athletic department’s facilities to seek care, they get the message that they’re outsiders, that what they’re dealing with isn’t a problem common among their peers. They can get the impression that they need to separate who they are as student-athletes from the ways in which their brains work.”

Conversely, if athletes can get the mental support they need in the same community where they spend so much of their time, then the overall environment becomes much more supportive and conducive to a healthy whole-body approach.

So, growing a supportive environment is key to the increase awareness of mental health issues, thus the promotion of resources which support healthy and positive coping skills among student-athletes.”

Designing for the future of college athletics

Of course, athletic directors and coaches are focused on winning games. Part of that is finding ways to push the envelope beyond just the physical enhancement of student-athletes, but actually increasing the mental recovery efforts as well.

To that end UHM, prior to COVID19 was able to, through the Department of Athletics, was able to hire a trained counselor to work with student athletes in a safe and confidential environment once or twice a week for several hours a day. I must share that appointments were made almost immediately and by the time “shelter in place” became a way of life, there was a month long wait to get an appointment.

During COVID19 services have continued via Zoom and TeleHealth (Kelley Withy) and also TalkSpace.

Erika Huddle has had a vital role in working with community members and the Athletic Department:

- E. Huddle’s partnership with private mental health agency: Beyond Mental Health - Dr. Thomas Cook continues

- o full psycho-educational evaluations conducted as well - NOT AVAILABLE ON CAMPUS at UHM
 - o This office transitioned to telehealth during COVID19 crisis so services were not interrupted - evaluations and treatment conducted as far as The Netherlands during this period
- E. Huddle invited to long-standing “Student-Athlete Well-Being Committee” to be a regular member due to expressed interest and involvement with mental health supports
 - o Meeting bridges departments in UH athletics and aims to address student-athlete wellness in a holistic/multi-disciplinary framework
 - o This committee plans to introduce TalkSpace app to student-athletes as an intervention to support student-athletes - MSW counseling
- New proactive initiatives to support mental health and wellness:
 - o Creations of Special Olympics College Club - 8 students have begun meeting to form a new college club for UHM student-athletes
 - This is designed to provide meaningful engagement for student-athletes outside of athletics
 - o Athletes expressed interest in doing a club to support the area’s homeless population as well
 - o Informational and Training workshops for student athletes, Coaches and staff

Mental health and wellness (Holistic health) is a part of, not apart from, student athletes’ health. Mental health exists on a continuum, with resilience and thriving on one end of the spectrum and mental health disorders that disrupt a college athlete’s functioning and performance at the other. To this end, COA will continue to strive to improve and implement permanent and confidential access to quality mental healthcare with the goal of creating a culture where care seeking for mental health issues is as normative as care seeking for physical injuries.

Student athletes are natural leaders and courageous self-starters and can be the key we need to tackle the challenges and stigma around mental health! If we work together to bring mental health into our regular conversation, we can open the door to create real change in the way we think and talk and treat mental health for student athletes and for all our students at UHM.