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INTRODUCTION
This handbook has been prepared for the purpose of clarifying the policies of the Misericordia University Athletic Department as they relate to student-athletes. This handbook presents an overview of departmental policy and philosophy and is in no way intended to cover all situations which may arise. Hopefully, it will clarify areas of maximum concern and give a better understanding of policies and procedures which serve to guide the day to day operation of the program of intercollegiate athletics.

Misericordia University holds membership in Division III of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). In addition, the University is a member of the Freedom Conference of the Middle Atlantic States Athletics Corporation (MAC) and the Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC). As a member of these organizations and in keeping with the values upon which Misericordia University experience was founded, the Athletic Department is committed to providing an athletic program conducted in such a manner as to serve as an integral part of the total educational experience of the student-athlete.

ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES
Goals and objectives which guide the day to day activity of the Athletic Department include:
- To provide an opportunity for those students who desire to strive for excellence through involvement in a highly competitive intercollegiate athletic program.
- To develop and maintain an intercollegiate athletic program that is competitive while uncompromising in subscription to NCAA Division III principles as well as the values upon which MU is founded.
- To develop and maintain a program of intercollegiate athletic activities which is sensitive to the needs and desires of the University community.
- To provide experiences through intercollegiate athletics designed to enhance the athletic, intellectual, moral and social development of students.

PROGRAM OFFERINGS
Misericordia University offers students the opportunity to participate in the following varsity athletic activities:
- **Fall**
  - Cross Country (Men and Women)
  - Field Hockey (Women)
  - Soccer (Men and Women)
  - Volleyball (Women)
- **Winter**
  - Basketball (Men and Women)
  - Cheerleading
  - Swimming (Men and Women)
- **Spring**
  - Baseball (Men)
  - Softball (Women)
  - Golf (Men and Women)
  - Lacrosse (Men and Women)
  - Tennis (Men and Women)
  - Track and Field (Men and Women)

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS
Student-athletes at Misericordia University must be prepared to meet NCAA eligibility regulations. In addition, student-athletes must meet academic regulations as established by the University. A summary of eligibility requirements follows.

It is important to note that information presented here will not include reference to all NCAA Division III requirements. The entire code is extensive and complex. As such, information presented here is designed to provide important details. For complete information regarding NCAA Division III eligibility standards, student-athletes should consult with the Director of Athletics.

NCAA Division III Regulations
In order to be eligible for participation in a sport you must not have:
- a) Accepted pay for competing in that sport.
- b) Agreed to compete in professional athletics in that sport.
- c) Played on any professional athletic team in that sport as defined by the NCAA.

In addition, you are not eligible in any sport if, because of your athletic ability, you were paid for work you did not perform, were paid at a rate higher than the going rate, or accepted pay in any form unacceptable to the NCAA.

Financial Aid
You shall relinquish your eligibility in all sports if you receive financial aid other than that which Misericordia distributes. However, it is right to receive:
- a) Money from anyone upon whom you are naturally or legally dependent.
b) Financial aid that has been awarded to you on a basis other than athletic ability.

c) Financial aid from a program outside of Misericordia that meets the requirements of the NCAA. You must report to Misericordia any financial aid received from persons other than those upon whom you are naturally or legally dependent.

**Academic Standards**
To be eligible to compete you must:

a) Be a regular matriculated degree seeking student.

b) Be in good academic standing according to the standards of Misericordia University. (see pg. 3 *Institutional Academic Standards*).

c) Be enrolled in at least a minimum full-time program, (not less than 12 semester hours) and maintain satisfactory progress toward a degree.

If you are enrolled in less than a full-time program, you are eligible to compete only if you are in the last term of your degree program and carrying enough credits to finish your degree.

In order to serve as a team student-assistant, one must be in good academic standing according to Misericordia standards.

**Other NCAA Regulations Concerning Eligibility**

a) You are not eligible to participate in more than four seasons of intercollegiate competition in any given sport.

b) You must complete your eligibility during the first 10 semesters in which you are enrolled in a collegiate institution in a minimal full-time program of study.

c) You are not eligible if you have satisfied the requirements for a baccalaureate degree unless you have eligibility remaining while seeking a second baccalaureate degree or graduate degree from Misericordia University.

d) Except for the sport of basketball, you are not eligible in your sport for the rest of your season if, following enrollment at MU and during any year in which you are a member of an intercollegiate team, you competed as a member of any outside team in non-collegiate amateur competition in the sport during Misericordia’s sport season.

e) You are not eligible for basketball if you participated in more than two high school “All Star” basketball games.

f) In basketball, you are not eligible if you played in any organized basketball competition after you became a candidate for the MU basketball team. It should be noted that it is all right to have played on a basketball team in an NCAA approved summer league.

g) Under no circumstances shall a student-athlete participate on an outside team or competition while in season.

**Institutional Academic Standards for Participation in Intercollegiate Athletics**
In order to be eligible to participate in the program of intercollegiate athletics at Misericordia University, a student must remain in good academic standing. Specifically, students attempting between 12 and 23 credit hours must attain a minimum cumulative GPA of 1.75. Students who have attempted between 24 and 37 credit hours must have achieved a minimum cumulative GPA of 1.90. Those students who have attempted in excess of 37 credit hours must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA 2.0.

When a student has been placed on academic probation participation in the program of intercollegiate athletics at the college shall be suspended. Students who are on academic probation may practice with a varsity squad at the discretion of the head coach of said sport.

**Transfer Students**
A student who has not previously participated in intercollegiate athletics and transfers from a two year or four year college to MU shall be immediately eligible to compete if NCAA regulations as stated in other sections of this handbook have been met. In addition, a transfer student must be in good academic standing as defined by Misericordia University.

If a transfer student has participated in intercollegiate athletics at a previous institution, in order to participate immediately at MU the student must be academically eligible had he or she remained at that institution. In addition, such a student must meet all NCAA regulations as outlined in this handbook and be in good academic standing as defined by Misericordia University.

All transfer students should make their status known to the coach of said sport. In addition, transfer students should meet with the Director of Athletics for a review of the NCAA regulations as they relate to the individuals situation.
ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES

A student-athlete must be committed to establishing priorities designed to satisfy academic and athletic responsibilities. Conflicts between class attendance and athletic events are inevitable due to the nature of the athletic program and the amount of travel required to complete the competitive schedule.

Misericordia University through its mission recognizes the importance of personal development through participation in co-curricular and extracurricular activities. The University endorses, supports and takes pride in these activities in which students represent the institution in authorized activities on and off campus.

Faculty and staff are committed to on-going collaboration for the purpose of continuing rapport, joint problem-solving and the ultimate benefit of the individual student’s overall learning and development. However, there may be times in which the academic class schedule and the co-curricular or extracurricular activity conflicts.

It is the individual student’s responsibility to:

■ know the course requirements, including which academic experiences cannot be missed because of their importance to course competency

■ plan with key faculty and staff as far as possible in advance to avoid class/clinical/internship/lab absences

■ inform relevant faculty, staff and the co-curricular or extracurricular activity advisor at the earliest time when potential conflicts might exist

■ make up work missed when faculty deem it is possible to do so.

The Athletic Department will circulate among faculty, staff, and administration a list of students participating in a given sport as well as dates and time of associated travel. Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of the student-athlete to maintain clear communication with faculty members regarding class absences due to athletic participation. This should be done in timely fashion.

Student-athletes are expected to attend ALL classes when participation in athletic contests does not conflict.

PROGRAM OF ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL SUPPORT

Through a cooperative arrangement with the Misericordia University Student Success Center, a program of academic and personal support for student-athletes is available. This program is coordinated by a member of the athletic department staff.

Academic And Personal Support Services include:

■ Counseling students regarding strategies designed to assist in meeting academic goals while remaining eligible for athletic competition.

■ Coordinating regular communication between the Athletic Department and faculty members regarding the academic progress of student-athletes.

■ Coordinating the availability of tutors for all courses.

■ Working with coaches and student-athletes in organizing supervised study halls.

■ Coordinating information sessions and seminars on topics of particular academic and social relevance to student-athletes.

■ Providing student-athletes with relevant information and assistance regarding the course registration process.

Student-athletes are encouraged to seek assistance from the coordinator.

STUDENT-ATHLETE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Student-Athlete Advisory Committee shall exist to assist in efforts to realize the goals and objectives of the Athletic Department. Generally these goals and objectives focus on maintaining a program of intercollegiate Athletics which complements the philosophy of NCAA Division III, supports the mission of Misericordia University, and contributes to the physical, mental, and social development of student-athletes.

Specifically, the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee shall promote communication between the Athletic Department and student-athletes on matters including:

a) Soliciting student-athlete input on the operation of the intercollegiate athletic program.

b) Soliciting student-athlete response to proposed MAC and NCAA legislation.

c) Disseminating pertinent information to student-athletes.
d) Recommend student-athletes to be appointed to the MAC Student-Athlete Advisory Committee.

The membership of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee shall be representative of the diversity of the student-athlete population. The Committee shall be composed of one representative from each varsity sport. That representative shall be appointed by the Athletic Director based on recommendations by each head coach.

Each Committee member shall serve as a liaison between the Committee and his or her team and will serve a one year term. Members can be reappointed and may serve a maximum of two years.

The Athletic Director shall serve as co-moderator of the committee. The Senior Athletic Administrator of gender opposite that of the Athletic Director (SWA/SMA) will also serve as co-moderator.

The Student-Athlete Advisory Committee shall meet at least twice each academic year. Meetings shall be called by the co-moderators.

**SPORTS MEDICINE AND ATHLETIC TRAINING SERVICES**

In addition to medical services provided for all students through the University Health Service, the Athletic Department staff includes an NATA Certified Athletic Trainer. The Athletic Trainer is available to student-athletes during hours posted and is in attendance at all home intercollegiate athletic events.

Student-athletes should notify their head coach as well as the Athletic Trainer in the event of any injury.

Any injury requiring referral to a physician must be reported on a Athletic Department Injury Form to be completed by the coach and/or trainer and signed by the student-athlete. If at any time a physician is seen, clearance must be received in writing from that physician prior to the student-athlete's return to athletic activities. This will be kept on file with the Director of Health Services and in the Athletic Department.

A student-athlete must successfully complete a physical examination annually prior to the start of practice and/or competition. For freshmen, this requirement will be satisfied by information provided on the health form required of all entering students. For upperclass persons, the Athletic Department will make arrangements for physical examinations to be administered by qualified medical personnel on campus free of charge. Upperclass persons who find it necessary to secure a physical examination through other arrangements will assume responsibility for the cost of such an examination.

Equipment may be issued by the Athletic Trainer. A student-athlete will assume the responsibility for the proper use and return of such equipment. Equipment damaged through abuse or not returned shall be the responsibility of the student-athlete.

**STUDENT-ATHLETE CONDUCT**

It is expected that student-athletes will conduct themselves in a manner that reflects positively the values of Misericordia University. Student-athletes are expected to abide by all policies and procedures regarding conduct as outlined in the Misericordia Student Handbook as well as to federal, state, and local laws.

Student-athletes shall refrain from the use of alcoholic beverages while representing MU in competitive events, while in transit to and from athletic events, and at official social events related to such competitions. Partaking of drugs which enhance performance or modify moods or behavior at anytime is strictly prohibited unless prescribed by a physician for medical reasons.

Each student-athlete shall be mandated to sign a drug testing consent form provided by the NCAA prior to competition. The NCAA reserves the right to test student-athletes at post season championships.

Hazing is prohibited. Hazing means any act committed by a person either individually or in concert with others that is intended or should reasonably be expected to have the effect of humiliating, intimidating or demeaning a student or endangering the health of a student. Hazing includes participating actively or passively in such acts that occur regardless of the consent or willingness of a person to participate in the activity.

A student-athlete is expected to attend all practices and contests unless released by the coach.

Dress policies applicable to team travel and home matches shall be established by the coach in conjunction with the Director of Athletics.

In addition to the above, the coach of each sport may, in conjunction
with the Director of Athletics, develop guidelines relating to appropriate student-athlete conduct. The coach will inform team members of these guidelines at a team orientation meeting conducted at the beginning of the season.

Violations of policies and guidelines pertaining to conduct as outlined in this section will subject a student/athlete involved to sanctions which may include expulsion from all athletic department programs. Other sanctions which may be imposed include a verbal or written reprimand, game(s) suspension, suspension from the team for a specified time frame, or expulsion from the team for the remainder of the academic year.

Following thorough dialogue with the coach if a student-athlete has an issue with discipline and/or any aspect of the athletic program an appointment can be made with the Athletic Director.

SOCIAL MEDIA

When participating in social media, in addition to the Misericordia University Athletics Social Media Policy that each student-athlete signs before competing for MU, it is of the utmost importance that you remember that you are an ambassador of Misericordia University and you are always in the public eye. DO NOT post information, photographs or videos online which would embarrass you, your family, your team or Misericordia University.

Content posted by student-athletes at other institutions or even other Misericordia students may not be acceptable on your personal online profile—keep this in mind as you continue to post information and images on social media.

Posting of inappropriate content as outlined in the MU Athletics Social Media Policy may result in penalties at institutional, conference or NCAA level, including education/counseling, meeting with athletic/university administration, suspension/termination from team or work-study termination.

ATHLETIC INSURANCE

While Misericordia University makes every effort to maintain a safe environment where athletes may practice and compete, a student-athlete must realize that there is an inherent risk involved in intercollegiate athletic participation. This risk can involve serious physical or even fatal injuries. Given the high cost of medical care, it is important that each student-athlete be covered by accident/injury insurance.

Misericordia University carries a medical insurance plan which covers all student-athletes, student-managers, and trainers participating in the program of intercollegiate athletics. The University provides limited excess or supplemental coverage designed to pick up balances left by the family or employer group insurance. The University plan includes a $250.00 deductible per accident.

The plan covers injuries that occur during the play or practice of a covered sport and when traveling on an authorized team trip.

Plan Highlights

- The plan provides limited medical expense coverage on an excess/supplemental basis for accidental injury sustained in play, practice and travel.
- The plan carries a $250.00 deductible per accident.
- Includes catastrophic injury coverage designed to provide lifetime benefits when called for as provided through our association with the NCAA.

In order to supplement the insurance coverage provided by the University, prior to any practice or competition, each student-athlete must provide proof of personal or family accident/injury insurance coverage.

For information on the procedure for filing a claim, see the Athletic Trainer or Health Center Director.

ATHLETIC RELATED TRAVEL

The following guidelines apply for all travel to and from athletic events:

- All transportation to and from athletic events shall be provided by Misericordia University.
- Transportation provided by the University for travel to and from athletic events shall be limited to team members, student-assistants, trainers, coaches, and other University personnel as designated by the head coach in conjunction with the Director of Athletics.
- Student-athletes are required to use transportation provided by the University. Should an unusual circumstance arise resulting in a request by a
student-athlete to use their own form of transportation, permission must be obtained from the head coach and the Director of Athletics. In instances where permission is granted, the University will be released by written statement from any responsibility in case of injury and/or accident. In addition, University and NCAA athletic insurance will not be applicable.

- When team travel precludes the availability of meals through the University dining service, the Athletic Department will make arrangements for the provision and funding of meals.

- Each student-athlete shall assume responsibility for insuring that vans are not abused and are left litter free following travel.

### FINANCIAL AID

As a member of the NCAA Division III, MU does not offer financial aid based on athletic ability. All financial aid programs at the University are administered through the Financial Aid Office.

All student-athletes are encouraged to communicate with a financial aid officer on matters regarding financial assistance including the filing of appropriate University, federal, and state financial aid forms.

### UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

Student-athletes will be provided with uniforms and selected equipment on a loan basis. The student-athlete is responsible for the proper use, maintenance, and safekeeping of all issued uniforms and equipment.

- All uniforms and equipment must be returned to the Athletic Department by a date specified following the conclusion of the season. Lost uniforms or equipment as well as that damaged through misuse, shall be paid for by the student-athlete at the cost required to replace these materials.

### MEDIA RELATIONS AND SPORTS INFORMATION

Contact between media and the Athletic Department is coordinated by the Sports Information Director (SID). The SID works closely with the media, coaches, and athletes to provide accurate coverage and public recognition for athletes and athletic programs. Through the office of the Sports Information Director brochures and press releases are produced, photo files are maintained, and team/individual statistics are compiled and reported to the press, NCAA, MAC, and ECAC.

To support the work of the Sports Information Director (SID), each year student-athletes will complete a sports information data form.

- Interview requests and/or comments requested by the media from coaches and/or student-athletes shall be arranged through the SID. Should a student-athlete be contacted by a member of the media at home or in a setting other than the contest or practice site, refer the media person to the SID prior to making comment. In any case, given the implications of public comment on the student-athlete, team, athletic program, and the University itself, thoughtfulness should be exhibited prior to making any public statement.

### PERFORMANCE RECOGNITION

Student-athletes are eligible to receive formal recognition from the University for athletic participation. The Varsity “MU” award shall be presented to student-athletes who compete in a minimum of one-half of the varsity contests held for that sport or to those who have made an outstanding contribution to the success of the team. In all cases the student-athlete must have successfully completed the season as a member of the team. The following Varsity “MU” awards are presented to student-athletes:

- First year award: Varsity letter and certificate
- Second year award: Engraved Varsity “MU” paperweight
- Third year award: Varsity “MU” plaque
- Fourth year award: Varsity “MU” watch for the first sport. For each additional sport, a suitable award other than a watch will be presented.

Other forms of athletic recognition sponsored by the University include:

- Academic Honors Award: A certificate presented annually to student-athletes who, at the conclusion of the first semester each year have achieved a cumulative GPA of 3.40 or better.
- Most Valuable Player Award: An award presented by the coach following the completion of the season to that person selected as the team’s most valuable player.
- Coach’s Award: An appropriate award presented by the coach at the completion of the season to
the individual whose dedication and commitment throughout the season best exemplified the spirit of the team.

Scholar-Athlete of the Year: Presented to a male and female who have best combined academic achievement, athletic success, and social service.

Wendy’s Misericordia Athlete of the Month: Awarded to a male and female for outstanding athletic achievement. Awarded each month from September through April.

Wendy’s Misericordia Athlete of the Year: Awarded annually to the outstanding female and male athlete. Sponsored by Wendy’s, Dallas, PA.

NCAA Woman of the Year: Awarded annually to a female athlete who has completed eligibility in her primary sport while exhibiting outstanding qualities of service, leadership and academic achievement. The recipient of this award shall have a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.50.

Student-athletes are also eligible to receive awards sponsored by the NCAA, ECAC, and the MAC. These awards include: All-America, All-MAC, MAC and ECAC Player of the Week and All-ECAC.

The Academic Honors Awards are presented by the University at a luncheon held annually. The Wendy’s Athletes of the Month and Year shall be recognized at a year end dinner. All other awards will be presented at one of three Athletic Awards Dinners sponsored by the Athletic Department each year. Recognition at these dinners shall be limited to those awards mentioned above. Other team awards as well as the presentation of mementos to coaches shall occur in other settings. Any exception to this must be approved in advance by the Director of Athletics.

STUDENT-ATHLETE CHECKLIST

The completed student-athlete file each year shall include:

- Documentation of successful completion of a physical examination.
- Signed NCAA Student-Athlete Drug Testing Statement.
- Signed NCAA Student eligibility Statement.
- Completed insurance information form signed by the student-athlete and/or parent/guardian.
- Completed sports information form.
- Completed emergency contact form.

In addition, each student-athlete shall, annually, receive a copy of the Student-Athlete Handbook.

CONCLUSION

It should be emphasized that this handbook is designed to provide information regarding areas of maximum concern to student-athletes regarding the conduct of the athletic program at Misericordia University. In keeping with this, the Director of Athletics welcomes discussion and/or comment intended to improve the form or content of this handbook.