

DEVELOPING THE STUDENT ATHLETE AS A WHOLE PERSON: WHAT COACHES
AND ADVISORS CAN DO

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DEVELOPING THE STUDENT ATHLETE AS A WHOLE PERSON: WHAT COACHES
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Abstract

Developing the student athlete as a whole person is the goal of coaches and advisors from the first time a student athlete steps onto a collegiate campus until they graduate. There are several programs and models that universities and colleges have put forth to help student athletes. This paper examines research showing that at the Division I level of athletics, the funding and resources have greatly enhanced the abilities of the athletic departments to help put these programs in place. The smaller divisions, II and III, have also put programs in place to help the student athletes, although they have done this on smaller budgets.

This review of literature found that, though there are many articles on developing the student athlete as a whole person, research is needed. The NCAA has put forth graduation requirements at the Division I level of athletics and has thus made developing the student athlete as a whole person a higher priority than in the years prior to these regulations.

Coaches and advisors are constantly analyzing their role in the development of the student athlete. They must always look to the example set by the best programs, but also watch for new programs that can help the student athlete best utilize their time, both in the classroom and on the playing fields and courts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL PAGE.....	i
TITLE PAGE.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv

CHAPTERS

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem	
Purpose of the Research	
Significance of the Problem	
Assumptions	
Delimitations of the Research	
Method of Approach	
Definition of Terms	
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	4
III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	16
IV. REFERENCES.....	18

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Although student-athletes at the collegiate level of competition often have unique experiences distinct from other students, there are many pressures and expectations that accompany them during their college years of eligibility. The coaches and advisors that oversee and provide leadership for these student athletes are instrumental in the student-athlete developing not only as an athlete, but also a whole person during their time in college. Universities and college campuses have begun to take steps to provide academic programs and services to help student-athletes deal with the rigors of playing competitive collegiate sports as well as balance their academic pressures, but the current standard is not enough. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) recognizes this and has begun to implement major penalties against schools that have not met standard graduation rates (NCAA, 2009). This has put necessary increased pressure on athletic departments at all levels of competition to provide all the necessary support in order for their student-athletes to attain success on both the field and in the classroom.

The difficulties that student-athletes find during their careers are numerous, and they must have coaches and advisors to help guide them if they want to be successful in their desired sport and academic career choice. The coaches and advisors must provide the proper guidance so that the student-athlete feels comfortable in their time at the school. They must allow the student to grow both from a psychological and physiological standpoint, but also help student athletes understand how to deal with criticism and demands from various outside influences. Coaches and advisors must not

only make the student aware of these programs and supports that are in place, but also ensure full participation.

Statement of the Problem

What can coaches and advisors do to fully develop the collegiate athlete as a whole person?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to analyze recent and current research and literature on the use of academic and athletic programs to further help coaches and advisors in coaching and advising the student athlete. Suggestions are made to on how to better use the programs and possibly further them to be even more successful.

Significance of the Problem

Coaches and academic advisors at the collegiate level have long been trying to find the proper balance between growth of the student athlete as both an athlete and a student. In recent years, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has put in place guidelines to help athletic programs maintain proper graduation rates. New academic programs and more involvement from coaches has become an integral part of the success of the student athlete.

Assumptions

For the purpose of this paper, it was assumed that all research and review of the current literature was accurately reported. It was assumed that the literature would make recommendations on how best to use the programs that are in place for developing the student athlete as a whole person.

Delimitations of the Research

The research was conducted in and through the Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, over thirty (30) days. Primary searches were conducted via the Internet through EBSCO Host with ERIC, Academic Search Elite, and Health Source: Consumer Edition as the primary sources. Key search topics included “Developing the Student Athlete”, “Athletes and Academics”, and “Academic Programs for Student Athletes.”

Method of Approach

An initial review of literature on the programs that colleges and universities are currently using to help develop student athletes was conducted. A second review of literature relating to research, studies, and anecdotal evidence of effective programs in place, as well as the challenges that coaches and advisors face was then conducted. The findings were summarized and recommendations then made.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Developing the Student Athlete as a Whole: An Overview

Over the course of the last twenty years, program models to help student athletes have become more prominent on collegiate campuses and universities. The NCAA has begun to monitor the graduation rates of the athletic programs, mainly at the Division I level of competition and in athletic programs that are able to offer scholarships (Prisbell, 2007). The loss of scholarships is an example of a penalty that has been levied on athletic programs that do not meet the criteria that the NCAA has set forth (NCAA, 2009). This has put added pressure on coaches and advisors who mentor student athletes during their time on the campus. Athletic departments are implementing programs through the work of their coaches and the division of student affairs to help student athletes. Several programs have been put in place, but there is an ever growing need to further help the student athletes adjust to life, academics and athletics on a collegiate campus.

Not only is there money being spent to implement academic support programs for the student athletes, there is also money being spent on the facilities to house the programs for the student athletes. Over the past fifteen years, a dozen major collegiate athletic programs have built comprehensive academic centers, most of them exclusively for student athletes (Wolverton, Kelderman & Moser, 2008). These buildings are mainly paid for by private donations and have become an integral part of the recruitment of student athletes. Increased attention to the recruitment of student athletes has created a

highly competitive environment, thus challenging the academic standards by which schools may allow admission to their institution.

In order for a traditional college student to gain admission to a university, he/she will need to meet certain qualifications. For example, a typical incoming freshmen student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison will be in the top 10-15% of their senior class and will have scored between a 26-30 on the ACT exam and an 1830-1980 on the SAT exam. During high school, he/she must also have completed four years of English, four years of mathematics, four years of social science, two years of a foreign language, and have two additional years of fine arts (www.admissions.wisc.edu, 2009.)

Student athletes must not only complete the same requirements as other students, but also fulfill the NCAA Clearinghouse criteria in order to qualify for participation in competitive athletics. The Clearinghouse criteria states that student athletes must have completed the following in high school: four years of English, three years of mathematics (Algebra I or higher), two years of natural/physical science, one year of additional English, mathematics or natural/physical science, two years of social science, four years of additional courses from any of the previous mentioned courses or a foreign language or non-doctrinal religion/philosophy (www.ncaa.org, 2009). The student must also meet the NCAA guidelines on the SAT test and the ACT test in order to compete in athletic competitions for their freshmen semesters. The NCAA uses a sliding score on the SAT and ACT, which includes the student's core grade point average from high school along with their scores from the writing and math portion of the SAT exam.

The student athlete population faces the same challenges and tasks that their classmates will face, as well as other unique opportunities and road blocks that will be

presented to them. Student athletes have long been the most recognized, yet unofficial, special population on the nation's college campuses (Valentine & Taub, 1999). The student athlete faces pressures that the other students on a campus may not face. In many cases the tutoring services and academic services that are offered to other students on campus may not be available to the student athletes due to the fact that the student athlete is on a more rigid schedule than their peers. For example, academic services may be provided during a time when the student athlete is either in practice or on a trip to one of their contests. Therefore, this can make using the services that the other students are privy to extremely difficult for the student athlete.

In the case of Division I athletics, these student athletes are put into situations where their every move is critiqued and they are very much in the public eye. These student athletes may have the same issues or problems that other students have on campus, but because they are in a high profile position, this creates another set of issues. They may not be able to keep private what their specific issue is, whereas the "traditional student" would have no problem finding a time to use the services provided by the college and would be able to keep the issue completely private. Universities and Colleges have begun to make an effort to protect the privacy of their student athletes with the rules set forth in the Family Educational Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974. FERPA allows the colleges and universities to hold private records and information about their students or student athletes (www.ed.gov, 2009). This has helped protect the student athletes from media outlets such as television, radio, and other various forms of public communication.

Programs and Models Used to Help Student Athletes

The last 15-20 years have provided exceptional growth in the area of helping student athletes' transition to the collegiate campus, as well as transition out of athletics when their eligibility is complete. Until recently, when the NCAA started mandating graduation rates and enforcing the reduction of scholarships for athletes with poor grades, many universities treated the student athletes similar to any other student on campus. The Center for Counseling and Student Development has sponsored a program for universities and colleges that deals directly with student athletes and the issues they face. Their services include academic monitoring, consultation, workshops, and personal counseling (Jordan & Denson, 1990). This is a program that works with the coaches of the athletic programs at the university, but is sponsored and set up through the Division of Student Affairs. This outreach model focuses on four key components: Transitions, Career Development, Training for Academic Success, and Coping and Relaxation. Each component is designed to not only be useful during an athlete's years of eligibility, but can also be utilized when they leave their respective college and transition into their next career field.

The transitions component of the outreach program is broken down into two workshops for the students. The first workshop helps the student athletes transition into college life and explore the opportunities that are available. The second workshop in the transitions component deals with helping the athlete handle the transition after their athletic career is complete (Jordan & Denson, 1990). Career Development is also broken down into two workshops: assisting the student athlete with self-assessment and

career/academic major exploration, and supporting the student athletes during their junior year as they begin to search for employment (Jordan & Denson, 1990).

The third element of the program model entitled, Training for Academic Success, has a major emphasis on time management. Participants in this session use the meeting time to help devise realistic schedules, design study tables, and figure out how manage time between class and practice schedules. The second portion of Training for Academic Success is used to help the student athletes learn proper techniques for studying and test taking (Jordan & Denson, 1990). The final component of the outreach program works with helping the athletes with Coping and Relaxation. This section helps teach the student athletes how to handle and relieve stress due to athletics or other aspects of their lives (Jordan & Denson, 1990).

Washington State University (WSU) in Pullman, WA has partnered with its library to provide academic support and opportunities for their student athletes. The program at WSU has implemented a one-credit course for their student athletes on how to handle the pressures of being a Division I athlete and what services are made available to them (O'English & McCord, 2006).

In part due to the many academic scandals that took place in the 1980's, the NCAA has begun to also institute new programs to help athletic departments, advisors and coaches keep a close eye on their student athletes. CHAMPS (Challenging Athletes' Minds for Personal Success) is one such program that is offered through the NCAA (www.NCAA.org, 2009). The goal of this program is to help the student athlete gain a better understanding of life skills they will need to be successful, as well as help enhance their athletic experience at the university. The program aims to help enhance the student

athlete in five core areas of their lives: academics, athletics, personal development, career development and community service (NCAA, 2009). The program holds various workshops around the country, not only for Division I institutions, but also for colleges and universities at the Division II and III levels.

Another approach that has been researched and implemented partners student athletes with each other in tutoring sessions. This program was first introduced in 1996 when a study was done at a Midwestern university. The study included 107 freshmen athletes who participated in a variety of Division I athletic sports (Dudley, Johnson & Johnson, 1997). The program that was implemented allowed the student athletes to work cooperatively on their academic assignments over the course of a semester. The groups met Sunday-Thursday and the sessions lasted for two hours. After a 15 minute briefing session, the student athletes could attend various sub-groups within the entire group (i.e. math, computer lab time, common course work or quiet study). The sessions were designed not only to help the student athletes with their coursework, but also allow them to interact with different members of the athletic community and greater campus community.

The Role of the Coach and Advisor

University programming has proven beneficial in providing student athletes with opportunities to be successful and attain their academic and social goals. However, what is the role of the coach and advisor in helping develop the student athlete? In many cases, the coaches have recruited that particular athlete to their campus to perform for their athletic team. The academic programs should be foremost on the student athlete's mind, but in many cases it is secondary to what sport in which the student athlete

participates. The role of the advisor and coach is to make sure the student athlete develops both physiologically and psychologically during their collegiate years. The role of the coach is not much different than that of a professor in the academic vicinity of the institution.

When developing competence as a student athlete, the focus must be on the skill maturity of three areas: intellectual, physical, and interpersonal growth (Valentine & Taub, 1999). The student athlete wants to master the skills needed to help achieve academic success, as well as increase their physical abilities to attain a high level of athletic success at the collegiate level. Finally, they must improve their skills so they are able to effectively communicate not only with teammates and coaches, but with other members of the campus community. The coaches and advisors play a vital role in the development of competency within student athletes. The advisor acts as an advocate, helping the student athlete understand how to achieve their academic potential, while the coach creates an environment where the athlete can develop and push themselves physically. Finally, both the advisor and coach play an integral role in helping the student athlete develop the skills to work with other students, faculty and fellow athletes.

Arthur Chickering's Seven Vectors of Development (Chickering, 1969) can provide a framework for understanding how to foster development in student athletes and compare the differing needs between the student athlete and the traditional student. These vectors, which include Developing Competence, Managing Emotions, Moving Through Autonomy Towards Interdependence, Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships, Establishing Identity, Establishing Purpose and Developing Integrity (Chickering and Reisser, 1993), are the foundation for how a student should

psychosocially develop during their collegiate years. All seven vectors can serve as guidelines to assess how the student athlete is developing and/or aid coaches and advisors in identifying which areas are lacking and need more attention.

Chickering's (1969) vector, Managing Emotions, explains that in moving from adolescence to adulthood means that students have to learn how to deal with emotions, such as anger and sexual desire (Chickering, 1969). In working with student athletes, this can be a particularly challenging stage for coaches and advisors to understand. The student athlete will go through a variety of emotions over the course of their eligibility. Their freshmen year will involve having their "ego" bruised, eventually awakening to the reality they might not achieve the success they had before in high school athletics (Dudley, Johnson & Johnson, 1997). Their second and third years of competition will be years of hard work and wondering whether or not choosing their current institution was the right choice. It is also during this time they will likely be developing a sense of the level at which they can optimally compete. Finally, the fourth and fifth years are spent dealing with reminiscent emotions, as they may be nearing the end of their extensive athletic careers (Dudley, Johnson & Johnson, 1997).

The third vector that Chickering has in his model is that of the student Moving from Autonomy towards Interdependence (Chickering, 1969). This is probably the step of development with which student athletes have the fewest problems. Student athletes, from an early age, understand that working hard and putting forth maximum effort often leads to high achievement and reward.

Chickering's (1969) fourth vector of development talks about how students must develop mature interpersonal relationships. Student athletes may be lacking in this area

for a few reasons. Due to the large amount of time taken up by sports and academics, they often lack needed time to interact with different populations on campus. Their schedules (i.e. practice, games, and study tables) limit how much social interaction time the student athlete has on a campus. The coaches play a significant role in helping assure the student athlete has enough time to interact with students who are not athletes on campus.

The role of the advisor in the fourth vector is also critical in helping the student athlete understand the need to have experiences outside of athletics. Advisors can help make suggestions and encourage participation in different activities and programs (Valentine & Taub, 1999). Additionally, the advisor can make recommendations to the student athlete which courses to register for that will broaden the academic and social experience of the student athlete.

The fifth vector of Chickering (1969) elaborates on the student developing their identity. In collegiate athletics, coaches and advisors must be aware that when student athletes tend to go through this stage, two issues become prominent. One common issue that can become prevalent among student athletes is substance abuse (Valentine & Taub, 1999). Student athletes will realize that illegal substances may help them gain an athletic advantage, however, they often do not realize the long term health effects the drug will have on them. Illegal drugs or alcohol use can also be a problem as many athletes see them as a way of dealing with stress, and collegiate life presents new levels of peer pressure and the opportunity to use and abuse without parental monitoring.

Another challenge relating to this vector deals with student athletes nearing the end of their athletic careers. For many student athletes, their identity has been tied to the

sport in which they compete. As they approach the end of their career, they will struggle with their new identity and wonder what perception people will have of them when they are not associated with their athletic team or sport (Valentine & Taub, 1999). Because of this transition beyond athletics, advisors play a major role during this stage. They can serve as an advocate for the student athlete and help them with this next step in their life, which is likely the career path they have chosen during their collegiate years.

Chickering's vector of developing a purpose (Chickering, 1969) involves the student planning activities and goals in their life outside of their athletic achievement. This vector can occur at a time in a student athlete's life when they start to envision what their life will be like without organized athletic activities taking place on a daily basis. It is the responsibility of not just the student athlete, but also the coach and advisor, to help the student athlete take advantage of the programs and classes that can help them prepare for future employment. The role of advisor is to help ease any frustrations or anxieties the student may have at this point in their collegiate career. The student may have frustrations over the classes they need to take or may not be sure their desired major is the appropriate choice. The advisor must calm fears and help direct and advise the student at this point because it is very possible the student athlete may incur distress when their intercollegiate athletic experience is over (Chartrand and Lent, 1987).

The final vector that Chickering writes about is the vector of development, where the student develops integrity (Chickering, 1969). This vector can also prove difficult for the student athlete. Again, they have spent many years understanding that one authority figure, traditionally a coach, has not only the final say in what happens, but the student athlete believes they have absolute knowledge of the subject base. As they progress

through this stage, they begin to think in a more progressive and analytical way. The student athlete begins to understand there are several thought processes that can go into a single concept and find more than one solution to a problem.

Students and student athletes need and deserve every opportunity to be successful both academically and athletically. There are some persons however, who would say that all the money and support is still not enough for the student athlete. At some universities and colleges, advisors are put in the inevitable position of helping students who have questionable academic abilities. "At Risk Students" need additional attention to obtain their goals, as well as extra support and programs to help with their integration into the campus community, not just their athletic teams.

With added pressures of making sure student athletes graduate on time, this can lead to high rates of burnout for the coaches, advisors and the student athlete. As one advisor was quoted saying, "All the glitz and mortar still doesn't make people graduate." An advisor can provide opportunities and guidance, but ultimately, the student athlete has to want to be successful. One of the keys to that success is allowing themselves to be autonomous within their setting of being a student athlete (Kimball, 2007). A difference between a traditional college student and a student athlete is that the student athlete does not always have the independence to be involved in the campus community as does the traditional student. The student athlete must be able to accept his or her lifestyle; if this is not possible, then burnout can occur (Kimball, 2007).

Due to these recent studies of collegiate student athletes, the term "burnout" itself has recently become a buzz word throughout collegiate athletics. Burnout is caused by chronic, excessive stress that prevents the student athlete from competing (Coakley,

1992). However, as coaches and advisors we cannot confuse the terms “burnout” and “dropout” when comparing how this pertains to our students. Coaches and advisors must be keenly aware of what the signs are for burnout and how to help the student deal with this crisis. In many cases the student athlete will feel trapped and not secure with their role within their lifestyle (Kimball, 2007). They may feel like they want something else in their life, other than athletics and will often turn to alternative means such as alcohol, drugs or other such life destructive activities.

The advisor can also aid the student athlete in avoiding burnout. One key component to the advisor’s role is to find out what motivates the student athlete to achieve his or her goals. Once the advisor knows what motivates the student to reach their goals, the task to help the student can become much easier. In many situations the advisor will use the SAT or ACT scores to help formulate where the student athlete should be slotted for classes in their desired major, easing any additional academic stress an unmanageable class could present. Other factors that the advisor should consider when guiding the advisee are whether or not they are first generation college students, their gender type, and whether their desired major tends to fit the academic profile they have when entering college. The advisor must get to know the student athlete and identify what will prompt them to achieve their goals. Having substantial background knowledge both as an advisor and coach can not only help build the foundation for a trusting relationship, but begin the student athlete on the path to success in all aspects of their collegiate career.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Athletic competition at the collegiate level has become increasingly about the end result, which is winning games. That is the goal of every team at any level of collegiate athletics, whether it is Division I, II or III. In many cases the coaches are defined by whether or not their teams have winning records, and in some cases, that is not enough. Coaches must remember that they are constantly educating. Coaches and advisors are teaching life skills in how to handle pressure, prioritizing time commitments, the value of hard work and team work and also how to handle failure. Coaches are not teaching the academic lessons in the student athlete's academic area, but they are teaching the student athlete valuable skills they will utilize much in their life after the competition is over. Currently, particularly at the Division I level, there is much pressure to be highly successful on the court and field. The economic impact that successful programs and teams can have on a university can be monumental, however, it is equally important to remember the need to be constantly teaching life skills the student athletes will be taking into the next phase of their life.

The role of the advisor is not that much different than that of the coach. Many Division I programs have academic/athletic advisors that help the student athletes make sure they are getting into the proper classes so that their academic schedule will not conflict with their athletic time commitment. For example, the University of Mississippi has taken their academic athletic counseling to even higher levels. They have hired additional support staff who specialize in helping students with learning disabilities to make sure they get the proper support that is needed (USA Today, Nov. 2003). The

estimated cost of the additional support is roughly \$50,000. Many coaches and advisors feel this example of financial backing is necessary to enable them to do everything possible to provide the proper support the student athletes need to be successful.

In all divisions in intercollegiate athletics, the highest priority is put on academics. The Division III level of athletics is a bit different from the others in that there are no athletic scholarships that can be awarded to the student athlete. In Division II athletics there are a limited number of athletic scholarships because of funding limitations that the universities and colleges have within their athletic departments. This is not to say there are not programs in place for the student athletes, but they may not have the specialty programs and support services that the Division I student athletes have. Division III and II schools need to get creative with how they give their student athletes support programs.

The literature that was reviewed clearly states there are programs and models in place for the student athletes, coaches and advisors to help ensure the success of the Division I student athlete. However, problems arise at the Division II and III level of athletics because there is not the funding to help support similar programs. As mentioned before, the coaches and advisors must put in extra hours to ensure the student athlete is getting the proper direction and needed attention. Most Division II and III programs are not going to be able to put up athletic buildings centered on supporting the efforts to help ensure academic success nor are they going to be able to hire 2-3 academic counselors to only advise the student athletes. Instead, the coaches and advisors must form solid relationships and have open lines of communication along the way. They must always try and remember to keep the best interest of the student athlete at hand and try to fully develop the student athlete as a whole person.

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