

UAAAC: 2023 – 2024 Report

Submitted by Dr. Arturo Rodriguez, Council Chair

Members: Arturo Rodriguez (Chair), Leigh Hersey (FAR), Shannon Banks, Valerie Fields, DeRon Talley, Ty Harp, John Hartwell, Anthony Malta, Patti Pate, Carmen Wright, Angel Darden (through October 2023), Oliver Jackson, Ann Rodriguez (October 2023 through April 2024) and Mr. David Reed (Compliance, October 2023 through April 2024)

Leigh Hersey (FAR) met with President Berry during the summer of 2023 to establish the main priorities for the upcoming year. Dr. Berry emphasized APR Tracking and Monitoring as well as Mental Health Awareness. Throughout the year, these two priorities were emphasized by setting up meetings with previous FAR's as well as setting up Mental Health Awareness training sessions. Hersey also met with different ULM teams to better explain to Student Athletes what the role of the FAR is and how she can assist them in their academic journey.

Throughout the year, Patti Pate and Carmen Wright continued to share obstacles and successes for student-athlete registration, tutoring, and advising. Working on the rollout and implementation of the DegreeWorks advising system proved challenging, as the system had inaccuracies that made advising more difficult. Carmen Wright explained that even though we may have a digital degree auditing system, athletic advisors are still required to provide paper degree sheets. Obtaining access to ULM Online courses continued to be a challenge for Student Athletes, as these courses are reserved for Online Students only and they are given preference before face-to-face students. The football team started holding practice hours in the morning, which made it difficult for these Student Athletes to find the courses they needed late in the morning. The ULM football team achieved the #1 GSR in the SunBelt conference for the last 8 years. ULM also had some of the highest average GPAs in the SunBelt for all sports.

David Reed was hired in the fall of 2023 as the new Associate AD for Compliance. New compliance policies and procedures were implemented throughout the year to be able to comply with the reinstatement of APR reporting and to remedy existing deficiencies. Additional staff was hired to assist with the development of those policies. A NIL policy was crafted and delivered to President Berry for review and approval.

Dr. Hersey worked with Carmen Wright and academic counselors to identify Kaitlyn Novak (Beach Volleyball) and Carson Jones (Baseball), for the 2024 Sun Belt Conference Postgraduate Scholarship Award.

The Council worked with the student-athletes to award the Faculty Member of the Year recognition. Dr. Tammy Johnston, Professor of Economics at the College of Business and Social Sciences won ULM's Faculty Member of the Year Award and was submitted to the Sunbelt Conference to represent ULM in the conference award.

Looking Ahead

The UAAAC has already prioritized focus areas for the 2024 – 2025 Academic Year. The number one priority is to focus on student-athlete continues to be academic achievement. Additionally, with the reinstatement of APR reporting, ULM needs to continue to implement the policies and reporting procedures that were started in 2022. During the summer of 2024, David Reed resigned and a search for a new Associate AD for Compliance was started.

This past year, the UAAAC did not experience the level of membership turnover from previous years. Dr. Ann Rodriguez resigned from the committee at the end of the academic year. The UAAAC will immediately ask for a new representative from the College of Arts, Education, and Sciences.