

**DEPARTMENT OF SYSTEMS &
INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING**

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1127 E. James E. Rogers Way
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To: UA Faculty Senate
Leila Hudson, Ph.D., Chair of the Faculty
Mona Hymel, J.D., Vice Chair of the Faculty
Katharine Zeiders, Ph.D., Secretary of the Faculty

Cc: Suresh Garimella, Ph.D., President
Desiree Reed-Francois, J.D., 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 2025-26 Academic Year

Date: April 27, 2026

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 Spring (2025) semester GPA** on record: **3.389**. Cumulative GPA Record was broken in **Fall 2025 with 3.412 GPA**. This was the 16th consecutive semester that student-athletes earned an average GPA of 3.0 or higher – the longest streak in department history.
2. Student athlete **Graduation Success Rate is at 92%**, up from 90% last year. This is the highest in department history. Seven programs posted a perfect 100% GSR: women's basketball, men's golf, gymnastics, men's swimming and diving, women's tennis, men's track & field, beach volleyball.
3. Three Big XII **Scholar-Athlete of the Year** winners: Tanvi Narendran (women's tennis), Jay Friend (men's tennis), and Tony Pluta (Baseball). Tobe Awaka (men's basketball) Second Team CSC Academic All-American.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
College of Engineering

4. Big XII Faculty of the Year: **Marcia Rieke** (Astronomy).
5. Continued faculty engagement in **Intercollegiate Athletics Committee**: Spece (Law), Benson (Eller), Gehrels (Geosciences), Neumann (Eller), Salvesen (Student Retention), Valerdi (Engineering). Two additional faculty members are being nominated this summer.
6. Ongoing monitoring of NCAA violations and rules education via **Compliance, Eligibility, and Student Athlete Well-Being (CESAW)** committee. No major NCAA violations to report.
7. Student athlete convocation on May 13 will recognize **126 graduates**. **Postgraduate employment** of student athletes has increased from 74% (Spring 2023) to **95%** (Fall 2025).
8. Faculty outreach events included **Breakfast and Ball** Football team with 50+ guests at practice on April 18, 2026. Guest coaches program for faculty ongoing for football and women's basketball. Houston football game featured **Prof. Carlos Vargas' NASA Aspera mission** and **Galaxy Slam** branding of men's basketball game featured achievements of astronomy faculty.
9. **New Head Coach** hired by Desiree Reed-Francois: Andrew Dubs (Track & Field and Cross Country).
10. Annual **student athlete end of season surveys** provide a snapshot of team culture, opportunities for feedback, and insight into student athlete experience. **90%** of survey respondents "would choose UA again."