

CU chancellor Phil DiStefano says academic review committee working well

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University of Colorado chancellor Phil DiStefano and faculty athletic representative David Clough said the first year went smoothly for a five-member committee that reviews the academic credentials of high-risk students being recruited by the athletic department.

The chancellor and athletic director Mike Bohn formed the Triple A committee last year with an eye on giving coaches help in forecasting the likelihood of a student being able to succeed at CU. They also believed it would help coaches meet NCAA standards under the Academic Progress Rate program because coaches would take fewer risks on student-athletes who might end up being ineligible.

"When you look at the new APR rules coming up in the next four years, there are going to be some major changes and we want to make sure that we're ahead of the curve," DiStefano said. "The sanctions are pretty severe. ... I think what all of us are concerned about, the coaches, the faculty, the staff is that we want to be competitive and we want to be in those championship games and we want to be able to not only win those championship games but be able to go on to bowl games and other NCAA finals. I think other schools are doing the same thing as far as looking at recruits coming in and making sure they are going to stay eligible and also be competitive on the field."

Senior women's administrator Ceal Barry is the only member of the committee who works in the athletic department. It also includes faculty and representatives from the registrar's office.

Before a prospect in any sport makes an official visit, the Office of the Registrar completes a review of where the prospect stands in terms of criteria for NCAA eligibility. If a prospect falls below a certain threshold, that initiates a review by the committee.

"The majority of prospects who are recruited heavily by our coaches, don't come under review of the Triple A Committee," Clough said. "We have some very experienced people on the committee and we look at these things pretty carefully. We make some decisions and we always try to provide some high quality feedback to the coaching staff."

Clough said the committee does not look at each recruit with the level of detail as the admissions office, which comes later in the process after a recruit has signed a national letter of intent and has completed high school or junior college. The committee also only looks at information available during the recruiting process, which means in some sports such as basketball, it doesn't have access to how a recruit performed at any point as a senior.

Clough said in the first year, there were numerous times when the committee informed coaches that it wouldn't be worth their time to continue recruiting a certain prospect because that prospect was very unlikely to be accepted to CU. Clough said he didn't have a specific number of recruits who were given a thumbs down by the committee.

"It has happened, not three times, not fifty times," Clough said. "I'd have to do a complete review."

Clough said it's normal for the football coaches alone to send 100 or more sets of academic credentials from recruits to the registrar's office during a recruiting cycle. He said a relatively small percentage of those prospects end up being reviewed by the committee.

There have been instances when coaches, upset about a recruit being turned down after review by the registrar and the committee, turn to DiStefano for approval.

"Very seldom if ever," DiStefano said when asked how often that occurs. "I do talk to the coaches throughout the year, but not about a specific recruit or somebody that Triple A is saying is on the margin. I try to let that work out below my level, where it should work out. It should work out with the AD, the coaches and the faculty athletic rep."

Clough, who has been CU's faculty athletic representative since 2005, said some schools have no review process in place for recruits and others have a review process that only begins after a recruit has signed a national letter of intent. Clough said he believes with APR and NCAA eligibility standards growing tougher, many schools will eventually institute review processes like the CU committee. He said UCLA has a similar process in place for reviewing recruits.

"We are not set up to be a wall between us and the coaches," Clough said. "In other words, if the coach has some information that we might not be aware of that would be helpful in an evaluation, we'd like to know that. So in that way, we're a little different from admissions."

"... It's a new system. We've been through our first year and we're still learning how to make it a really smooth operation. I think we did reasonably well, but I think we'll be better at it next year and the coaches will be more used to it."