

Minutes of the University Athletics Committee
University of Kentucky
Monday, February 19, 2026

The University Athletics Committee of the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees met on Monday, February 19, 2026, in the Gatton Student Center, Harris Ballroom.

I. Meeting Opened

Chair McCoy called the meeting to order at 5:17 p.m. and asked Katie Hardwick to call the roll.

II. Roll Call

The following members of the University Athletics Committee were present: Board Members Skip Berry, Todd Case, Lance Lucas, Elizabeth McCoy and Frank Shoop; Community Advisory Members Wells Bullard and Wilbur Hackett; and Faculty Athletics Representative Joe Fink.

III. Approval of Minutes

Chair McCoy asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the September 11, 2025, meeting. Trustee Lucas moved approval of the minutes, and Trustee Berry seconded the motion. The motion carried without dissent.

Chair McCoy introduced Athletics Director Mitch Barnhart for remarks.

IV. Athletics Director's Report

Athletics Director Barnhart reported on the success of several fall sports programs. He stated that men's soccer won the Sun Belt Conference regular-season championship and advanced its tradition of postseason success under Coach Johan Cedergren. He noted that women's soccer earned its second consecutive National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) Tournament appearance and recorded its highest win total in more than a decade. He further reported that volleyball captured both the Southeastern Conference (SEC) regular-season and tournament championships for the ninth consecutive year and advanced to the NCAA Championship match, finishing as national runner-up.

He reported that new football coach Will Stein has generated significant enthusiasm among supporters and recruits. He stated that the program secured one of the nation's top-ranked transfer portal classes and has experienced strong season ticket renewal activity, including more than 2,000 new season ticket deposits.

Athletics Director Barnhart reported that men's basketball has remained competitive against one of the nation's most challenging schedules, highlighted by victories over Tennessee, Indiana and St. John's. He stated that women's basketball achieved a historic milestone with two victories over Top-5 opponents and is nationally ranked. He also

highlighted the continued success of the rifle program, which set an NCAA scoring record, as well as strong performances from gymnastics, STUNT and other winter sports programs.

He reported that spring sports have opened their seasons with notable accomplishments. He stated that softball earned a road victory over a nationally ranked Stanford team, baseball entered the season ranked among the nation's top programs and both men's and women's tennis teams posted strong records entering conference competition. He also noted successful starts for the men's and women's golf programs.

Athletics Director Barnhart reported continued excellence in academics and student-athlete development. He stated that student-athletes achieved a school-record NCAA Graduation Success Rate of 93 percent and maintained a composite grade-point average above 3.0 for the 27th consecutive semester. He noted that 141 student-athletes graduated during the 2025 calendar year and highlighted continued success through the Cawood Ledford Post-Eligibility Program.

He reported that student-athletes remained highly engaged in community service and leadership initiatives. He highlighted SEC Community Service Team selections, national recognition earned by football student-athlete Josh Kattus and the induction of 16 student-athletes into the Frank G. Ham Society of Character. He also noted strong participation in career development programming.

Athletics Director Barnhart reported on the ongoing transformation of collegiate athletics. He stated that the University is implementing the House settlement through expanded scholarships and revenue-sharing opportunities for student-athletes while continuing to support approved name, image and likeness activities. He emphasized the need for federal legislation to establish a consistent national framework for college athletics and noted that institutions across the country are advocating for passage of the Student Compensation and Opportunity through Rights and Endorsements (SCORE) Act.

He concluded by reporting that the transition of University Athletics into the Champions Blue LLC structure remains underway, with significant legal and organizational work continuing throughout the process overview of the Student-Athlete Experience Division

Chair McCoy thanked Mr. Barnhart and introduced Executive Associate Athletics Director Stephanie Simmons for her report.

Director Simmons reported on the work of the Student-Athlete Experience (SAE) division and its mission of developing leaders of character, competence and consequence. She stated that the division was established in 2018 to provide a unified approach to supporting student-athletes throughout their academic, athletic and professional journeys through what is known as the "Kentucky Road."

She reported that the SAE division integrates academic support, leadership development, career preparation and community engagement to help student-athletes achieve success during and after their time at the University. She stated that the division's work is guided by principles of empowerment, transformation and competitive advantage, with an emphasis on developing graduates, thinkers, learners, teammates, winners and citizens.

Ms. Simmons reported that the division has implemented several data-driven tools to better understand and support student-athletes, including surveys that identify career interests, geographic preferences and post-graduation goals. She stated that information gathered from current student-athletes, alumni and employer partners helps create meaningful connections and career opportunities.

She highlighted an example in which a former football student-athlete connected with a recent cross-country graduate interested in medical sales, ultimately helping her secure employment with Stryker in her preferred location in Los Angeles. She stated that this example reflects the division's commitment to building lasting relationships and supporting student-athletes beyond graduation.

Director Simmons reported that leadership development programming includes Emerging Leaders and Team Captains initiatives, which provide selected student-athletes with opportunities to engage with community leaders, alumni and subject matter experts. She stated that these programs are designed to strengthen leadership skills and prepare participants for challenges within their teams and future careers.

She reported that the Center for Academic and Tutorial Services (CATS) remains the cornerstone of student-athlete academic success. She stated that CATS, founded in 1975 as the nation's first academic facility dedicated solely to student-athletes, provides individualized academic counseling, tutoring, mentoring and eligibility support. She noted that the staff's experience and proactive support help student-athletes successfully balance academic and athletic commitments.

Ms. Simmons highlighted the academic success of the softball program as an example of the support provided through CATS. She stated that despite extensive travel and competition schedules, student-athletes were able to successfully manage examinations and coursework while achieving a team grade point average (GPA) of 3.8.

She reported that additional programming focuses on career readiness, financial education and student-athlete leadership. She stated that workshops, career preparation programs and financial literacy initiatives help student-athletes recognize transferable skills, prepare for professional opportunities and make informed financial decisions.

Director Simmons reported that community engagement remains a core component of the student-athlete experience. She stated that student-athletes participate in a variety of service opportunities through longstanding partnerships and community programs. She noted that student-athletes contributed more than 2,600 hours of service during the previous year across 150 organizations.

She reported on the “My New Kentucky Home” program, which helps new freshmen and transfer student-athletes transition to the University through peer mentoring and educational programming. She stated that participants are introduced to campus resources, wellness services, compliance expectations and career development opportunities.

She highlighted the Pro Career Institute, a donor-funded initiative that provides paid experiential learning opportunities for student-athletes exploring career interests both within and beyond athletics. She stated that the program has served participants from multiple sports and has created meaningful connections with alumni and employers.

She reported that the Career Combine has become a signature event connecting student-athletes with employers and graduate programs. She stated that a record 219 student-athletes participated this year and that employers are selected to align with student-athletes’ academic and professional interests. She noted that former student-athletes now frequently return as recruiters representing their organizations.

Director Simmons reported that the division continually evaluates its programs through tools such as leadership assessments, personality evaluations and the internally developed Kentucky Road Resume. She stated that these resources help student-athletes recognize their accomplishments, document developmental experiences and better articulate their skills to future employers and graduate programs.

She reported that during the previous academic year the division conducted more than 13,000 one-on-one academic support sessions, completed more than 200 transcript evaluations and maintained nearly 14 consecutive years of a departmental GPA above 3.0. She stated that all teams remained above the NCAA Academic Progress Rate benchmark and that no competitions were lost due to eligibility issues.

She concluded by reporting that 37 percent of graduating student-athletes pursued further education, 35 percent entered professional careers and 26 percent pursued professional athletic opportunities. She stated that the Student-Athlete Experience division remains committed to creating transformative experiences that build lifelong connections to the University and the Commonwealth while preparing student-athletes for meaningful and successful lives beyond graduation.

Chair McCoy recognized Trustee Williams for a question, who asked if the data points referring to community engagement hours and graduates in the presentation – how many of those students would have exhausted their eligibility.

Athletics Director Barnhart responded that student-athletes are increasingly completing their undergraduate degrees before exhausting their athletic eligibility due to early enrollment and year-round academic progress. He stated that many student-athletes now graduate in three to three-and-a-half years and often pursue master's degrees while continuing to compete.

Mr. Barnhart further noted that transfers present an additional challenge, with approximately 40 percent of student-athletes entering through the transfer portal. He explained that the NCAA Graduation Success Rate remains an important measure

because it tracks student-athletes who complete their degrees at the University. He stated that the University receives credit for transfer student-athletes who graduate after enrolling at the University, but not for those who leave and complete their degrees elsewhere. He emphasized that the University's Graduation Success Rate has continued to improve and remains approximately 93 percent.

Chair McCoy introduced Deputy Athletics Director Mark Hill and Associate Vice President of Planning, Design and Construction Kevin Locke for an update on capital projects.

V. Update on Various Capital Projects

Deputy Athletics Director Hill reported on capital projects beginning with improvements at the softball facility, noting the Board previously approved funding to support approximately \$5 million in upgrades. He stated the project included basic infrastructure such as sidewalks and lighting, along with enhancements designed to prepare the University to host the Southeastern Conference Softball Tournament and showcase the University campus and athletics program.

Mr. Hill stated the renovations also upgraded concession areas with new flooring, equipment and service capabilities, improving the fan experience and benefiting both softball and soccer programs. He noted additional enhancements included modernized lighting systems with programmable features, a new patio space for donors and guests, and upgraded fencing throughout the facility.

He reported the project prioritized the student-athlete experience by fully renovating the indoor training space, including installation of motorized netting, multiple hitting lanes and dedicated areas for pitching and catching drills to support year-round training and competition readiness.

Mr. Hill stated most softball facility improvements are complete ahead of the upcoming home opener, including upgrades to Information Technology (IT) and data capabilities that support performance tracking and in-game analytics in both training areas and dugouts.

He reported additional enhancements to the berm seating area, including installation of concrete to increase capacity and improve accessibility for individuals with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) needs, further enhancing the overall game-day environment.

Mr. Hill stated separate projects at Kroger Field, funded through prior Board approvals, focus on essential structural maintenance, including resealing concrete and removing and replacing seating in the north bowl, with work progressing despite weather challenges and expected to be completed in time for upcoming use. He noted future phases will address the south side of the stadium and include improvements to general admission and premium seating areas.

Deputy Athletics Director Hill yielded the floor to Associate Vice President Locke for his report.

Associate Vice President Locke reported on the Kroger Field Fan Experience capital project and Fan Experience District Study, describing it as a transformative initiative for the University and broader campus community. He stated the Board previously approved pursuing legislative authority to study the district and enable a public-private partnership to support long-term development.

He stated the project aims to create a cohesive, year-round vision centered on Kroger Field and Memorial Coliseum, integrating athletics, academics and community life into connected districts that extend beyond game days and enhance daily campus activity.

He reported the planning process began in November 2025 and includes multiple phases from analysis through final plan development, with concept alternatives currently under review and a final summary expected in June. He noted the effort has been highly collaborative and encompasses two primary districts representing significant campus redevelopment opportunities.

He stated the planning framework is guided by principles of leveraging University assets for long-term value, creating a year-round destination and improving connectivity through pedestrian-friendly design and transportation enhancements.

He reported four conceptual development approaches for the Kroger Field District, each emphasizing mixed-use development, walkability and enhanced public spaces, with all concepts including new buildings, parking solutions and improved connections throughout the area.

He stated in response to questions that proposed plans consider maintaining and ultimately increasing parking through structured facilities while balancing game day tailgating traditions with expanded fan experiences. He noted transportation planning will address traffic flow and pedestrian safety through roadway improvements and ongoing study with expert input.

VI. Other Business

FCR 8 Approval to Acquire

Chair McCoy yielded the floor to Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration Eric Monday to introduce FCR 8, Approval to Acquire.

The recommendation was that the University Athletics Committee approve to recommend to the Finance Committee that the Board of Trustees authorize the Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration to enter into a purchase agreement and acquire a commercial parcel owned by Coliseum Plaza, LLC located at 377 399 Rose Street in Lexington, Kentucky and approve an internal loan to fund the purchase. Pursuant to the University's Internal Loan Program Policy, any internal loan for capital purposes greater than \$1,000,000 must be approved by the Board.

The University of Kentucky and Coliseum Plaza, LLC have held intermittent discussions regarding the purchase of 377 399 Rose Street which includes .43 acres and a multi-tenant commercial building near Historic Memorial Coliseum. The parcel will be used for future development projects in the area.

The property has appraised for \$3,900,000. The acquisition price of \$3,900,000, plus customary due diligence and the costs of appraisals, land surveys, closing fees and other capitalized costs of acquisition, has been authorized by the 2024 Session of the Kentucky General Assembly as part of the Acquire Land (Land Acquisition Pool) and will be funded with an internal loan of up to \$3,925,000.

Chair McCoy asked for a motion to approve FCR 8. Trustee Lucas moved approval and Trustee Berry seconded the motion. The motion carried without dissent.

Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Hardwick
University Athletics Committee Secretary