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Lucas Noboa  
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THE TRANSITION THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EXPLORATION OF  
CHALLENGES, BARRIERS, AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR STUDENT- ATHLETES

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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in the Department of Educational Leadership and Higher Education  
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at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

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2020

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## ABSTRACT

During the recent decades, the importance of intercollegiate athletics has proliferated amongst institutions of higher education. As such, the transition through higher education for student-athletes has increasingly included experiences with challenges and barriers, which influence their success. To address difficulties, institutions and athletics departments have implemented support services and resources to assist student-athletes throughout their transition. Additionally, the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) has conducted several studies, which examined the experiences and well-being of current student-athletes. Through the Growth, Opportunities, Aspirations and Learning of Students in college (GOALS) survey, detailed information has been provided to member institutions, which has influenced the support services and resources provided to student-athletes.

This study utilized the NCAA GOALS survey instrument, in addition to semi-structured interviews, to explore the experiences of 10 student-athletes with challenges and barriers as they transitioned through higher education. Furthermore, the study investigated which support services and resources student-athletes depended on and which support services or resources should be implemented to assist them during their transition. Particular questions from the NCAA GOALS survey were predetermined based on their alignment with the research questions; follow-up interviews provided additional insight into the phenomenon.

The results of this study found that student-athletes do experience challenges and barriers in higher education. Five themes emerged, including time commitment, major selection, study aboard and internship, health problems and symptoms, and mental wellness. Moreover, student-athletes depended on several support services and resources, including relationships with faculty, care from team or college medical personnel, communication with parents/guardian, and

academic support services. The study also found that student-athletes wished the coaches or athletics administrators talked more about budgeting/financial management, preparing for a career after college, mental wellness, and proper nutrition. The results of this study also found that the four major factors of Schlossberg's Transition Theory, situation, self, support, and strategies, were influential in the student-athletes' abilities to cope during a transition.

The results of this study suggest that institutions and athletics department should continue with their support services and resources to ensure the success of their student-athletes. This was the first research done, which supplemented the NCAA GOALS study with supportive qualitative data. The findings will contribute the success of current and future student-athletes in higher education. However, future research should investigate the everchanging challenges and barriers that influence the success of student-athletes.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

To my wife, Katrina and our unborn son, this was for the two of you. To my parents, I did it. I hope to have made you proud. To my family and closest friends, your support and encouragement has meant everything.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

4 Ss	Situation, Self, Support, Strategies
APR	Academic Progress Rate
FBS	Football Bowl Subdivision
FCS	Football Championship Subdivision
GOALS	Growth, Opportunities, Aspirations and Learning of Students in College
GSR	Graduation Success Rate
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### General Background

According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Eligibility Center (2018) *Guide for the College Bound Student-Athlete*, more than 480,000 NCAA student-athletes compete on 19,500 teams at 1,100 academic institutions located throughout the United States. The organization adopted a three-division structure in 1973 “to create a fair playing field for teams from similar schools and provide college athletes more opportunities to participate in national championships” (p. 2). The current NCAA President, Mark Emmert, boasted to current and prospective student-athletes, “we at the NCAA strive to make sure your college experience shapes your personal development and future success, no matter what career path you choose” (p. 2). But the NCAA’s Eligibility Center (2018) has acknowledged that “fewer than 2%” of student-athletes compete professionally in their sport (p. 4). In fact, the estimated statistics are presented as 1.2% and 1.6% for men’s basketball and football, respectively.

Although student-athletes experience issues in higher education similar to those of students who are not athletes, such as involvement (Astin, 1999; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1980; Wolf-Wendel, Ward, and Kinzie, 2009), engagement (Kuh, 2009; Tinto, 1988; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009), and integration (Tinto, 1993; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009), student-athletes experience additional academic, social, physical, personal, and emotional challenges (Jolly, 2008; Watson & Kissinger, 2007). According to Tinto (1993), it is the responsibility of institutional leaders to ensure the success of all students, including student-athletes. However, the body of literature on this subject elucidates various challenges and barriers that student-athletes experience in higher education that continually serve as potential obstacles regarding their journey through higher education.

## Statement of the Problem

Intercollegiate athletics provide many high-profile institutions with national visibility, and the teams attract interest from people outside academia, such as community residents, alumni, state legislators, and prospective students (Judson et al., 2004). With three distinct divisions, NCAA member institutions vary significantly. For instance, at Division III institutions, athletic scholarships are not provided, and the median undergraduate enrollment is just 1,748, and one in six students are athletes. By contrast, Division I institutions have a median undergraduate enrollment of 9,629, and one in 25 students are athletes (NCAA Eligibility Center, 2018). With these differences in institutional size and scope, the experiences of student-athletes are highly diverse, as well. However, student-athletes experience similar challenges and barriers regardless of NCAA division classification. With these numerous obstacles in mind, institutional administrators, intercollegiate athletics practitioners, and educational policymakers are continually challenged to implement adequate support and resources to facilitate the success of their student-athletes.

The problem this study investigates is identifying which challenges and barriers student-athletes experience in higher education, which services and resources are utilized in their efforts to overcome them, and how institutions and intercollegiate athletic departments may enhance or supplement their support for student-athletes. Identifying the relevant issues and making necessary recommendations will improve the higher education experience for student-athletes. As a result, there will be decreased attrition among this segment of the student population.

For many student-athletes, collegiate athletics has provided the only opportunity to obtain a college degree: “The student’s athletic abilities have paved the way for an opportunity to attend college; without it, that opportunity may not have been present” (Hendricks & Johnson, 2016, p.

17). To support student-athletes in their efforts to obtain their degree, the study explores student-athletes' perceptions regarding the various challenges and barriers they experience in higher education.

### Purpose of Study

The NCAA Growth, Opportunities, Aspirations and Learning of Students in College (GOALS) study has been administered several times, in 2006, 2010, and 2015. The fourth iteration will be conducted in 2019. The purpose of these studies is to examine the experiences and well-being of current student-athletes competing at NCAA institutions. Over the years, respondents have provided important information on topics ranging from college choice to post-college careers. However, apart from two concluding questions, the 2019 version of the instrument features 84 questions that exclusively collected quantitative data (e.g., Likert scale data).

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to better understand the challenges and barriers that student-athletes face at a large Division I research university in the southeastern United States. The purpose also includes determining which support services and resources student-athletes depend on and which services or resources should be implemented to assist during their transition through higher education. Finally, this study bridges a gap in the current literature. More specifically, it is designed to supplement the quantitative data from the NCAA GOALS survey instrument with qualitative research data. According to Collins, Onwuegbuzie, and Sutton, the rationale for conducting mixed research includes participant enrichment, instrument fidelity, treatment integrity, and significance enhancement (as cited by Johnson et al., 2007, p. 116). With a supplemental analysis, including the meaning of student-athletes' experiences in higher education, institutional administrators, intercollegiate athletics practitioners, and

educational policymakers will have “superior explanations of the observed social phenomena” (Denzin as cited by Johnson et al., 2007, p. 115).

### Research Questions

The research questions for this study include the following:

RQ 1: Do student-athletes experience challenges and barriers as they navigate higher education? If so, which challenges and barriers do they experience?

RQ 2: What campus and athletic support services or resources are particularly useful to student-athletes in their efforts to overcome the challenges and barriers they face in higher education?

RQ 3: How can institutions and intercollegiate athletics departments enhance or supplement current services to effectively support student-athletes with the challenges and barriers they experience in higher education?

### Advancing Scientific Knowledge

The results of this study could provide additional descriptive analysis to the findings of the NCAA GOALS study. While the various iterations of the NCAA study have produced valuable and insightful information, this study will provide considerable context based on the participants’ quantitative responses. In doing so, the results will further help institutions and athletics departments better understand the challenges and barriers that student-athletes experience and which support services and resources are perceived as contributing to their success. Based on the findings of this study, it may be necessary for practitioners to implement or modify existing resources to decrease the rate of attrition among student-athletes.



## Significance of the Study

According to Navarro and Malvaso (2015), intercollegiate athletics now serve as the front porch of American institutions. The public image, reputation, and prestige of the university is framed by the success or failure of athletics at the institution (Mathes & Gurney, 1985). In fact, the competitiveness of intercollegiate athletics has consumed college and university officials in the decades following World War II (Thelin as cited in VanOverbeke, 2013). However, the NCAA has only recently become increasingly concerned with the educational experience of student-athletes (Gayles & Hu, 2009).

According to Gayles and Hu (2009), finding the proper balance between intercollegiate athletics and the purpose of higher education has “been an enigma unsolved by institutions of higher education” (p. 315): “It is well documented that student-athletes underperform academically” (Levine, Etchison, and Oppenheimer, 2014, p. 525). Further, researchers have determined that student-athletes experience various challenges and barriers as they navigate higher education. For instance, researchers have posited that student-athletes experience challenges with racism and gender inequality. According to Simiyu (2010), “one of the biggest criticisms of college sport is the fact that it is a replica of the plantation system.” Fletcher, Benschhoff, and Richburg et al. have added that challenges “include role conflict, negative stereotypes towards female sports participants, limited career opportunities in sport, and minimal support on campus for women athletes and their sports programs” (as cited in Simiyu, 2010, p. 21). Researchers have argued that student-athletes experience physical and emotional strains, as well. Watson (2005) has noted, “challenges and demands associated with being a student-athlete make these individuals more susceptible to mental and physical distress” (p. 442).

Supplemental challenges are generated from time constraints and restrictions. Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, and Hannah (2006) have claimed, “given their demanding training and practice routines, it’s not surprising that student-athletes devote significantly more time to extracurricular activities than members of other groups” (p. 771). This statement surmises that there is less time for academics and meaningful interactions outside athletics. Further, researchers have discovered that student-athletes experience challenges when interacting with faculty. According to Sharp and Shelley (2008), “many faculty view student athletes as less than capable academically, especially those who participate in revenue-producing sports. They may stigmatize student athletes, which can lead to increasing alienation of student athletes from their academic endeavors” (p. 109).

The literature has provided presumptions that student-athletes are academically unprepared for higher education. According to Adler and Adler (1985), assumptions remain that “athletes are unprepared for and uninterested in academics, that they come to college to advance their athletic careers rather than their academic careers” (p. 241). There are also challenges in meeting NCAA eligibility requirements: “the athletes must, for example, maintain full-time student status, earn minimum grade point averages, and take a minimum number of course hours each semester” (Fletcher et al., 2003, p. 36). These are standards not required of the general student population.

Additionally, student-athletes experience difficulties meeting coaches’ demands. Ridpath et al. (2007) have noted that “revenue sport coaches as a whole are likely to be excessive in their demands on the time of their athletes for athletic purposes and not for academic purposes” (p. 62). In addition, these students must also articulate and navigate institutional policies. Simiyu (2010) has acknowledged that “institutional policies require” faculty to “make up for missed

material, assignments, and examinations” (p. 20). However, faculty members react negatively when this becomes a constant occurrence over the course of a semester. In addition, Fletcher et al. (2003) have recognized, “some institutions ... do not have policies to protect these students from being penalized for missing class, although their participation in athletics necessitates their absence” (p. 36).

Finally, prior literature on student-athletes has recognized challenges and barriers with identifying career goals. According to Briggs (1996), “research on athletics and career preparation indicates that college athletes, especially football and basketball players, tend to be lower in measures of career maturity” (p. 5). Consequently, these challenges and barriers serve as a catalyst of potential attrition. The significance and purpose of this study include understanding the variety of challenges and barriers that student-athletes experience and which support services or resources student-athletes perceive as necessary for their success.

#### Rationale for Methodology

The methodology for this proposed study is a mixed methods research approach. According to Johnson et al. (2007), mixed methods research is now as the third major research approach, along with qualitative and quantitative research (p. 112). The proposed study will utilize “qualitative dominant mixed methods research” (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 124). That is, the research will rely on semi-structured interviews with participants. To begin, a quantitative survey sampling strategy will be employed. However, the dominant feature will be a qualitative, phenomenological design (Moustakas, 1994). According to Jones et al., a qualitative design provides an opportunity for the researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon individuals experience (as cited in Navarro, 2015). The study will incorporate the NCAA GOALS survey instrument, which collects information on important topics regarding the

experiences and well-being of student-athletes. According to the NCAA (2019), the GOALS survey includes quantitative data collection on student-athletes' academic, athletic, and social experiences. Participants will be prompted to complete the instrument. The phases of research will be conducted sequentially (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). After completing the survey instrument, selected participants will be interviewed and asked to elaborate on survey responses. There will not be statistical tests to analyze quantitative data; the survey responses will only be described descriptively. The rationale for selecting this mixed methods approach includes verification and determining the meaning of experiences (Sechrest & Sidana as cited in Johnson et al., 2007).

#### Nature of the Research Design for the Study

It is estimated that the duration of research activities will last approximately three months during the Spring 2020 academic semester, from January 2020 through March 2020. The study includes a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, including the NCAA GOALS survey instrument and semi-structured interviews. By using a mixed methods approach, recruited participants can verify the fidelity of the instrument and confirm previous findings while contributing to the richness and thickness of the data

#### Theoretical Framework

Schlossberg's transition theory, shown in Figure 1 (Schlossberg, 1981; Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson, 2006; Schlossberg, 2011), is the theoretical framework that will guide this study. According to the theory, events and nonevents result in transitions for individuals. These events cause "changes in relationships, routines, assumptions, and/or roles" (Bjornsen & Dinkel, 2017, p. 246). Additionally, these events, or nonevents, may be anticipated or unanticipated. According to Schlossberg (2011), transition is considered how the individual

reacts over time as he/she begins, navigates, and exits the transition process. To cope with the process, individuals rely on four resource areas that Schlossberg (2011) has identified as the four Ss: the situation, social supports, self, and strategies. Figure 1 provides an image of the Adult Transition Theory's coping resources or the 4-S model (Schlossberg, 1984; Goodman, et al., 2006).

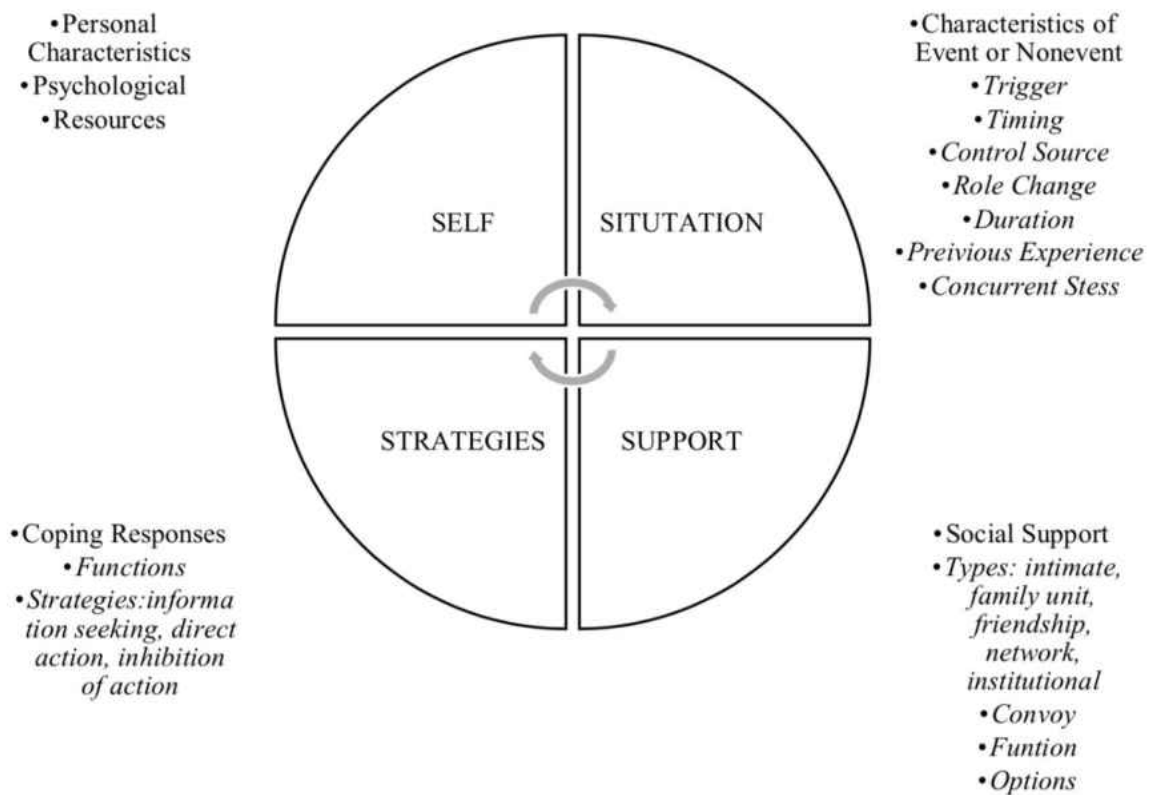


Figure 1: Coping Resources the Four Ss (Goodman, et al., 2006).

### Situation

This factor refers to the situation of the individual during the time the transition occurs. According to Schlossberg (2011), the timing of the transition is important because it influences

the context of one's life. In addition, Bjornsen and Dinkel (2017) have included the type of transition and potential role change as factors that influence the situation.

### Support

Support references the assistance available to the individual during the transition. This support includes an individual's interpersonal network and "peripheral sources such as larger organizations and institutions" (Bjornsen and Dinkel, 2017, p. 247). Schlossberg (2011) has argued that support is essential to an individual's sense of well-being (p. 160).

### Self

According to Schlossberg (2011), this resource includes a person's inner strength. Here, optimism, resilience, and the ability to deal with ambiguity are identified as traits of individuals who are successful in the transition process. Bjornsen and Dinkel (2017) have noted that self also refers to an individual's previous success in effectively coping with transition (p. 247).

### Strategies

Schlossberg (2011) has referenced Pearlin and Schooler (1978) and identified three coping mechanisms. They include strategies that try to change the situation, reframe the situation, and reduce stress. Although there are various strategies, individuals who utilize several strategies are better able to cope with transitions.

### Definition of Terms

Definitions of the study's key terms are provided below.

**Transition:** "A transition can be said to occur if an event or nonevent results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships" (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 5).

**Student-athlete:** "An amateur sportsman is one who engages in sports for the physical, mental, or social benefits he derives therefrom, and to whom the sport is an avocation. Any

college athlete who takes pay for participation in athletics does not meet this definition of amateurism” (Duderstadt as cited in Bass, Schaeperkoetter and Bunds, 2015).

#### Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

The assumption is that each participant is a current student-athlete at the institution and has experienced challenges and barriers in higher education. This assumption is made based on purposeful sampling of participants who are identified with the assistance of the athletics academic support staff at the institution. It will also be assumed that participants have had experience with various support services or resources at the institution.

A potential limitation could be the participants’ unwillingness to elaborate or fully divulge information that may make them appear vulnerable. The researcher will address this limitation by eliminating participants known as a result of the investigator’s previous employment and relationships in the Academic Services for Student-Athletes (ASSA) department at the institution.

A potential delimitation is that the study will only investigate student-athletes at a large NCAA Division I institution in the southeastern United States. Thus, the study will exclude Division II and III student-athletes and Division I student-athletes who do not participate at the institution where the study will take place.

#### Conclusion

The remainder of this document includes Chapter 2, which reviews the existing literature pertaining to the phenomenon. Chapter 2 discusses the history of intercollegiate athletics in higher education, the differences between student-athletes and non-athlete students, the challenges and barriers, support services and resources for student-athletes, and the chosen theoretical framework. The document also includes Chapter 3, which provides the description

and rationale behind the methodology chosen for this study. Finally, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 identify the findings and results of the study, summarize them, and provide recommendations for future research.



## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Introduction

To develop full humanity, ancient Athenians believed that both athletics and academics must be incorporated in a complete education. By doing so, a “sound mind in a sound body” could be achieved (Hyland, 2017, p. 3). Hence, we can discern how the ancient Greeks gave us some of the greatest poets and sculptors in history, in addition to the Olympics (Hyland, 2017, p. 2). However, recent studies have determined that there is a modern imbalance between “athletics and the university’s traditional educational role” (Comeaux, 2011, p. 521). Smith has argued that, although intercollegiate athletics was designed to contribute to the student’s education and experience, student-athletes face a myriad of contemporary issues that adversely influence their college experience (as cited in Hendricks & Johnson, 2016, p. 2). If not properly addressed, these various challenges and barriers could potentially influence the retention and persistence of student-athletes.

The review of literature is intended to present the research as it relates to the phenomenon under investigation. The research encompassing the advantages and disadvantages of athletic participation in higher education has been inconsistent and contradictory and has revealed both positive consequences (e.g., Umbach et al., 2006) and negative consequences (e.g., Shulman & Bowen, 2001). Thus, according to Chen, Snyder, and Magner (2010), “past research has produced mixed conclusions when trying to generalize the benefits of athletic participation” (p. 180). Therefore, it is imperative to begin the literature review with a historical review of athletics at colleges and universities. The chronological review begins with the introduction of athletics in American higher education. An overview on the establishment of governance models for intercollegiate athletics follows, which includes the establishment of the NCAA. Finally, a brief

analysis regarding the modern condition of athletics in higher education is presented. The exploration of the modern condition references several recent events that have served to influence the current condition of athletics at colleges and universities. Following the historical review, the chapter presents an overview of various initial and continuing academic requirements for student-athletes and identifies several distinctions between the matriculation processes for athletes compared to non-athlete students in higher education. The chapter then discusses the various challenges and barriers that student-athletes experience in higher education and explores several support services and resources available to them as they navigate their educational pathways. The concluding portion of the chapter provides a brief overview and reveals prior literature that employs the conceptual framework, Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory, that was utilized for this investigation.

#### Intercollegiate Athletics at Colleges and Universities

In "Intercollegiate Athletics/Football History at the Dawn of a New Century," Smith (2002) began by sharing a narrative from a colleague at Pennsylvania State University, Mark Dyreson. The portrayal depicted the professor observing an autumn football game at the institution. To his game-mate, Dyreson stated, "it is a paradox that professors criticize the intercollegiate athletic scene and at the same time love the contest" (p. 229). Recently, this has become a ubiquitous notion in modern society. In fact, Thelin (1994) identified intercollegiate athletics as American higher education's "peculiar institution" (p. 1). American society loves observing the competition of highly skilled athletes and at the same time scrutinizes the issues surrounding intercollegiate athletics (Smith, 2002). Galyes and Hu (2009) have described the recent scrutiny of low graduation rates, gross misconduct, academic scandals, and student-athletes leaving institutions in poor academic standing. These issues "have eroded the public's

confidence concerning the educational benefits of participation in sports at the college level” (Galyses & Hu, 2009, p. 315). However, intercollegiate athletics has not always been riddled with these paradoxes and hypocrisies. In fact, to understand the current state of affairs, it is pertinent to begin with an understanding of the historic beginnings of athletics in higher education and explore the factors that have contributed to the “increasingly entangled relationship between the university and athletic department” (Bass et al., 2015, p. 2).

### **The Beginnings**

To place intercollegiate athletics in a proper context within American higher education, a historical understanding must be reached first. Athletic activities at American colleges and universities began in the mid-1800s (Bass et al., 2015) with students competing among themselves at individual institutions (e.g., Yale, Harvard, and Princeton). However, Goldin and Katz (1999) have shown that, from 1820-1859, 240 more institutions were established in the United States (p. 42). With this rapid expansion, students quickly developed an interest in competing against the students of other institutions rather than only against themselves. According to Hums and MacLean and Weight and Zullo, the first intercollegiate athletic competition was a rowing event organized by the students of Harvard and Yale in 1852 (as cited in Bass et al., 2015). This would commence what Wallsten et al. (2017) has called “one of the most profitable businesses in all of sports” (p. 210).

In the 20 years following the initial Harvard-Yale regatta on Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire, athletic competitions among different institutions continued to expand. Towards the later part of the 1800s, this growth included intercollegiate baseball and football competitions (Hums & MacLean, 2004). However, it did not take long for university administrators to express several concerns regarding the expansion of intercollegiate athletics. According to Smith (1983),

there were “concerns about the inability or unwillingness of students to control their own athletic programs” (p. 372). Hums and MacLean (2004) note that some administrators became concerned with the influence of student-organized football in the academic setting of college campuses. Of primary concern was the number of classes students missed due to competitions against other colleges (Smith, 1983). According to Smith (1983), as the faculty of an institution would provide permission for one team to travel for competition, another team would petition for equal treatment. As this continued, additional faculty time was used to replace course discussions missed due to athletic competitions (p. 374).

Although the extra-curriculum had become important in the nineteenth century, it was unfamiliar territory for faculties and campus administrators who were accustomed to “the classical curriculum and patriarchal control of student behavior” (Smith, 1983, p. 373). Faculties were accustomed to standard *in loco parentis*. Thus, institutions questioned their moral responsibilities for students given their new leisure activities. Incidents of trepidation from administrators surrounding athletic activities included a report from President McCosh regarding the uncertainties of athletics to the Princeton University Board of Trustees in 1874. McCosh posed a question to the board regarding “whether evils may not arise from sports in no way under control of the College authorities” (Princeton Trustee Minutes as cited by Smith, 1983). However, students remained reluctant to share authority over intercollegiate athletics, particularly with academic superiors when the subject in question was a non-academic area (Smith, 1983). As a result, intercollegiate athletics remained marginally unregulated during the later parts of the 1800s.

Nevertheless, some university administrators conversely began noticing several merits of intercollegiate athletics. The attributes included support from alumni, marketing the institution,

and increased student enrollment. Thus, rather than prohibit athletics at the institution, these administrators campaigned for paternalistic reform in the convention of institutional faculty athletic committees. Recognizing the benefits of institutional autonomy, many colleges during this period continually resisted propositions for inter-institutional governance or a national athletic body (Smith, 1983, p. 372). In fact, Smith (1983) has noted that, in the 1880s and 1890s, nearly every college had its own athletics committees dedicated to regulating athletics at the institution. Institutions were thus able to create their own policies and regulations, which created several unfair advantages as many institutions were less restrictive concerning who could and could not participate. As America proceeded into the Progressive Period of the late 1800s and early 1900s, political and social reforms became widespread. Unavoidably, intercollegiate athletics moved in a similar direction (Smith, 1983).

#### Governance and the Establishment of the NCAA

The first attempt at inter-institutional control came in 1882. President Charles Eliot of Harvard University sent a letter to other presidents at New England colleges. Eliot wrote on behalf of the faculty at Harvard, requesting other institutions to consider prohibiting their baseball programs from competing against professionals. In addition, Eliot proposed limiting the number of annual competitions (Smith, 1983). The president implied that faculty and administrators at Harvard were willing to act on these proposals. However, there was a consensus at his institution that unity among other New England institutions would be more effective in pervasive implementation (Smith, 1983, p. 375). Unfortunately, Eliot's initial attempt at inter-institutional cooperation was ignored. Again, institutions delighted in self-regulation and were reluctant to surrender autonomy. However, issues of professionalism,

particularly the use of professional coaches, remained an imperative issue regarding the future of intercollegiate athletics.

In 1883, the faculty committees from eight institutions met in New York City. Attendance at the conference included Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Columbia, Pennsylvania, Trinity, Wesleyan, and Williams. By the conclusion of the conference, eight resolutions had been mutually agreed upon. For example, attendees agreed that there should be no professional coaches or competitions against professional teams. In addition, they supported a proposed limitation of four years of athletic eligibility and required each institution to establish a faculty athletic committee if one had yet to be created. However, when the resolutions were sent to 21 Eastern institutions, there was unanimous disagreement, and the resolutions were shared among students. As usual, students also opposed them and remained persistent that the faculty should not meddle in athletics: “Students saw athletics as their own creation and their responsibility to conduct as they saw fit” (Smith, 1983, p. 376). Since agreement could not be achieved, institutions reverted to individualized regulations and policies regarding intercollegiate athletics.

In 1895, the Intercollegiate Conference of Faculty Representatives (Big Ten) was created. According to Hums and MacLean, it sought to “develop parameters for eligibility, participation, scheduling, equipment, and funding” (as cited in Bass et al., 2015). By the 1900s, the assumption had developed that, unless there was greater control for the collective good, intercollegiate athletics might not last at some institutions (Smith, 1983). By this time, the popularity of college football had exploded. As a result, a lack of consistent rules created several issues. For instance, athletes competed more than four years, and progress towards a bachelor’s degree was irrelevant and was not even required for participation. Football and baseball student-athletes were also commonly paid to play. In addition, “there was no agreed-upon definition of an amateur athlete.

Nor was the question of the advisability of hiring professional coaches resolved” (Smith, 1983, p. 377). Commercialization became of increasing concern, as well; institutions began building gates around athletics fields and charging patrons a hefty gate fee for entrance to intercollegiate athletic competitions. As a result, and “[w]ith all these issues, the overriding question of the place of athletics in American higher education was in need of resolution” (Smith, 1983, p. 377).

Football continued as the dominant college sport in the early 1900s. However, with unacknowledged problems regarding player safety, there were a significant number of intercollegiate football-related accidents. According to Hums and MacLean, there were 18 deaths and more than 140 serious injuries in 1905 (as cited in Bass et al., 2015). This would prove to be the turning point regarding governance of intercollegiate athletics. Ultimately, college administrators began to question whether college football should be abolished (Smith, 1983). It became apparent that a meaningful discussion among institutions was required regarding the safety and integrity of intercollegiate football. If not, institutions would be forced to abandon the sport. In March 1906, 62 institutions formed the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS). By 1910, the organization had been renamed the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) (Bass et al., 2015, p. 4). The establishment of the NCAA broke “the long tradition of hands-off policy” and “student-run games” (Smith, 1983, p. 380) and began serving as the modern organization for the inter-institutional governance of athletics (Smith, 1983).

#### The Modern Condition of Intercollegiate Athletics

Despite the creation of the NCAA, opposition to college sports persisted among many university officials throughout the 1900s. Nonetheless, the general population remained enthusiastic and passionate, especially with college football. According to Bass et al. (2015),

after the founding of the NCAA, “athletics truly did become the metaphoric front porch for the university; the athletic department was becoming arguably the most visible faction of the university” (p. 5). With increasing popularity, college football coaches began obtaining more authority at institutions, as well. In fact, Bass et al. (2015) cited an incident in 1906 at the University of Michigan where the university regents sided with an opinion of the football coach, Field Yost, rather than the university president, James Burrill Angell. This power struggle between university administrators and high-profile coaches has become a modern-day issue.

In 1929, the Carnegie Foundation released a report arguing college football was negatively influencing athletic departments and universities. The report identified adverse issues of commercialization and professionalization (Bass et al., 2015, p. 6). However, the report did little regarding changes, as institutions continued to develop and expand intercollegiate athletics. In the years following, issues of “recruiting, financial aid guidelines for student-athletes, and the role of the media” (Hums & MacLean as cited in Bass et al., 2015, p. 7) quickly became topics of concern.

In 1951, Walter Byers was hired as the first executive director of the NCAA, and his appointment created more structure within the organization. Byers is also noteworthy for creating the term “student-athlete”; according to Bass et al. (2015), “Byers is credited with the development of this term in an effort to make it so that student-athletes would not be considered employees of the university” (p. 8). This notion has served as the foundation for the modern “pay-for-play debate” in intercollegiate athletics (Byers & Hammer as cited in Bass et al., 2015, p. 8). However, amateurism is not the only issue that has challenged intercollegiate athletics.

In the 1970s and 1980s, numerous changes to the structure and dynamics of the NCAA influenced the modern condition of the organization. Several of these issues include the



separation of institutions into divisions (Divisions I, II, and III), the passage of Title IX (as part of the Education Amendments Act of 1972), and the formation of sport television contracts (e.g., CBS and ESPN), which have enhanced the commercialization and, arguably, exploitation of student-athletes (Bass et al., 2015).

### NCAA Divisions I, II, and III

In 1973, the NCAA was split into three distinct divisions (Bass et al., 2015). According to the NCAA, divisions differ “based on funding of athletic programs, scholarships for student-athletes, and fan interest” (as cited in Bass et al., 2015, p. 9). At Division I institutions, student-athletes receive partial or full athletic scholarships. According to Bass et al. (2015), these colleges and universities have significant operating budgets because of substantial television contracts and fan interest (p. 10). According to Benedict and Keteyian, “television broadcasting contracts for football and men’s basketball can exceed \$25 million annually for some schools” (as cited in Bass et al., 2015, p. 10).

At the Division II level, student-athletes receive partial athletic scholarships. Bass et al. (2015) have referred to this financial scholarship model as an equivalency system. In an equivalency system, teams are provided a specific number of full scholarships that coaches divide among players. With smaller stadiums and arenas, and less traveling for competitions and recruiting, Division II institutions do not depend on lucrative television contracts, like Division I institutions do, to operate. In Division III, students are prohibited from receiving athletic scholarships (Bass et al., 2015). According to the NCAA, the idea is that Division III student-athletes should be fully integrated into the institution and primarily focused on academics (as cited in Bass et al., 2015, p. 11).

## Title IX

Title IX, a component of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, “drastically altered the structure of college athletics and the role of athletics in the college institution at large” (Bass et al., 2015, p. 12). According to Shaw, Title IX “mandated that no person should be excluded from having the opportunity to participate in any educational program receiving federal financial assistance” (as cited in Bass et al., 2015, p. 11), including intercollegiate athletics.

During the 1970s, women sport activists established an organization known as the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW). As programs within this organization began receiving substantial funding from institutions, the NCAA noticed a potential conflict in competition that the AIAW could create. In an effort to further monopolize college athletics, the NCAA offered incentives to institutions that would incorporate their AIAW programs under the NCAA. Through membership discounts, the organization persuaded institutions to align themselves with the NCAA. According to Sperber, by June 1982, the NCAA had persuaded enough institutions that the AIAW collapsed (as cited in Bass et al., 2015, p. 12).

Since Title IX is closely associated with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights is responsible for monitoring and enforcing provisions (Bass et al., 2015, p. 13). After noticing that Title IX could negatively influence revenue-generating sports (e.g., football and men’s basketball), athletic administrators’ opposition resulted in the introduction of numerous bills to Congress that sought to eliminate unfavorable consequences for athletic departments. However, none of them were passed (Bass et al., 2015).

Identifying this noticeable resistance to Title IX from institutional administrators, Congress passed the Javits Amendment in 1974 to clarify how Title IX must be applied to athletic activities at collegiate institutions. Based on this amendment, a compliance tool known

as the three-pronged test was developed. Essentially, institutions have three distinct options to demonstrate that they have satisfied Title IX's participation component. Institutions can provide athletic opportunities that are proportionate to the undergraduate enrollment, demonstrate the continual expansion of athletic opportunities for an underrepresented sex, or fully accommodate the interests of the underrepresented sex. However, “there is still a considerable amount of confusion about the functionality and importance of the three-pronged test” (Bass et al., 2015, p. 14). Nonetheless, most institutions have sought compliance by ensuring that the number of female athletes remains within five percentage points of the percentage of female students at the institution.

For football to remain while complying with Title IX regulations, athletic departments have had to terminate nonrevenue men’s programs and add more sports for women. Typically, these include “unpopular, high-number sports like rowing or equestrianism” (Bass et al., 2015, p. 16). This has resulted in objections regarding impartiality from nonrevenue men’s teams. However, to achieve Title IX compliance with a football program without adding women’s sports, Sigelman and Wahlbeck discovered that “a Division I FBS school would have to go from 167 male non-football athletes to 41” (as cited in Bass et al., 2015, p. 18). Therefore, institutions have decided to add women’s sports with larger rosters to reduce the negative influence on nonrevenue men’s teams. Many have placed blame on Title IX for the reduction of nonrevenue men’s sports. However, proponents of Title IX insist that it is unfair to accuse the federal law when there is no requirement for athletic departments to cut men’s teams to comply (Bass et al., 2015, p. 21). Nevertheless, the debate about the intentions of Title IX and its applicability to intercollegiate athletics remains a topic of current debate.

## Television Contracts

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the NCAA extended its existing contract with the television broadcasting company Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and formalized a contract with the recently created Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN). The contract with ESPN allowed the network to broadcast NCAA men's basketball tournament games that were not broadcasted by CBS. With the popularity of college sports increasing, the NCAA now held the advantage in contract negotiations with television companies. During the early 1980s, "the NCAA received between \$30 million and \$40 million for the NCAA tournament" (Bass et al., 2015, p. 22). According to Duderstadt, the NCAA and CBS then reached a seven-year, one-billion-dollar broadcasting agreement for the NCAA men's basketball tournament in 1989 (as cited in Bass et al., 2015, p. 22). However, it is important to acknowledge that the NCAA, not member institutions, receive these substantial payments. According to Cheeks and Carter-Francique (2015), the money generated is then "allocated among five funds: academic enhancement, basketball, grant-in-aid, student assistance, and sports sponsorship" (p. 29).

Although the NCAA has held a firm grasp on broadcasting the NCAA men's basketball tournament, college football has steadily slipped from its grip. According to Sperber, individual conferences have settled on their own broadcasting contracts (as cited in Bass et al., 2015). Thus, athletic administrators at institutions of higher education have quickly come to understand that the success of their athletic departments is closely associated with the success of their football programs. According to Benedict and Keteyian, "football television contracts often form the primary revenue source for Power Five conferences in college athletics" (as cited in Bass et al.,

2015, p. 22). Many of these dealings have resulted in criticism that questions the exploitation of student-athletes.

### **Summary**

It is imperative to reference the modern role of faculty in intercollegiate athletics. Today, each NCAA institution is required to appoint a faculty athletics representative (FAR) who “plays an important role on college campuses, providing oversight of the academic integrity of the athletics program and serving as an advocate for student-athlete well-being” (Miranda & Paskus, 2013, p. 10). However, the role of faculty has been drastically reduced from the once-established faculty athletic committees that originally provided oversight and regulation for intercollegiate athletics. As has been shown, there are several stark contrasts between the initial and current condition of intercollegiate athletics. For instance, modern intercollegiate athletic departments are now dependent on “corporate sponsors, ticket sales revenues, and television broadcast payouts from its athletic conference” (Clotfelter as cited in Bass et al., 2015, p. 23).

Intercollegiate athletics has drastically changed over the last century.

Founded as student-organized activities in the mid-1800s, athletics in modern higher education functions more like a business. Although Harvard and Yale began competing against one another in 1852 with virtually no oversight, the regulators of intercollegiate athletics have progressed from students to faculty committees, and now the NCAA has become “a billion-dollar industry” (Bass et al., 2015, p. 23). However, as athletics has become the “metaphoric front porch for the university” (Bass et al., 2015, p. 5), the faculty has remained cognizant of the various issues surrounding intercollegiate athletics. In fact, Bass et al. (2015) have acknowledged that, through the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), faculty members were included in NCAA restructuring debates during the 1980s and 1990s (p. 23), which followed the

introduction of divisions, Title IX, and the initial surge of television contracts. Regardless, the modern condition of intercollegiate athletics includes issues about player safety, the appropriate balance between academics and athletics, commercialization, and pay-for-play. Several of these issues are addressed in succeeding sections.

### Student-Athletes and Non-Athlete Students

As an additional portion of the literature review, it is essential to analyze the process of initial and continuing eligibility standards as established by the NCAA, which create different experiences for student-athletes in comparison to non-athlete students in higher education.

#### Similarities

There is already an abundance of literature on the various advantages and disadvantages of athletic participation in higher education. Additionally, studies have also proclaimed neutral influences. For instance, Wolniak et al. (2001) have claimed that athletic participation does not influence college outcomes such as higher-order cognitive activities, learning for self-understanding, and motivation to succeed academically. Furthermore, Umbach et al. (2006) have reported, “student-athletes across a large number of colleges and universities do not differ greatly from their peers in terms of their participation in effective educational practices” (p. 727). Furthermore, Pascarella, Bohr, Nora, and Terenzini (1995) have found no difference regarding cognitive development in student-athletes and non-athlete students. While several comparisons have been identified between student-athletes and non-athlete students in higher education, there is a recognizable difference in one process that both student populations experience. The route student-athletes must navigate for initial athletic eligibility and enrollment at an institution, and the requirements necessary to maintain athletic eligibility once matriculated, are significantly different compared to the traditional admission and progression processes for non-athlete

students. The NCAA continually enforces and initiates these differences, and it determines initial and continuing eligibility requirements for student-athletes to compete. These requirements induce supplemental challenges and barriers for student-athletes in higher education.

## Differences

### Initial and Continuing Athletic Eligibility

The pinnacle of intercollegiate athletics is Division I. According to the NCAA Eligibility Center (2018), Division I institutions have the largest student bodies, athletics budgets, and number of athletic scholarships available (p. 5). Approximately 350 colleges and universities compete in Division I. Every year, more than 750,000 student-athletes participate on over 6,000 teams. The Division I structure is further divided into two subdivisions. These subdivisions are based on football programs at member institutions. The first category of Division I institutions, known as the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS), participates in bowl games (e.g., Rose Bowl, Orange Bowl, etc.). The second category of Division I institutions, known as the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS), competes in an NCAA-run football championship. The final group of institutions does not sponsor football and is simply referred to as Division I (NCAA, 2019, p. 359).

For a prospective student-athlete to begin the process of competing in Division I intercollegiate athletics, the student must first be certified by the NCAA Eligibility Center (2018). Prospective student-athletes are instructed to begin this process as early as the ninth grade. The NCAA Division I Manual has identified specific courses, a grade point average, and minimum test scores for which college-bound student-athletes must achieve in high school to obtain initial athletic eligibility at the collegiate level (NCAA, 2019).

## Initial Core Courses

Recognized as the “16 NCAA-approved core courses” (NCAA Eligibility Center, 2018, p. 17), the purpose of these courses is for high school students to develop a foundation for the academic expectations of college. However, not all high school courses are considered core courses. According to the NCAA Eligibility Center (2018), courses that are excluded include fine arts classes (e.g., music and art), vocational classes (e.g., typing and driver’s education), personal skill classes (e.g., personal finance), remedial classes, and classes that are not academic in nature (e.g., video editing and film appreciation) (p. 14). If a high school student desires to compete at an NCAA institution, certain course restrictions may prevent him or her from pursuing a personal hobby (e.g., graphic design) and/or taking foundational courses necessary for future success (e.g., remedial courses).

According to the NCAA (2019), “only classes in English, math (Algebra 1 or higher), natural or physical science, social science, foreign language, comparative religion or philosophy may be approved as NCAA core courses” (p. 166). More specifically, prospective student-athletes must take at least four years of English, three years of math (Algebra I and above), two years of natural or physical science, one more year of any of those three (English, math, or natural or physical science), two years of social science, and four more years of either “English, math, natural/physical science, social science, foreign language, comparative religion or philosophy” (NCAA, 2019, p. 166). However, in addition to taking the 16 core courses, prospective NCAA student-athletes must achieve a minimum GPA and comparable standardized test scores.



## Initial GPA and Test Scores

The GPA for those 16 core courses must reach at least a 2.30, as shown in Figure 2 (NCAA, 2019). To obtain initial athletic eligibility, students must also obtain an ACT sum score or SAT combined score that matches their core-course GPA on a sliding scale established by the College Board (NCAA, 2019, p.167). Figure 2 below depicts the sliding scale for Division I. For instance, with a 2.30 core-course GPA, a student would need either an SAT combined score of 980 or an ACT sum score of 75. However, a student with a 3.00 core-course GPA would only need to obtain a 720 SAT combined score or a 52 ACT sum score based on the sliding scale. The sliding scale utilized to assess college academic preparedness has been a controversial topic, and it is discussed in a following section.

Division I Sliding Scale			Division I Sliding Scale		
Core GPA	SAT	ACT Sum	Core GPA	SAT	ACT Sum
3.550	400	37	2.750	810	59
3.525	410	38	2.725	820	60
3.500	430	39	2.700	830	61
3.475	440	40	2.675	840	61
3.450	460	41	2.650	850	62
3.425	470	41	2.625	860	63
3.400	490	42	2.600	860	64
3.375	500	42	2.575	870	65
3.350	520	43	2.550	880	66
3.325	530	44	2.525	890	67
3.300	550	44	2.500	900	68
3.275	560	45	2.475	910	69

3.250	580	46	2.450	920	70
3.225	590	46	2.425	930	70
3.200	600	47	2.400	940	71
3.175	620	47	2.375	950	72
3.150	630	48	2.350	960	73
3.125	650	49	2.325	970	74
3.100	660	49	<b>2.300</b>	<b>980</b>	<b>75</b>
3.075	680	50	<b>2.299</b>	<b>990</b>	<b>76</b>
3.050	690	50	<b>2.275</b>	<b>990</b>	<b>76</b>
3.025	710	51	<b>2.250</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>77</b>
3.000	720	52	<b>2.225</b>	<b>1010</b>	<b>78</b>
2.975	730	52	<b>2.200</b>	<b>1020</b>	<b>79</b>
2.950	740	53	<b>2.175</b>	<b>1030</b>	<b>80</b>
2.925	750	53	<b>2.150</b>	<b>1040</b>	<b>81</b>
2.900	750	54	<b>2.125</b>	<b>1050</b>	<b>82</b>
2.875	760	55	<b>2.100</b>	<b>1060</b>	<b>83</b>
2.850	770	56	<b>2.075</b>	<b>1070</b>	<b>84</b>
2.825	780	56	<b>2.050</b>	<b>1080</b>	<b>85</b>
2.800	790	57	<b>2.025</b>	<b>1090</b>	<b>86</b>
2.775	800	58	<b>2.000</b>	<b>1100</b>	<b>86</b>

Figure 2: Sliding Scale for Division I (NCAA Eligibility Center, 2018, p. 19)

According to the NCAA Division I Manual:

An institution shall not permit a student-athlete to represent it in intercollegiate athletics competition unless the student-athlete meets all applicable eligibility requirements, and the institution has certified

the student-athlete's eligibility. (NCAA, 2019, p. 159)

### Continuing Athletic Eligibility

Assuming the student-athlete meets initial eligibility requirements and is admitted to an institution, there are also continuing “applicable eligibility requirements” that the student-athlete must achieve throughout collegiate enrollment (NCAA, 2019, p. 159). For instance, to be eligible to participate in athletic practices and competitions, student-athletes must maintain full-time enrollment at the institution. If a student-athlete withdraws or is dropped from a course and is not enrolled full-time, the student-athlete becomes athletically ineligible (NCAA, 2019). In addition, student-athletes must maintain progress towards a degree. That is, prior to the student-athlete's second year or third semester of collegiate enrollment, 24 semester hours must be sufficiently completed. Within the 24 semester hours, 18 must have been earned during the fall and spring semesters, excluding the summer term. Further, at least six semester hours must have been earned in the spring semester (NCAA, 2019, p. 172). However, football student-athletes have additional requirements. For these students to maintain athletic eligibility, members of the football team must complete at least nine semester hours during the fall term (competition season). Failure to do so results in athletic ineligibility during the first four competitions in the following season.

### Continuous Progress Towards Degree

During the first two years of collegiate enrollment, each qualifying course the student-athlete successfully completes is counted toward the percentage of degree requirements. However, by the student-athlete's fifth semester or third year of collegiate enrollment, an academic major must be declared. From there on, only courses towards that declared academic major are considered. Entering the third year or fifth semester of collegiate enrollment, student-

athletes must have completed at least 40% (e.g., 48 credits for a 120-credit degree) of the degree requirements. By the fourth year or seventh semester, 60% must be completed (e.g., 72 credits for a 120-credit degree). If the student is provided a fifth year or ninth semester of athletic eligibility, 80% of the degree should be completed to maintain athletic eligibility (e.g., 92 credits for a 120-credit degree). Among athletics practitioners, this is known as the 40-60-80 Rule (NCAA, 2019, p. 174).

#### Continuous GPA

There are also continuing GPA requirements for student-athletes. According to the NCAA Division I Manual, “a student-athlete who is entering his or her second year of collegiate enrollment shall present a cumulative minimum grade-point average (based on a maximum 4.00) that equals at least 90 percent of the institution’s overall cumulative grade-point average required for graduation” (p. 195). For an institution that requires a 2.00 cumulative GPA to graduate, student-athletes must achieve a 1.80 GPA. Furthermore, upon entering their third year, the requirement is 95%, or a 1.90 GPA. At the beginning of the fourth year and beyond, the requirement is 100% or a 2.00 cumulative GPA to maintain athletic eligibility.

#### Summary

Although the NCAA implemented this legislation in 2004 to increase retention and graduation among student-athletes, it has become an additional burden that supplements the differences between student-athletes and non-athlete students (Wolverton, 2007). Beginning with high school, prospective student-athletes exercise caution when taking courses that are not on the approved list of 16 NCAA core courses. This limits their ability to experience courses that may entice curiosity (e.g., personal finance classes) or increase cultural capital (e.g., fine art classes). Moreover, high school teachers, administrators, and alumni become pressured or persuaded to

ensure that talented student-athletes are successful in the necessary courses required for initial NCAA eligibility. This may include grade inflation (Winters & Gurney, 2012) and academic dishonesty regarding coursework and standardized test taking. Once matriculated, the process continues. However, the student then balances collegiate athletics, which are much more time consuming and demanding than high school sports. In addition, the notoriety is greater, and the stakes are higher. In addition, student-athletes must maintain full-time enrollment and meet pre-established GPA and credits earned benchmarks each academic year. To do so, student-athletes experience continual pressure, as they are measured according to their abilities to meet academic standards in addition to athletic standards. If a student-athlete is unsuccessful, the athletic ability becomes irrelevant, and the purposes of higher education are blurred. The various challenges and barriers created by achieving and maintaining athletic eligibility are further elucidated in a subsequent section.

### Challenges and Barriers for Student-Athletes

Without doubt, scholarly literature is replete with publications that acknowledge the various advantages of being a student-athlete in higher education. For instance, Aries, McCarthy, Salovey, and Banaji (2004) have concluded that “important skills and qualities are developed through participation in sports that are not acquired through the academic curriculum” (p. 577). These include valuable time management skills and personal growth (e.g., Richards & Aries, 1999). Furthermore, Astin (1993) has argued that athletic participation positively influences peer relationships and students’ commitment to the institution. Researchers have claimed that enhanced peer relationships are developed as “athletes compete with and against people from socioeconomic, racial and ethnic, and religious backgrounds other than theirs” (Wolf-Wendel, Toma, and Morpew, 2001, p. 385).

Various researchers have also reported that student-athletes are typically more satisfied and involved than non-athlete students (Astin, 1993; Pascarella and Smart, 1991; Ryan, 1989). Specifically, Ryan (1989) has found that “participation in intercollegiate athletics is associated with a high level of satisfaction with the overall college experience, motivation to earn a college degree, and the development of interpersonal skills and leadership abilities” (p. 127). Athletic participation also “brings numerous physiological, psychological, educational, and social benefits to the participants” (Chen et al., 2010, p. 176) and has been determined to positively influence students’ personal and social well-being (Cantor & Prentice, 1996).

Neutral influences of athletic participation have also been discovered. Several researchers have reported no difference in academic achievement when controlling for pre-college differences between student-athletes and non-athlete students (Hood, Craig and Ferguson, 1992; Pascarella & Smart, 1991; Stuart, 1985). However, despite these advantageous and impartial findings, much of the existing literature presents disparaging repercussions as a consequence of athletic participation in higher education.

To illustrate, evidence has suggested that recruited student-athletes are frequently provided an admissions advantage due to their athletic abilities (Bowen & Levin, 2003). Less academically prepared student-athletes achieve acceptance into institutions with well-below average academic qualifications and continually struggle to succeed among classmates with much higher academic qualifications than their own (Hood et al., 1992; Shulman and Bowen, 2001; Stuart, 1985). Unfortunately, most issues do not become pronounced until the student-athlete matriculates. At this time, researchers have discovered additional challenges and barriers, including racism and gender inequality, physical and emotional strains, time constraints and restrictions, interactions with faculty and peers, continuous academic unpreparedness, meeting

NCAA continuing eligibility requirements, the demands of coaches, articulating and navigating institutional policies, and identifying career goals (Adler & Adler, 1985; Briggs, 1996; Fletcher et al., 2003; Watson, 2005; Umbach et al., 2006; Ridpath et al., 2007; Sharp & Shelley, 2008; Simiyu, 2010). Therefore, the rationale for this segment of the literature review is to elucidate existing literature that relates to the commonly identified challenges and barriers for student-athletes in higher education. The review begins with student-athletes who are specially admitted through the recently modified NCAA initial eligibility requirements.

### Special Admission

Most institutions in higher education use traditional admissions criteria when considering applications for admission to their institution, such as an applicant's cumulative GPA and standardized test scores. At other institutions, considerations might include a personal essay or letters of recommendation. However, colleges and universities ultimately possess the ability to make admissions decisions independently. That is, rather than utilizing traditional admissions criteria, institutions can decide whether to consider an applicant's other attributes. In other words, institutions can independently decide whether the student is an appropriate fit for the institution.

For instance, a gifted musician, an avant-garde artist, or published scholar might be qualified beyond the consideration of traditional admissions criteria. Often, these attributes include the applicant's athletic talents. In fact, Winters and Gurney (2012) have revealed that "the potential glory of a university on the athletic field can become a key consideration in the decision whether to admit certain applicants" (p. 3). At various institutions of higher education, athletic departments have significant influence over the application process of prospective student-athletes. Institutions with notable NCAA Division I athletic programs are often pressured

to admit student-athletes with well-below average academic qualifications. Although they meet initial NCAA eligibility standards (see Figure 2), athletic departments pressure admissions departments to consider students who would otherwise be considered academically unprepared to attend the institution. With the thought of losing student-athletes to the competition, unqualified student-athletes are frequently admitted based purely on the consideration of their athletic attributes.

According to Winters and Gurney (2012), the NCAA has continually struggled with the ideal method of determining “the academic preparedness of incoming student-athletes” (p. 3). In fact, since 1965, the NCAA has shifted between numerous designated requirements to determine student-athlete eligibility. However, when a landmark court case in the late 1990s claimed minimum standardized test scores were culturally biased against minorities, the NCAA was prompted to establish new initial eligibility requirements. In 2003, the NCAA introduced the modern academic standards for prospective student-athletes, utilizing a sliding scale to determine athletic eligibility based on high school GPA and standardized test scores (e.g., SAT or ACT). With this contemporary model (see Figure 2), a student-athlete with an unimpressive standardized test score can become athletically eligible with the NCAA by achieving a significantly higher GPA (Winters & Gurney, 2012). While there has been controversy regarding the reliability of standardized test scores and high school GPAs to predict academic success in college, Geisiner has acknowledged that these basic assessment instruments allow institutions to compare applicants and offer acceptance to those who will likely succeed and deny those who will likely fail (as cited by Winters & Gurney, 2012, p. 4). However, more recent research has questioned the predictability of an applicant’s high school GPA.



Winters and Gurney (2012) have studied the academic preparation of specially admitted student-athletes. That is, their academic qualifications alone would not have provided acceptance into the institution. The researchers used three cohorts of specially admitted students (n=109) and divided the groups into students who obtained an ACT score below 17 (n= 21) and other specially admitted students (n=88). Each of the students was administered the Wide Range Assessment Test 4 (WRAT4). This instrument measures the basic academic skills of reading, spelling, and math. According to the findings, differences in high school GPAs were not statistically significant. However, Winters and Gurney (2012) have found significant differences in “basic academic skills of word recognition, sentence comprehension, and spelling” (p. 7). In other words, despite these noticeable deficiencies among student-athletes with an ACT score below 17, the groups had comparable high school GPAs. Thus, researchers determined that high school GPAs are not an accurate reflection of a student-athlete’s knowledge (Winters & Gurney, 2012).

Although high school GPA is not reflective of knowledge, the standardized test scores of the student-athletes investigated were statistically significant. In other words, in addition to the WRAT 4 results, students in the “other specially admitted” group had higher standardized test scores. According to Winters and Gurney (2012), this means that “standardized tests more accurately measure basic academic skill deficiencies than high school GPA” (p. 8). These findings reveal that, due to a recently acquired initial eligibility requirement, student-athletes with low standardized test scores obtain athletic eligibility with greater high school GPAs. Increased GPAs are likely caused by grade inflation (Winters & Gurney, 2012). Thus, Winters and Gurney (2012) have argued that high school GPAs do not reflect academic abilities. However, because many perceive GPAs as a reflection of students’ academic abilities,

“universities and athletic departments are admitting student-athletes whose academic deficiencies are becoming apparent only after matriculation” (p. 8). This becomes the foundation for several challenges and barriers that student-athletes experience in higher education.

### Racism and Gender Inequality

According to Parham (1993), institutionalized discrimination permeates our society (p. 419), including within the realm of our educational institutions and intercollegiate athletics (Cheeks & Carter-Francique, 2015). Hyland (2017) explained, “racism, it is easy to see, derives not from sport itself but from problems within society that spill over, as it were, into sports” (p. 14). Thus, student-athletes of color are subjected to continuous systematic biases and prejudice. For instance, African American student-athletes experience faculty members and classmates who presume their acceptance at the institution was a result of affirmative action (Scales as cited in Parham, 1993). Alternately, they view them as special admits who do not deserve their presence on campus (Murty, Roebuck, and McCamey, 2014). Additionally, due to a lack of interaction with minorities, faculty members and coaches are “unable to support the student-athlete of color in ways that could be useful and productive” (Parham, 1993, p. 419). Murty et al. (2014) has claimed that faculty members stereotype Black student-athletes as uninterested and requiring special privileges or accommodations. Furthermore, since coaches are primarily responsible for winning, their focus is on athletic talents rather than the academic interests of students. Further, although Black student-athletes have likely experienced racism and discrimination prior to higher education, the challenges and barriers experienced because of the color of their skin can leave them feeling “confused, angry, hurt, and perhaps bitter” (Parham, 1993, p. 419).

In a study investigating the exploitation Black student-athletes experienced from 1960-2010, Murty et al. (2014) have discovered that exploitation included “commercialization and

overemphasis of college and university football and basketball sports; racial and class stereotyping and profiling practices; economic exploitation; academic exploitation; and, exploitative workplace” (p. 158). To elaborate, researchers found that, although NCAA guidelines prohibit institutions from using student-athletes for “revenue generation without adequately compensating them for their services,” Black student-athletes endure various forms of economic exploitation. Economic exploitation occurs because Black students must remain “amateur student athletes” (p. 162). That is, while institutions reap financial revenue from Black athletes’ athletic performances, lower-class Black student-athletes do not receive fair compensation. Rather, Black student-athletes receive a college education, which is “mere pittance when compared to the revenues Black student athletes generate within an essentially cost-free labor pool” (Meggyesy as cited in Murty et al., 2014).

Additionally, Black student-athletes “are extremely impacted by academic exploitations of all kinds because they are the most heavily recruited race in college sports; especially in their participation in football and basketball” (Gatmen as cited in Murty et al., 2014). For instance, Black student-athletes are advised into courses that do not require much academic rigor. These are courses they can easily pass to remain athletically eligible. However, the courses are associated with majors that often do not align with the student’s occupational or professional career interests. Academic exploitation occurs as Black student-athletes are unable to make mature educational and career plans like their non-athlete peers. Thus, “athletic departments thereby take advantage of the student athlete’s academic opportunities for the purpose of his play-time eligibility” (Murty et al., 2014, p. 165). However, Black student-athletes are not the only students treated inequitably. In addition to the challenges and barriers of overt and implicit

racism towards Black and minority student-athletes, female student-athletes experience challenges and barriers related to gender inequality.

Athletics has historically been male orientated, and male dominated; thus, female athletes experience sexism (Parham, 1993, p. 418), and the inclusion of women in intercollegiate athletics has regularly been cause for debate and criticism. According to Parham (1993), the fallacious consequences to a female's reproductive system, the thought that female athletes become masculine or appear manly, and the attitude that women do not value competition has caused questions as to whether they belong in the athletic world (p. 418). However, Aries et al. (2004) have shown that women's participation in athletics has significantly increased since the passage of Title IX. Consequently, the recruitment of women athletes in higher education has also escalated (p. 579). However, Fletcher et al. (2003) have noted that numerous institutions have yet to fully comply with Title IX. As a result, women athletes still participate in sports that operate with much smaller budgets (e.g., significantly fewer scholarships, less media exposure) and continue to have limited access to athletic opportunities (Fletcher et al., 2003, p. 40).

Cogan and Petrie have reported that there is also "role conflict, negative stereotypes toward female sports participants, limited career possibilities in sport, and little campus wide support for women athletes and their sports" (as cited in Fletcher et al., 2003, p. 40). Like racism, gender discrimination also permeates our society, including intercollegiate athletics. For instance, in comparison to male sports, gender discrimination in athletic departments includes, but is not limited to, "travel budgets, pay for coaches, size of coaching staffs, quality of facilities and equipment, and the number of available athletic slots" (Fletcher et al., 2003, p. 40). Parham (1993) has also acknowledged that there are few women in athletic administration positions.

Parham (1993) has recognized that there are few women in positions of authority, as well, since some women's teams are coached by males (p. 418).

Female athletes must continually confront various societal and systemic biases that present additional challenges and barriers. For instance, society has created particular social norms for women that include femininity, beauty, and grace. However, to be successful student-athletes, women must exhibit strength and aggressiveness in their sport. Thus, "women who engage in college athletics also may struggle with role conflict" (Fletcher et al., 2003, p. 40). Challenges arise when females are questioned about their sexual orientation or are considered masculine and unfeminine by their peers (Snyder & Spreitzer as cited in Fletcher et al., 2003). This notion has recently been supported by researchers who discovered that women of particular sports that are considered masculine (e.g., basketball or softball) are less likely to be selected as a date by males or as a friend by females when compared to women of "gender appropriate" sports (e.g., gymnastics or swimming) (Kane as cited in Fletcher et al., 2003, p.40). This social isolation on campus due to athletic participation creates numerous challenges and barriers for female student-athletes.

Furthermore, "sexual harassment and abuse of female athletes are part of the reality of women's sports" (Heywood as cited in Fletcher et al., 2003, p.40). Instances such as the recent sexual abuse scandal at Michigan State University have received significant media attention (Kennedy, 2018). Repercussions have the potential to influence female student-athletes physically and emotionally, well beyond the years of intercollegiate athletics participation. According to Simons, Van Rhee, and Covington (1999), female athletes are less likely to arrive on campus primarily to play sports. According to the researchers, this is due to an understanding by female student-athletes that there are limited possibilities of a professional

athletic career beyond college. However, beyond participation in collegiate athletics, the opportunities for women to achieve careers in athletics are also meager. According to a study by Suggs, only 9% of athletic directors in Division I are female (as cited in Fletcher et al., 2003, p.40). Accordingly, these challenges and barriers related to racism and gender inequality, which exist in both society and within institutions of higher education, significantly influence the well-being of student-athletes, both externally and internally, as they pursue their degrees.

### Physical and Emotional Strains

It has been acknowledged that, like non-athlete students, student-athletes experience various developmental issues that must be resolved to “ultimately promote their emotional health and maturity” (Parham, 1993, p. 411). Parham (1993) has identified similar developmental issues as “developing and strengthening a set of personal competencies (e.g., academic, social, intrapersonal), solidifying their identities as individuals separate from their families and communities, discovering and creating ways to nurture interpersonal and intimate relationships, coming to terms with a set of beliefs and behaviors that are consistent with their emerging values and moral and ethical standards, and formulating career goals and, ultimately, deciding to pursue a vocational path that is both satisfying and personally rewarding” (p. 411).

However, student-athletes experience numerous physical and emotional challenges that have been differentiated from the challenges non-athlete students experience (Watson & Kissinger, 2007). These challenges influence developmental issues for student-athletes and cause supplemental physical and emotional strains. In particular, it has been found that student-athletes experience challenges with learning to balance academics and athletics (Pinkney, 1991), adapting to a degree of social isolation (Astin, 1977; Lanning, 1982), managing success, maintaining physical health to minimize athletic injury and rehabilitation (Danish, Petipas, &

Hale, 1993), satisfying relationships (e.g., coaches, friends, and teammates; Parham, 1993), and terminating an athletic career (Pearson & Petipas, 1990; Parham, 1993). Often, these challenges result in “emotional, physical, or development difficulties for student-athletes” (Watson & Kissinger, 2007, p. 153).

To elaborate, student-athletes experience heightened physical and emotional strains during competition season, which is when the athletic requirements for student-athletes are greatest. At this time, “student-athletes are challenged to find ways of maximizing their involvement and learning in both academic and athletic domains and doing so in an effective and efficient manner” (Parham, 1993, p. 412). However, the “mental and physical stamina” of student-athletes is continually compromised, as they balance various academic responsibilities (e.g., attending class, studying, completing assignments) with the physical requirements of intercollegiate athletics (e.g., practices, strength and conditioning, rehabilitation). With competing demands, student-athletes are forced to make difficult decisions by prioritizing one pursuit over the other (Parham, 1993).

With the existing challenges of balancing academics and athletics, student-athletes seldom have time for social activities: “Given these time constraints and decreased attention to social and leisure activities, student-athletes often report feeling estranged, left out, and not in touch with campus life” (Parham, 1993, p. 413). Furthermore, previous research has found that a lack of time to develop social relationships with non-athlete students can become the source of much distress. Consequently, the demands of participating in athletics lead to feelings of social isolation (Harris, Altekruise, & Engels, 2003; Pinkerton, Hinz, & Barrow, 1989) and stress and anxiety (Stone & Strange, 2000). Furthermore, student-athletes are unable to meet financial needs. Although provided an athletics scholarship that covers tuition, books, and room and

board, student-athletes are unable to generate enough finances to cover other general expenses (e.g., clothes, toiletries). Thus, they have reported feeling “frustrated, trapped, and even exploited” when unable to generate monies to support themselves.

According to Parham (1993), student-athletes also experience physical and emotional strains related to success and failures (p. 414). For instance, exceptionally talented student-athletes have expectations of maintaining an elevated level of athletic performance throughout college. Constant pressure is the result of maintaining the expectations of their “coaches, teammates, their home communities, and the media” (Parham, 1993, p. 414). Other researchers have expressed concerns with how talented student-athletes react and manage their feelings associated with status, admiration, and when letting people down (Cavenar & Werman as cited in Parham, 1993, p. 414). Although gifted student-athletes may not be mesmerized by their athletic success, they recognize that failure to maintain peak athletic performance “could trigger feelings of self-doubt and self-criticism, and they could feel that they will be abandoned by those who used to hold them in such high esteem” (Parham, 1993, p. 414). On the contrary, the student-athlete “rated average to good” experiences a different array of physical and emotional strains related to success and failures (Parham, 1993, p. 414).

Less talented student-athletes are usually excluded from athletic notoriety. Thus, they are generally on a quest to achieve elusive athletic success in college. Although they are members of the team, their mere participation has never been enough; rather, they are constantly in pursuit of an opportunity to prove that they have what it takes to make substantial contributions to the team. Over time, the strains associated with achieving that opportunity grow, and frustration ensues as they gradually feel as though an opportunity to succeed is ultimately out of their control (Parham, 1993). For another group of student-athletes, the reality is that intercollegiate



athletics is their final chance to exhibit the talent necessary to become a professional athlete. According to Parham (1993), this “‘last-ditch effort’ mentality also tends to exacerbate their sense of already feeling overwhelmed” (p. 414). Feeling as though they are emasculated influences their emotional well-being, as they must learn to manage their feelings without influencing other areas of their life (e.g., academics, social, personal).

Injuries related to athletic competition are a common occurrence for student-athletes, and they produce monumental physical and emotional strains. According to Parham (1993), at least one study has reported that, when surveyed, 50% of Division I student-athletes disclosed an injury related to athletic participation (p. 415). Consequently, student-athletes experience physical and emotional strains when sidelined due to sport-related injuries; in fact, “to be sidelined with an injury can be quite distressing for any athlete” (Parham, 1993, p. 415). Student-athletes experience unrelated strains following their injury. Parham (1993) has found that distress may occur as coaches pressure student-athletes to return before they feel comfortable doing so. For instance, student-athletes can feel forced to return and may be pressured to ignore their physical injuries. Should student-athletes return prior to completing rehabilitation, it is usually because they fear letting their teammates down. Nevertheless, the onset of physical and emotional strains related to athletic injuries occurs because of the initial unexpectedness and abrupt nature of the experience. Since “much of their sense of being and purpose is connected to their identification with the athletic role,” overidentification becomes problematic when the athlete is injured (Watson & Kissinger, 2007, p. 159). Although some injuries are minor, many athletically related injuries have the potential to significantly impede and interfere with the lives of student-athletes (e.g., torn ligaments, concussions), and “[a]t the extreme, some injuries can result in lifelong physical and related emotional difficulties” (Parham, 1993, p. 415).

Several researchers have declared that the termination of a student-athlete's athletic career presents the most physical and emotional strains (Ogilvie & Howe; Pinkerton, et al.; Wittmer, et al. as cited in Parham, 1993, p. 416). For collegiate athletes, athletics remains a constant throughout their life. However, it is not until their athletic eligibility concludes that they realize just how significant the relationship has been. Although student-athletes recognize that the athletics experience will eventually end, it is an after-thought that is rarely taken seriously. According to Parham (1993), "despite the knowledge that one's athletic career will someday come to an end, the actual termination of a student-athlete's career is the kind of experience for which no amount of preparation and foresight seems adequate" (p. 416). During this termination period, student-athletes experience intense anxiety. Ogilvie and Howe have claimed that the experience for student-athletes at this time is like "when a person experiences a loss, such as a death" (as cited in Parham, 1993, p. 416). Although student-athletes do not experience a physical loss, they experience the loss their self-fulfillment. For these students, athletics has been their primary means of achieving success; thus, athletics has always been related to their self-esteem and self-worth (Parham, 1993). Athletic participation has provided "success, approval, validation from others, recognition, and feeling a part of someone or something" (Parham, 1993, p. 417). When those basic human needs are unsatisfied through athletics, student-athletes struggle to incorporate other activities that satisfy their emotional needs. This process is further intensified for student-athletes who exhibit significant "emotional attachment and investment" to their sport (Parham, 1993, p. 417). Therefore, issues related to "balancing academics and athletics, social isolation, financial concerns, physical health and injury, and termination of one's athletic career" are noteworthy factors that contribute to physical and emotional strains.

## Time Constraints and Restrictions

The time demands of intercollegiate athletic participation require student-athletes to sacrifice their responsibilities to academics (Meyer, 1990; Parham, 1993). For instance, a student who accepts an athletic scholarship is required to miss “classes, exams, and in the most extreme cases, choose a major that accommodates their athletic schedule” (Hollis, 2001, p. 265). Thus, student-athletes are unable to adequately devote the necessary time towards studying to earn adequate grades (Cantor and Prentice, 1996). Sparent (1989) has argued that class preparation “can be cursory at best” (p. 9). In fact, Hendricks and Johnson (2016) have claimed that “attempting to juggle the arduous schedule of athletics, while also managing the rigors of college academics is a dichotomy that makes the completion of an academic degree program challenging” (p. 2). However, time constraints and restrictions that result from intercollegiate athletic participation create various other challenges and barriers for student-athletes beyond the inability to earn high grades or complete an academic degree program.

According to Wolverton, a recent survey on student-athletes’ experiences on college campuses revealed that Division I football players spend over 40 hours each week on athletically related activities (as cited in Gayles & Hu, 2009). Similarly, Sparent (1989) has reported that, after attending classes and performing adequately in their academics, student-athletes “may be required to spend up to six hours a day on their athletic pursuits” (p. 9). Others have reported that student-athletes are required to devote up to 25 hours per week and “miss numerous classes for university-sanctioned athletic competitions” (Simons et al., 1999, p. 151). Holsendolph has noted that, by adding approximately 20 hours of practice, in addition to “weight training, film study, and team meeting,” athletic requirements are closer to 30 hours each week (as cited in Hendricks and Johnson, 2016). With 12 to 16 hours of classes and 15-20 hours of studying, Griffin has

determined that student-athletes “have anywhere from 57-66 hours of obligations each week” (as cited in Hendricks and Johnson, 2016). Thus, time constraints significantly influence the higher education experience for student-athletes.

For instance, Wolverton has found that student-athlete participants cited time commitment as an influence on major selection (as cited in Gayles & Hu, 2009). In a comparable investigation into the alignment of athletes’ undergraduate major choices and career field aspirations, Navarro (2015) has stated, “participants in certain sports felt time constraints differentiated them from the general student body and often had remorse for their major decision” (p. 375). Thus, student-athletes felt time constraints created inflexibility in major selection, and balancing athletics and academics excluded majors that required course scheduling during practice times. Pascarella, Truckenmiller, Nora, Terenzini, Edison, and Hagedorn (1999) have argued that “sports absorb so much physical and psychological energy that there is only limited amount left to make the kinds of intense investments in one’s academic experience that enhance cognitive growth” (p. 9).

Also referred to as a “time conundrum,” Navarro and McCormick (2017) have described “the difficult decision-making process student-athletes face as they determine how to divide their time among the competing wants and needs of their academic commitments, athletic commitments, and personal interests outside of academics and athletics” (p. 143). An example is the time to participate in tutoring. Even when a student-athlete acknowledges academic deficiencies and has the initiative to improve, they are “often unable to take the time for extra tutoring” (Sparent, 1989, p. 9).

Gayles and Hu (2009) have reported that time restrictions prevent student-athletes from interacting and engaging with classmates in educational activities outside of the classroom or in

other educationally purposeful activities (p. 316). Similarly, Sparent (1989) has noted that student-athletes have limited opportunities to participate in non-athletic events. Furthermore, previous research has found that “those in high-profile sports had lower level of interaction with students other than teammates and had lower levels of scores on the measure of cultural attitudes and values” (Gayles and Hu, 2009, p. 323).

Additionally, Watson and Kissinger (2007) have suggested that, due to “stringent academic training and competition (including traveling) schedules,” student-athletes are unable to interact socially with other students. Watson has found that student-athletes spend as much time on athletically related activities, “e.g., games, practice, training, and team meetings” as an individual working a full-time job (as cited in Watson and Kissinger, 2007, p. 158). According to a qualitative investigation of two female sports, Meyer (1990) has reported that, although “athletes had anticipated that college athletics would be demanding, many members of both teams believed their practices were too long and that sport ruled their lives” (p. 48).

College is supposed to provide an invaluable opportunity to meet and connect with individuals of different races, ethnicities, and genders. Since student-athletes must spend much of their time on athletic activities or with other athletes, they lack this opportunity to interact with non-athlete students who share dissimilar outlooks of the world and have different perspectives and experiences. Therefore, these findings support the notion that student-athletes, especially revenue-generating (e.g., football and men’s basketball) student-athletes, spend a significant amount of time during the week on athletic related activities. As a result, they experience various challenges and barriers throughout their time in higher education.

## Interactions with Faculty and Peers

Numerous scholars have demonstrated the importance of student-faculty interactions (e.g., Kuh, 2003) and collaboration with classmates (e.g., Astin, 1999). However, “despite the value of student-faculty interaction, the relationship between faculty and student-athletes at Division I institutions has been quite complex and somewhat troubled over the years” (Comeaux, 2011, p. 521). Previous research has acknowledged that “conflicting aims of academe and athletics contribute to both the tension and the lack of resolution on issues” (Feezell, 2013). Furthermore, “both by inclination and necessity,” student-athletes spend much of their time with other athletes (Sparent, 1989, p. 10). Thus, the group becomes isolated on many campuses and segregated from the non-athletic community (Sparent, 1989).

Researchers have found that non-athlete students tend to switch between being avid supporters and having adverse stereotypes of their athletic peers (Zingg, 1982). For instance, Sellers has reported that student-athletes are perceived as “socially inept” and “do not do well in the classroom” (as cited in Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995). Further stereotypes include the idea that “dumb jock” athletes are athletically superior but lack academic competencies (Engstrom et al., 1995). In fact, Baucom and Lantz (2001) have found that “many persons have formed negative attitudes toward all college student-athletes” (p. 266).

Faculty have seldom agreed with students regarding the purposes of collegiate athletics. The two have continually exchanged debates over whether college sports “complement or undermine the university’s educational mission” (Baucom and Lantz, 2001, p. 266). Faculty members and student-athletes have rarely agreed on anything since the inception of college sports in the mid-1800s. Thus, many faculty members still hold the implicit view that “athletics have no significant educational component, that education can proceed adequately and best

without the presence or cooperation of athletics” (Hyland, 2017, p.11). Modern interactions on campus with the non-athletic community, therefore, have remained challenging for student-athletes.

According to Astin (1993), faculty members are believed to be most capable of assisting students with resolving the various issues they encounter throughout higher education. With “quality and frequent contact with students” (Comeaux, 2011), opportunities for interactions can occur informally or formally. Comeaux (2011) has noted that interactions can have social or academic settings and happen either inside or outside the classroom (p. 522). Kuh has provided some behaviors typically associated with student-faculty interactions, such as, “discussing career plans, working with faculty members outside of class on a committee or project, and working with a faculty member on a research project” (as cited in Comeaux, 2011, p. 522). As a result of student-faculty interactions, numerous researchers have identified various positive outcomes (Astin; Kuh; Milem & Berger; Nora & Cabrera; Pascarella & Terenzini as cited in Comeaux, 2011). In addition, previous studies have focused on student-athletes and found similar results. For instance, Comeaux (2011) has found that faculty who provide a letter of recommendation, encourage graduate school, and help achieve professional goals contribute to both male and female student-athletes’ academic success. However, many more studies show an adverse relationship between faculty and student-athletes. In fact, several studies have concluded that faculty and non-athlete students have “prejudicial attitudes and stereotypes toward NCAA Division I and II student-athletes” (e.g., Engstrom et al.,1995; Baucom & Lantz, 2001).

In studying faculty attitudes toward male revenue and nonrevenue student-athletes, Engstrom et al. (1995) have reported on previous research that provided evidence that faculty members might have greater negative attitudes toward student-athletes than other members of the

institution (e.g., other students, administrators, and alumni). Connors has suggested that these negative attitudes may occur because of the “perceived incompatibility between the goals of big-time college athletic programs and the basic values of academic integrity and academic excellence in higher education” (as cited in Engstrom et al., 1995, p. 218).

During their own investigation of 126 faculty members at an NCAA Division I institution, Engstrom and colleagues (1995) found that, when presented with identical personal or social situations for general students, revenue sport student-athletes, and nonrevenue sport student-athletes, faculty members reported significantly different attitudes on seven of the 10 situations for each of the three different groups. Engstrom et al. (1995) have found that, for six of the seven situations, “the attitudes of the faculty were more negative toward the male revenue and non-revenue athletes than they were toward students” (p. 222). The six situations included “drives an expensive car; gets an A in class; University creates an expanded tutorial program; receives a full scholarship to college; admitted with lower SATs; and student’s accomplishments are featured in the campus newspaper” (Engstrom et al., 1995, p. 222). These results support previous literature and further indicate that faculty have prejudicial attitudes and stereotypes towards student-athletes (Engstrom et al., 1995). The prejudices of faculty members have been identified through other studies, as well.

In a comparable study of faculty attitudes, Baucom and Lantz (2001) utilized the same instrument as Engstrom et al. (1995) to survey faculty members at Division II institutions, and the researchers describe similar findings. In their study, Baucom and Lantz (2001) indicated significant differences in four of the 10 situations, which included the university creating an expanded tutoring program, receiving a full scholarship to attend college, being admitted with lower college board scores, and having accomplishments featured in the campus newspaper (p.



270). In each of these scenarios, “comparisons revealed that faculty perceived both revenue and non-revenue athletes in a significantly less positive light than nonathlete-students” (Baucom and Lantz, 2001, p. 270). These findings indicate that faculty members harbor prejudicial attitudes and stereotypes toward student-athletes, regardless of the level of the NCAA athletic program. These various findings are disconcerting and problematic for all student-athletes. According to Hamilton and Troiler, pervasive stereotypes can undermine the academic efforts of student-athletes and result in self-fulfilling prophecies as student-athletes themselves internalize low academic performance (as cited in Comeaux, 2011, p. 523).

#### Academic Unpreparedness and Continuing Underperformance

According to Stuart (1985), attention has been focused on “whether student-athletes have been prepared for college-level work and whether they are given an opportunity to attain a college degree” (p. 124). Previous studies have identified concerns that have resulted in researchers acknowledging that “it is well documented that student-athletes underperform academically” (Levine et al., 2014, p. 525). Given their lower academic skill levels, researchers have recognized that student-athletes experience significant academic challenges at highly selective institutions (Aries et al., 2004). In truth, the problem of academic underperformance among student-athletes is pervasive (e.g., Purdy, Eitzen, & Hufnagel, 1982; Maloney & McCormick, 1993). For instance, previous research has indicated that student-athletes “who played all types of sports” underperform academically. Further, it was revealed that the “underperformance was more pronounced for athletes who played high-profile sports (i.e., football, basketball, and hockey)” (as cited in Aries et al., 2004, p. 578).

It could be surmised that underperformance is a result of self-reported data that indicated male football and basketball student-athletes read less than male non-athlete students (Pascarella

et al., 1995), or it could be a result of cognitive ability. For instance, differences in measures of cognitive skills between revenue-generating student-athletes and non-athlete students appear in freshman year and are reported to “increase over the course of college” (Pascarella et al. as cited in Aries et al., 2004). More specifically, male football and basketball players have been found to have significantly lower end-of-first-year measures on reading comprehension and mathematics. However, these are merely a few examples; many research studies that have further ascertained that student-athletes continually underperform academically in higher education (e.g., Aries et al., 2004; Bowen and Shulman, 2002).

In a study comparing athletes and non-athletes at two highly selective institutions, Aries et al. (2004) have discovered that “athletes entered college with lower SAT scores, particularly verbal scores” (p. 589). Furthermore, athletes in their study rated themselves lower on academic skills and underperformed academically relative to other students who entered college with similar SAT scores and demographic backgrounds, although the differences were not significant (Aries et al., 2004, p. 592). Aries and colleagues also found that high-commitment athletes (10 or more hours per week in athletic activities) were “distinguished from non-athletes by lower perceptions of themselves throughout college as smart, intellectual, and artistic/creative” (p.597). These findings have served to further confirm that, despite entering with similar abilities, student-athletes underperform academically in comparison to non-athlete students. This has caused researchers to question student-athletes’ academic motivation.

According to Sparent (1989), students participating in intercollegiate athletics present several difficulties for faculty members. While most college students recognize that there is a connection between the academic skills acquired in college and their career aspirations, the academic purpose of college to student-athletes is more complicated. Lee has noted that a

significant percentage of student-athletes at the college level still “believe that they have reasonable chances of becoming professional athletes” (as cited in Sparent, 1989, p. 8). With this mentality, student-athletes arrive on college campuses with “different conceptions of their own identity than many other students” (Sparent, 1989, p. 8). Rather than focusing on academics, the academic world is far removed from their identity as an athlete. Sparent (1989) has argued that, although faculty expect student-athletes to take academics seriously, “these students’ main academic goal may be simply to do well enough to remain eligible, in order to continue their athletic participation” (p. 9). With influences that continually encourage and reinforce athletes toward athletic careers, less attention is paid to “the academic side of their college life” (Sparent, 1989, p. 9). Thus, with an explicit lack of academic motivation, student-athletes experience challenges in higher education, particularly if they are unprepared at the time of matriculation.

In a study utilizing GPAs and graduation rates, Purdy et al. (1982) have discovered that student-athletes underperformed over a 10-year span compared to non-athlete students at the same institution. Purdy and colleagues have found that student-athletes matriculated with lower academic qualifications, received lower grades, and were less likely to graduate than non-athlete students. Furthermore, the study determined that scholarship student-athletes had lower GPAs and graduation rates compared to non-scholarship or partial scholarship student-athletes. Likewise, Maloney and McCormick (1993) have examined the academic performance of student-athletes over a five-year period at an institution in the Division I Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC). The study supported previous literature in reporting that revenue-generating student-athletes received lower grades than non-athlete students and earned lower GPAs while in their season of competition.

In an examination of college GPAs, the College Sports Project (CSP) found that “male recruited student-athletes underperformed by .07 points (on a four-point scale), male walk-on athletes by .03 points, female recruited athletes by .03 points, and female walk-on athletes by .03 points” (Emerson as cited in Levine et al., 2014, p. 526). Furthermore, while attempting to delineate the academic differences between the grades of football players in-season versus out-of-season, Bowen and Shulman (2002) have found that football players underperform during the season. However, the researchers also determined that, despite significantly fewer athletically related activities and requirements, football players also underperformed out-of-season. Further, Bowen and Shulman (2002) have shown that underperforming behaviors can influence others: “For instance, athletes whose teammates are academically underperforming tend to have lower class ranks and worse underperformance themselves, even in comparison to other student-athletes” (as cited in Levine et al., 2014, p. 527).

A study by Levine and colleagues found that pluralistic ignorance served as a significant influence on student-athlete academic underperformance. According to the researchers, the student-athletes in their study held positive attitudes about academic achievement; however, they reported that their athletic peers did not. Thus, to fit in, student-athletes begin to “conform to the perceived (but false) social norm” (p. 527). In doing so, they undermine their own academic performance and serve as adverse replicas for the rest of the athletic community (Levine et al., 2014, p. 527). In the case of initial subpar admission criteria, academic motivation, or noticeable differences between revenue and non-revenue student-athletes, various prior scholars have determined there is a constant issue with the continuous academic underperformance of student-athletes in higher education.

## Meeting NCAA Continuing Eligibility Requirements

Recently, to emphasize and address the academic experiences of student-athletes, the NCAA has initiated several relevant measures “beyond the mere enforcement of eligibility rules and regulations” (Gayles & Hu, 2009, p. 315). These include limiting athletically related activities and mandating that institutions implement academic support programs for student-athletes. However, athletic eligibility rules and regulations have remained intact. With the initial eligibility sliding scale (see Figure 2), the 40-60-80 Rule (NCAA, 2019, p. 174), the GPA requirements student-athletes must meet annually, or the Graduation Success Rate (GSR) and Academic Progress Rate (APR) institutions must publicly release each year, academic progression indicators have created various challenges and barriers for institutions, coaches, and student-athletes as they strive to remain athletically eligible but also attain a meaningful and worthwhile college degree.

### Graduation Success Rate (GSR) and Academic Progress Rate (APR)

As previously noted, the NCAA has continually modified the minimum eligibility requirements for freshman participants (Hood et al., 1992). Furthermore, the NCAA has recently made several conscious efforts to ensure that institutions implement measures to provide student-athletes continuous academic support. To evaluate institutions, the NCAA “created the Graduation Success Rate (GSR) to better reflect the percent of athletes who do earn a college degree” (Fountain & Finley, 2009, p. 3). Additionally, in April of 2004, “the Academic Progress Rate (APR) was created to measure the academic progress of each athletic team” (Fountain & Finley, 2009, p. 3). Both assessment instruments were initiated through an Academic Reform Package adopted by the NCAA Division I Board of Directors (Fountain & Finley, 2009). According to the NCAA president at the time, Myles Brand, the package was implemented to

“improve the academic progress, retention, and graduation rates of student-athletes (NCAA as cited in Fountain & Finley, 2009, p. 3). However, the standards to which institutions are now accountable and the consequences for failure to meet those objectives have researchers investigating the potentially unethical methods institutions utilize to maintain student-athlete eligibility and graduation rates. For instance, coaches “can recruit athletes of marginal academic ability and seek easier majors, courses, and professors to ensure a reasonable graduation rate” (Fountain & Finley, 2009, p. 3). Previous researchers have called this method academic clustering, where 25% of the team is clustered in one academic major (Case, Greer, & Brown, 1987).

#### Major Selection

Major clustering has become a detrimental problem for intercollegiate athletics. In fact, “academic clustering is one of many underlying issues within the debate on college athletics and academics” (Schneider, Ross, & Fisher, 2010). Prior research has indicated various reasons clustering may occur. For instance, McGinn and O'Brien have theorized that student-athletes select their major based on the recommendations of other student-athletes (as cited in Schneider et al., 2010). In addition, Lederman has posited that, due to the pressures of ensuring eligibility and graduation, academic advisors in athletics departments may implicitly guide student-athletes toward certain majors (as cited in Schneider et al., 2010). Other researchers have surmised that academic clustering may occur for purposes of flexibility, as majors with significant elective availabilities and online course options allow student-athletes more flexibility with their athletic schedules (Hollis, 2001; Schneider et al., 2010). It is also possible that “many student-athletes will choose the path of least resistance—less competitive majors—so they can maintain their eligibility” (Lederman as cited in Schneider et al., 2010).

In a 2006 study to determine if major clustering occurred among 12 institutions in a Division I-A conference, Schneider et al. (2010) found that seven of the Big 12 institutions displayed signs of academic clustering among football student-athletes. For instance, at Oklahoma State University, 31.4% of football players majored in education. That same year, only 10.7% of undergraduates at the institution majored in education. At the University of Texas at Austin, 69% of football players majored in liberal arts. In comparison, merely 5.8% of undergraduates at the institution majored in liberal arts in 2006. Other researchers have discovered more alarming trends within academic clustering.

In one study, Fountain and Finley (2009) examined data from 11 of the 12 institutions in the Division I ACC. Through answering their first research question regarding whether football players in the ACC were clustered into majors, the researchers discovered that academic clustering occurred at all 11 institutions (p. 6). In the study, academic clustering was designated when at least 25% of a team shared a single major (Case et al., 1987). Fountain and Finley (2009) reported that “one university had the highest concentration of football players clustered into one major, with fully 73% of the upperclassmen studying Business Management” (p. 6).

The second of three research questions for Fountain and Finley (2009) sought to determine if there was a prevalence of academic clustering among Whites compared to those in minority groups; they found that clustering for minorities occurred more frequently than for Whites. In fact, nine of the 11 institutions reportedly clustered minorities “more densely into a single program” (p. 7). Moreover, four of the institutions had 62% or greater of minority upperclassmen clustered into one major (Fountain and Finley, 2009).

Lastly, the study questioned whether multiple majors exceeded the 25% level to be considered clustering. Researchers found secondary majors that also included large percentages

of football student-athletes. Furthermore, Fountain and Finley (2009) divided players by ethnicity. According to the study, “four schools had Minority upperclassmen clustering into more than one major” (Fountain and Finley, 2009, p. 10). Nine of the institutions reportedly had greater than 50% of Minority players in just two majors, and six schools had over 75% of minority football players in just two majors. In this instance, while academic clustering clearly occurred for minority football players, it was reported that White players were not clustered into a single major at any of the 11 institutions.

These results and similar research show that academic clustering certainly occurs in athletics departments at institutions of higher education. Further, evidence suggests that the issue appears to be more prevalent among revenue-generating minority student-athletes. Various theories propose explanations for academic clustering; these include that players “gravitate to majors that allow flexibility in scheduling, allowing more electives, and offering a wide variety of class times (Capriccioso, Finley, & Foundation as cited in Fountain & Finley, 2009, p. 11). If any of these were truly valid, however, academic clustering would occur equally across all sports and ethnicities. Many scholars have indicated that increased academic pressures from the NCAA, although admirable, have caused increased challenges and barriers for student-athletes (Fountain & Finley, 2009). As a result, many have come to view student-athletes as “raw material, used up and discarded, with no better than a coin-flip’s chance of earning a degree” (Fountain & Finley, 2009, p. 11).

#### Meeting Demands of Coaches

Coaches have been recognized as providing substantial support to student-athletes throughout matriculation (Adams, Coffee & Lavalley, 2015). While coaches guide student-athletes in their athletic and physical development, they simultaneously assist with various



“transferable life skills such as discipline and punctuality” (Bjornsen & Dinkel, 2017, p. 247). Furthermore, “coaches are an essential component in the student-athletes’ transition to college and college academics” (Hendricks & Johnson, 2016, p. 14). Researchers have determined that the perceived coach-athlete relationship is related to the student-athletes’ basic psychological needs (Choi, Cho, and Huh, 2013). Thus, student-athletes usually perceive coaches to be their primary source of support (Adams et al., 2015). Previous studies have also surmised that student-athletes’ perceptions of their relationship with their coaches may influence motivation, attitude, and emotional responses (e.g., Fletcher et al., 2003; Jowett, 2009; Stuntz & Spearance, 2007). Therefore, various researchers have indicated that the relationship student-athletes share with their coaches significantly influences their success.

In a study of the educational attainment of college athletes, Purdy et al. (1982) have found that scholarship student-athletes scored lower on educational attainment than non-scholarship and partial scholarship student-athletes. Researchers have posited that scholarship student-athletes are essentially employees of the university. Because of their athletic scholarship, they perceive that “they ‘owe’ their coaches their undivided attention because these coaches are paying the bills” (p. 445). Sack and Stavrowsky added that student-athletes are pressured to meet the demands of coaches because coaches are the ones who make decisions about annual scholarship renewal (as cited in Hollis, 2001). Therefore, when academic responsibilities are presented, they are typically neglected because scholarship student-athletes prioritize their athletic responsibilities to the coach. Hence, their success is adversely influenced by the perceived athletic demands from their coach, rather than the academic demands of the institution. Furthermore, Purdy and colleagues (1982) have found that male student-athletes on revenue-generating teams (e.g., basketball and football) have a low probability of educational attainment

compared to student-athletes on non-revenue generating teams and non-athlete students. Again, researchers surmised that, because of increased competitiveness to win, coaches “are likely to be excessive in their demands on the time of their athletes during and between sessions” (Purdy et al., 1982, p. 446). In other words, revenue-generating student-athletes knowingly sacrifice academics as a result of the athletic demands from their coaches. In both scenarios, evidence has suggested that coaches serve as a significant influence on the educational attainment, or lack thereof, for student-athletes.

Prior evidence has indicated that, although coaches champion athletes as students first and athletes second, their primary objective is to maintain players’ athletic eligibility in order to continually compete and win games. Hollis (2001) has noted that coaches’ job security is primarily based on records, “not student-athletes’ academic success” (p. 266). According to Purdy et al. (1982), several academic atrocities have included coaches’ involvement with “credit for phantom courses, surrogates for tests, and counseling on which easy courses do not lead to graduation” (p. 439). As evidence, the FBI once found that a New Mexico coach arranged to have a men’s basketball recruit’s transcripts altered so the student could be admitted to the institution (Lapchick, 1991). Instances have become so routine that academic corruption among intercollegiate athletics is assumed to be ubiquitous. However, there are further implicit consequences as a result of coaches’ demands.

For instance, although coaches are prohibited from requiring student-athletes to miss academic requirements in place of athletic activities, student-athletes have come to understand that, when unexpected conflicts arise, “missing a practice or part of a practice because of an unexpected academic commitment is generally frowned upon” (Simons et al., 1999, p. 158). In other words, coaches have “substantial power and control over their athletes” (Wolf et al., 2001,

p. 384). Coaches possess “the power to decide which athletes will play or start in the games” (Simons et al., 1999, p, 158). As a result, student-athletes believe that they will jeopardize their starting position or be penalized by coaches if they choose academics over athletics (Simons et al., 1999). According to Adler and Adler, when experiencing conflicts, student-athletes often favor the demands of athletics over academics (as cited in Simons et al., 1999). Such decisions present serious challenges and barriers for the student-athlete.

### Identifying Career Objectives

Previous empirical studies have indicated positive (e.g., Sack & Thiel, 1979) and negative (e.g., Sowa & Gressard, 1983) correlations regarding athletic participation and various career outcomes. For instance, Sack and Thiel (1979) have investigated graduated football student-athletes at the University of Notre Dame and concluded that athletic participation did not hinder career mobility. In fact, the researchers posited that, because of athletic participation, student-athletes from lower socioeconomic backgrounds increased their social mobility. They added “that the interpersonal skills and character traits which make successful athletes are precisely those which make successful entrepreneurs” (Sack & Thiel, 1979, p. 65). In contrast, evidence from an investigation by Sowa and Gressard (1983) has found that revenue-generating student-athletes (e.g., football and basketball) tend to have less clarity in identifying career objectives and lower levels of career maturity than non-athlete students. Similarly, Dubois (1980) has argued that “little support can be given to the belief that sports serves as a stepping stone to later occupational success” (p. 107). Therefore, the scholarship on the impact of athletic participation on career outcomes is inconsistent and unconvincing. Nevertheless, much of the existing literature suggests that student-athletes experience various challenges and barriers regarding career exploration and career self-efficacy (e.g., Huang, Chou, and Hung, 2016).

In a study on college experiences and career barriers for student-athletes, Huang and colleagues (2016) refer to several prior studies indicating that, because of rigorous academic and athletic schedules, student-athletes can feel unprepared to address career issues (Wippert & Wippert as cited in Huang et al., 2016). The researchers found that, unlike non-athlete students, student-athletes experience various challenges and barriers that impede their ability to participate in opportunities that advance career clarity or improve career maturity (Martens and Lee as cited in Huang et al., 2016). According to Huang and colleagues (2016), challenges and barriers related to career exploration include a “lack of time, energy, and accessible resources” (p. 572). Martens and Lee have determined that activities such as hands-on experiences through internships and job shadowing have been found beneficial for student-athletes and their career preparation following graduation (as cited in Huang et al., 2016). However, Watson and Kissinger (2007) have reported that student-athletes underutilize career services resources on campus. Several researchers have found that athletic identity is also a contributing factor for student-athletes who experience challenges with post-athletic career decisions (e.g., Gaston-Gales & Hu, 2009; Lavalley & Robinson as cited in Huang et al., 2016). These researchers have argued that the over-incorporation of one’s athlete identity results in the student separating himself/herself from external influences that require attention to be diverted from that identity.

In their study, Huang et al. (2016) utilized the athletic identity measurement scale (AIMS), the student-athlete experiences inventory (SAEI), and the student-athlete career situation inventory to gauge how much students identify as an athlete, to measure their college experiences, and to assess their career development self-efficacy and barriers to career development (p. 575). The findings revealed that each participant (n=345) experienced “a moderate level of career barriers” (Huang et al., 2016, p. 577). Furthermore, students with higher

levels of athletic identity were reported as being less willing to utilize campus resources to enhance their career development. However, participants with higher levels of athletic identity reported fewer perceived career barriers than those with lower levels of athletic identity. For such students, “lacking time to explore future careers” was among the perceived barriers (Huang et al., 2016, p. 581). Huang and colleagues (2016) also determined that career barriers would be reduced if student-athletes participated in assorted and social experiences. Researchers reasoned that these experiences would lower athletic identity and increase career self-efficacy.

To assist student-athletes with career exploration, many institutions offer them specific career preparation programs. However, prior literature on student-athlete development and preparation for life after college is conflicting. For instance, Comeaux and Harrison (2011) have recommended separate development programs for student-athletes to provide more engagement so that students participate with other athletes who face similar challenges. However, Umbach et al. (2006) have argued that isolation on campus generates significant challenges for student-athletes in their college experience. In other words, when institutions provide student-athletes separate resources, they encourage social isolation, faculty isolation, and peer isolation.

Navarro and McCormick (2017) have investigated outcome-based career preparation programs for graduated Division I football student-athletes (n=12) and reported that participants “did not engage in career development activities at a depth and breadth needed to construct career plans prior to graduation resulting in a smooth transition into life after sports” (p. 143). Researchers found several common themes, which included a lack of involvement in researching a career and a lack of participation in externships, internships, and work experience. Moreover, only three of the participants reported visiting the institution’s career services office, and only two of those participants completed an evaluation tool (e.g., Strong Inventory) (p. 145). A

majority (83%) responded that they had discovered their career interests prior to any formal career exploration. Career exploration may include discussions with family members or teammates. Those who were initially undecided in their major selection reported being provided limited choices by their academic advisor: “Overall, 67% of the graduated football student-athletes in this study revealed that they did not research a career prior to graduation” (Navarro and McCormick, 2017, p. 146). Regarding experiential opportunities, 83% of participants did not partake in an externship or internship (Navarro and McCormick, 2017). Time conflicts were identified as the common reason participants were unable to participate in experiential opportunities. Although half (n=6) reported working during their athletic careers, most of the work was part-time summer employment that was not career-related (Navarro and McCormick, 2017).

In the study, Navarro and McCormick (2017) also found that 83% (n=10) of participants felt unprepared to enter the workforce following graduation. Of those 10, “six (60%) experienced career confusion as they searched for their initial job post-graduation” (p. 148). Over half (60%) reported a sense of entitlement or had unrealistic career expectations, and nearly all (90%) experienced job dissatisfaction with their initial job following graduation (p. 149). While 92% of the graduated student-athletes recognized a need for student-athlete career development programming, the evidence suggested that various challenges and barriers prevented student-athletes from engaging in activities that would promote career development.

In a similar study, Navarro (2015) examined the alignment of student-athletes’ undergraduate major choices and career field aspirations. The researcher investigated 29 Division I student-athletes in their final year of studies who had completed a mandatory career strategies capstone course (p. 368). Through semi-structured, individual interviews, Navarro

(2015) found that “three overarching life experiences influence undergraduate major choice as well as the alignment of participants’ undergraduate majors and future career aspirations” (p. 364). Accordingly, the experiences included interactions with student affairs personnel, athletic student affairs personnel, and “the struggle to balance the roles of student and collegiate athlete” (p. 370). In their interviews, fewer students (48%) identified previous interactions with student affairs personnel; however, those who did reported positive experiences. More participants (79%) spoke of interactions with athletics student affairs personnel. However, “the majority expressed feelings of pressure to choose a major to easily maintain eligibility” (Navarro, 2015, p. 374). Additionally, most participants reported that time constraints resulting from balancing multiple roles limited the attention provided to their career development. With the modern, competitive American job market, career development for students in higher education is essential for future economic stability. However, numerous scholars have found evidence that student-athletes experience various challenges and barriers as they identify career objectives.

#### Student-Athlete Support Services and Resources

According to Gaston-Gayles and Hu (2009), for collegiate student-athletes to successfully navigate higher education, supportive programming must exist. Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, and Jensen (2007) have acknowledged that student-athletes devote more than 40 hours per week to athletic activities. Furthermore, previous researchers have recognized that “student-athletes shoulder a tremendous amount of responsibility placed on them by coaches, administrators, and faculty members” (Johnson, 2013, p. 76). Hence, support services are imperative for student-athlete success.

Historically, providing academic support to student-athletes has not always been a required at NCAA institutions. However, the organization established new regulations that

require institutions with Division I athletic programs to provide student-athletes with adequate support and resources. Support and resources include academic advisors, counselors, tutoring, mentoring, and life skills development (e.g., career services, personal development, etc.). Huml, Hancock, and Bergman have suggested that academic centers may also provide counseling for drug and alcohol addiction or abuse problems (as cited in Evans, Werdine, and Seifried, 2017). According to Hollis (2001), the purpose of student-athlete support service programs is to help student-athletes “overcome obstacles created by participation in intercollegiate athletics” (p. 267).

#### NCAA

In January of 1991, the NCAA instituted a mandatory policy that all Division I member institutions adopt tutoring and academic counseling services for student-athletes. As the list of approved services grew, the NCAA eventually permitted financial support for any service necessary for the academic success of student-athletes (e.g., learning disability assessment, life skills development, resources for study hall) (NCAA, 2019). With the “Needs to Know Bill” passed by Congress in 1991, which required institutions to publish student-athlete graduation rates, the NCAA has initiated several similar reform policies to improve these rates for student-athletes (Hollis, 2001). As part of bylaw 16.3.1.1 in the NCAA Division I Manual requiring services for student-athletes, the Academic Enhancement Fund was created to financially assist institutions with developing or enhancing academic support service centers for student-athletes. According to the 2019 Division I Revenue Distribution Plan, the Academic Enhancement Fund has provided each active Division I institution with approximately \$136,800 to enhance academic-support programs for student-athletes. Among the permitted uses for monies is the hiring of academic personnel and “other academic or programming expenses” (p. 4).



## Academic Advisors

According to Tinto (1993), college students discover a connection to their institution through counseling and advising services. Colleges and universities at the NCAA Division I level are equipped with academic advising professionals who work specifically with student-athletes at the institution. In fact, “if you look at Division I institutions, they may have anywhere between three to 20 academic advisors (for athletics)” (Hendricks and Johnson, 2016, p. 13). At Michigan State University, Student Athlete Support Services (SASS) consists of seven academic coordinators and one learning specialist who assess individual needs, gather daily reports on academic progress, provide academic assistance through a tutorial program, and assist with the development of learning strategies (Michigan State University SASS, n.d.). Advisors for athletes must have knowledge in specialized areas. Hollis (2001) has noted that advisors must understand the “athletic systems, academic systems, and the role conflict student-athletes endure when trying to progress through these systems” (p. 271). For instance, they must recognize the relevance of athletics and academics for each advisee as well as the applicable eligibility requirements. As stated in the University of Tennessee Thornton Center Student Handbook, “their knowledge of NCAA academic progression and eligibility rules allows Thornton Center Academic Counselors to provide students sound advice and assistance” (Thornton Center Student Handbook, 2019). According to Nordeen and Robinson, “the astute advisor often must intervene with the most appropriate support services” (as cited in Johnson, 2013). For student-athletes at Florida State University, this includes “academic advising, career development, tutorial assistance, and learning specialists” (Florida State University Student Athlete Academic Services, n.d.)

Prior research has determined that student-athletes are susceptible to the influences of teammates (e.g., Storch & Ohlson, 2009). Therefore, academic advisors are an essential component of the continuous evaluation regarding academic progress for student-athletes. One method of progress tracking is the distribution of progress reports. Depending on the institution, progress reports could be sent to faculty members “as often as two to four times each semester” (Storch & Ohlson, 2009, p. 78). According to the University of Central Florida Student-Athlete Handbook (2019), “each semester progress reports are either given to the student-athlete to be completed by each of their professors or emailed directly to faculty by the ASSA staff twice per semester” (p. 14). Progress reports provide significant insight for advisors regarding class absences, missing assignments, and the current grade in the course. Faculty members can also provide further perspective on how the student-athlete can improve in the course. Based on progress reports, academic advisors may mandate tutoring, mentoring, or other support services for student-athletes (Storch & Ohlson, 2009). Another method of advising support has become known as “intrusive advising” (Glennen as cited in Storch & Ohlson, 2009, p. 78). In this method, advisors and advisees continuously evaluate academic progress through frequent meetings during the semester. At the University of Washington, “the Academic Coordinator works with regularly and specially admitted freshmen and at-risk students within the student-athlete population to develop individualized learning plans and to track and monitor their academic progress” (University of Washington Student-Athlete Academic Services, n.d.). During this process, the advisor and student share responsibilities for academic performance. Prior research has shown that intrusive advising increases retention and academic skills among students (e.g., Earl as cited in Storch & Ohlson, 2009).

## Counselors

Today, counseling centers exist on nearly every college campus to assist students with various developmental issues (Fletcher et al., 2003). According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), these issues include developing autonomy and establishing identity. However, student-athletes also encounter various challenges with balancing academics and athletics. Student-athletes experience “the internal or external pressure to perform, train, travel, maintain academic eligibility and physical health, remain in compliance with the NCAA's set of ever-changing regulations, cope with injury, and the potential to undergo public scrutiny” (Loyola University Maryland, n.d.). Therefore, athletic departments have begun establishing “collaborative partnerships with clinical psychologists, mental health services providers, and special education professionals to introduce strategies to addressing the needs of student-athletes with emotional and learning issues” (Carodine, Almond, and Gratto as cited in Storch & Ohlson, 2009, p. 79). At Loyola University Maryland (n.d.), “the Counseling Center seeks to promote positive and effective mental health to enhance performance across a variety of life domains (e.g., sport, personal, social, career, etc.)” Through understanding the complexity of these issues, college counselors can more effectively help student-athletes navigate the challenges and barriers they may experience.

Student-athletes confront difficulties with prioritizing multiple roles. “Whether student-athletes are students first or athletes first has long been a controversy within collegiate athletics” (Fletcher et al., 2003, p. 38). Student-athletes are members of a team; according to Fletcher et al. (2003), a sports team constantly develops and changes. The role of the student-athlete on the team could “negatively affect an athlete’s performance and performance satisfaction” (p. 39). Thus, counselors can help student-athletes clarify their role on the team. Student-athletes also

experience gender and cultural biases. For example, women student-athletes are more likely to struggle with eating disorders and experience societal biases regarding femininity and sexual orientation. Likewise, African Americans experience racial discrimination. Biases and discrimination include unequal treatment and unequal compensation (e.g., scholarships and stereotypes) (Fletcher et al., 2003). Hence, counselors can aid and provide support to student-athletes experiencing these challenges.

### Tutoring

Tutoring has long been the primary source of academic assistance in higher education. In fact, Owen (2002) has called tutoring the “anchor on which the support system of the university rests” (p. 8). Storch and Ohlson (2009) have noted, “group and individual tutorial services serve to augment the academic performance of student-athletes” (p. 81). In fact, tutoring programs “provide student-athletes with subject-specific assistance beyond that which they receive in the classroom” (University of Georgia Academic Services, n.d.). Due to conflicting schedules, student-athletes are usually unavailable for tutoring offered through campus entities (e.g., academic colleges, learning centers on campus). Thus, student-athlete academic centers provide extended hours of operation, including weekends, where student-athletes can participate in academic enrichment opportunities. Tutors are generally upper-classmen, graduate students, volunteers, or retired teachers. Academic centers for student-athletes may even connect with current and retired faculty members who are experts in disciplines to tutor student-athletes on a weekly basis. Academic tutoring is content-based and assists student-athletes with instructional support in their courses.

## Mentoring and Life Skills

According to Adler and Adler (1987), the commercialization of intercollegiate athletics has influenced how student-athletes prepare for life after sport. For instance, Croissant has argued that multimillion-dollar television contracts pressure athletics administrators and coaches to produce winning teams. In turn, student-athletes must intentionally prioritize athletics over personal and social development during their time in higher education. Thus, “many Division I athletics departments now incorporate student-athlete peer mentorship programs to assist freshman student-athletes to develop self-leadership skills” (Navarro & Malvaso, 2015, p. 24). However, rather than the traditional authoritative relationship between a student and a faculty member, several studies have indicated strong support for peer-to-peer mentoring (Navarro & Malvaso, 2015). At Virginia Tech (n.d.), the mentor program is “a culmination of active one-to-one relationships between student athletes, graduate students, and community volunteers. The mentoring relationships are formed to foster guidance and support for the academic and personal enrichment of selected Virginia Tech student athletes.”

As noted above, tutoring provides student-athletes with assistance regarding academic content. In addition, mentorship and life skills programs assist student-athletes in becoming leaders in athletics and academics and preparing them to become societal leaders in life after sports (NCAA Leadership Development, 2019). To do so, mentorship programs include academic support through developing time management, organizational, goal setting, and study skills. However, various programs also include personal development, community and civic engagement, and career development (NCAA Leadership Development, 2019). At the University of Michigan, the athletic career center “is committed to the career preparation and planning of the University of Michigan student-athletes through comprehensive professional and educational

programs and services, leading to a seamless transition to life after sports” (n.d.). Since student-athletes have been shown to associate more with their athletic identities, integration with campus and the non-athlete population can produce negative influences (Gayles & Hu, 2009). However, this indicates that student-athletes rely more on internal support services within athletic departments. Thus, it becomes even more imperative that institutions establish and enhance support services of various kinds for student-athletes to assist with their cognitive, psychosocial, and personal career development.

## Theoretical Framework

### Introduction

According to Astin and Astin (2015), the transition to college includes a period in which students experience numerous changes in their lives. Prior researchers have found that transitions may include changes in personal responsibilities, social supports, and institutional environment (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2009). Additionally, leaving home and entering college consists of the separation of the student and his/her family and friends and a transition to greater independence and integration into an academic environment. Noticing the various challenges that may result because of the transition to college, numerous scholars have emphasized the necessity of students developing adequate coping strategies to manage the transition into higher education. According to previous research, “traditional approaches to transitions have suggested that all people endure a similar sequence of experiences” (Swain, 1991, p. 153). According to Troll, the failure to consider individual differences during a transition (e.g., Kubler-Ross, 1969) derives from an understanding that changes in human development cease once the individual has reached adulthood. However, Nancy Schlossberg has recognized that adulthood is also characterized by intense growth and change (Swain, 1991): “as people move through life they continually

experience change and transition, and that these changes often result in new networks of relationships, new behaviors, and new self-perceptions” (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 2).

Schlossberg is known as a “life transition guru” (Schlossberg, n.d.). Over the years, she has collaborated with several renowned researchers (e.g., Chickering, 1995) in the development of her theory of adult transition, which is well documented in numerous books (Estrella, 2006). In her 1981 published periodical in *The Counseling Psychology*, she first introduced her research and the idea of a transition theory. According to Evans, Forney, and Guido-Dibrito (1998), Schlossberg described her work “as a vehicle for analyzing human adaptation to transition” (p. 110). In 1989, Schlossberg collaborated with Ann Lynch and Arther Chickering to write *Improving Higher Education Environments for Adults*. Following that publication, Schlossberg continued her relationship with Chickering. Together, the two adult development theorists wrote *Getting the Most out of College* (1995), a practical workbook that is utilized by students and in first year experience courses. Here, Schlossberg provided various examples of her transition theory. According to Nemeth Tuttle (1995), Schlossberg and Chickering shifted the focus for change from the “institutional environment to the individual student” (p. 278).

#### Moving In, Moving Through, Moving Out

In the first section of their book, “Moving In,” Schlossberg challenged students to assess the influences of college on their lives. Here, Chickering and Schlossberg first introduced the 4-S System. According to the authors, students should “take stock of their resources by examining their Situation, Supports, Self, and Strategies for coping to see what areas need strengthening during times of transition” (Nemeth Tuttle, 1995, p. 288). The second part of their book, “Moving Through,” covers topics ranging from major selection to time management and test-taking skills. Chickering and Schlossberg also described the importance of connecting with

faculty members and participating in extracurricular activities on campus. The final section, “Moving On,” discusses life after college. As students transition out of college, Chickering and Schlossberg challenge students to assess their strengths and transferable skills (Nemeth Tuttle, 1995).

### Schlossberg’s Transition Theory

Schlossberg’s framework primarily provides an understanding of the factors related to a transition, the individual, and the environment. Schlossberg’s (1981) model is one “in which transitions of all kinds... can be analyzed, and possible interventions formulated” (p. 3).

According to Goodman et al. (2006), many factors influence how an individual manages transition. Though the model has evolved (e.g., Schlossberg, 1984), the major components have remained. These include approaching transitions, which involves how an individual perceives his/her place in the transition and whether he/she is “moving in, moving through, or moving out” (Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman, 1995). Individuals must also consider the context, type, and impact of the transition. Additionally, transition theory includes multiple features, such as the four Ss: situation, self, supports, and strategies (Schlossberg, 2011). Lastly, the final element is known as taking charge, that is, determining whether the 4-S features listed are assets and/or liabilities that influence the adaptation to the transition (Goodman et al., 2006, p. 55).

#### Approaching Transitions: Types, Context, and Impact

Schlossberg (1981) has stated, “a transition can be said to occur if an event or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one’s behavior and relationships” (p. 5). Schlossberg has defined three different types of events that can initiate transition. For instance, anticipated transitions are predictable (e.g., graduation, marriage), unanticipated transitions are not predicted or scheduled (e.g., injuries, a



miscarriage), and non-event transitions are events that are expected but do not occur (e.g., fertility, promotion). Schlossberg (1981) has further categorized non-events as personal if they relate to the individual (e.g., an expected job promotion that never comes through). Ripple is felt as a result of a non-event for someone else (e.g., spouse passed over for promotion). A resultant event caused by an event (e.g., natural disasters), and delayed events are anticipated events that may still occur (e.g., having a child, retirement). The context of the transition is also important to consider, and the reference is to one's relationship with the transition and the environment in which it takes place. Impact is concerned with the transition's influence on the individual, that is, the "individual's perception of the impact of the transition on relationships, routines, assumptions, and role" (Winter, 2012, p. 405).

#### Taking Stock of Coping Resources: The 4-S System

A major component of Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory are the 4 Ss. "*Situation*" refers to the individual's situation at the time of the transition. According to Griffin and Gilbert (2015), this feature includes whether the change is permanent or temporary and perceived as good or bad. Situation also refers to an individual's control over the transition and the resulting changes to the individual's roles (Bjornsen & Dinkel, 2017). Winter (2012) has added this feature further considers what triggered the transition and if the individual has previous experiences with the transition (e.g., moving, divorce).

The "*self*" variable refers to the "inner strength for coping with the situation" (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 160). The feature includes whether a person is optimistic or pessimistic about the transition and whether they consider the transition as an opportunity for growth. Self factors also include personal characteristics, such as resilience and perseverance (Griffin & Gilbert, 2015). According to Winter (2012), factors of self additionally include socio-economic

status and spirituality (p. 405). Ultimately, individuals differ in terms of their issues and personality. However, individuals with positive self features are better able to manage transitions.

*Support* has various forms. For instance, examples of support may be professional associations (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous), an institution (e.g., colleges and universities), or a network of friends and family. The feature refers to the quality and quantity of support available as an individual transitions. Previous literature has recognized the importance of support during transitions (e.g., Wall, Fetherston, and Browne, 2018). However, the available support options vary for everyone.

Finally, *strategies* include the coping techniques utilized to navigate the transition. Schlossberg (2011) has referred to these as coping strategies and further delineated them as strategies that try to change the situation, reframe the situation, or help reduce stress. Though there is no preferred method of coping, individuals who can use multiple strategies are better able to cope with transitions. Winter (2012) has claimed that people navigate transitions in different ways, and that there is no correct formula for how an individual deals with transition. However, previous research has found several relevant coping strategies for those navigating transitions.

In fact, Schlossberg's (1981) theory has been employed as the theoretical framework for numerous studies that have analyzed the experiences of adults in transition. These studies have examined various populations ranging from veterans and nursing students to former professional athletes and children entering state care (e.g., Swain, 1991; Winter, 2014; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Wall et al, 2018). The next section addresses several studies that have employed Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory.

## Research on Transitions

As stated, prior research studies have utilized Schlossberg's transition theory. However, the research that uses the theoretical framework regarding student-athletes' transition into, through, and out of higher education is sparse and limited. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made to describe the previous literature that is available and relevant to the study.

“From Military to Civilian Life: Applications of Schlossberg's Model for Veterans in Transition”

Anderson and Goodman (2014) have explored the transition from the military back into civilian life for veterans. The researchers acknowledge that this transition can be a lengthy process, which is like other types of transitions. Anderson and Goodman (2014) have claimed that interventions should be implemented to provide strategies and support to veterans in transition. When creating interventions, counselors should consider the situation (e.g., length of deployment), self (e.g., changing roles), support (e.g., information, referrals, and practical help), and strategies that are tailored to an individual's assets and liabilities.

“Better Transitions for Troops: An Application of Schlossberg's Transition Framework to Analyses of Barriers and Institutional Support Structures for Student Veterans”

In a comparable study to that of Anderson and Goodman (2014), Griffin and Gilbert (2015) have examined the barriers and institutional support structures for student veterans in higher education. The researchers noted that veterans face various challenges as they renegotiate their identities and attempt “to blend in on campus with traditional-aged students” (DiRamio & Spires as cited in Griffin and Gilbert, 2015, p. 72). The researchers sought to understand the challenges institutional agents encounter as they provided transitional resources and examined which challenges institutions “introduce or perpetuate in relation to veterans' institutional transitions” (Griffin and Gilbert, 2015, p. 76). Griffin and Gilbert (2015) found participants

expressed the “importance of offices, services, and professionals that meet and understand student veterans’ unique issues and concerns (personal and services)” (p. 80). Student veterans also appreciated contact with other veterans to access information (support). However, they did not usually self-identity as student veterans (self), which presents numerous challenges for student affairs professionals and administrators. Lastly, veterans valued veteran-specific initiatives that provided information so they could take direct action in obtaining their education (strategies).

“Understanding and Supporting Young Children's Transitions into State Care: Schlossberg's Transition Framework and Child-Centered Practice”

To understand the transition into state care, Winter (2014) has used the three main elements of Schlossberg's transition framework to examine the various complexities and impacts that children experience. The elements include “approaching transitions; taking stock of coping resources; and taking charge” (Schlossberg as cited in Winter, 2014, p. 404). Approaching transitions includes the context, type, and impact of the transition. The context for the child in the study included that he was removed from a home that included physical and emotional abuse. The type of transition was “unanticipated—sudden and unplanned” (Winter, 2014, p. 409). The impact of the transition influenced the experience because it affected the role and relationships the child had prior to being removed from the home.

“Understanding the Enrolled Nurse to Registered Nurse Journey Through a Model Adapted from Schlossberg's Transition Theory”

Wall et al. (2018) have investigated nursing students’ journey to becoming Registered Nurses (RNs). Utilizing Schlossberg’s transition theory, the researchers focused on the moving in, moving through, and moving out features to identify the various challenges students

experience. Wall and colleagues (2018) have expanded Schlossberg's original three stages and began their synthesis of the experiences of transitioning from Enrolled Nurse (EN) to RN with "preparing to move in" (p. 8). Wall et al. (2018) note that it is important for higher education practitioners to provide "resources, support, and educational strategies needed to inform a positive and successful transition and address any potential attrition from these programs" (p. 6).

Wall and colleagues (2018) found that nursing students prepared to move into the RN role by determining personal goals. When moving in, nursing students had to meet the demands of learning approaches and access university resources and academic support. When moving through, students overcame setbacks, demonstrated self-efficacy, and maintained support structures. With moving out, nursing students begin constructing their own RN role, identifying mentors, and preparing for the future as a graduated nursing student.

"Withdrawal from Sport and Schlossberg's Model of Transitions"

Swain (1991) has conducted a study to examine the "diversity and commonality of experience" for former athletes who withdrew from their sport. Participants varied across several features, such as sport, career duration, and time since retirement (Swain, 1991, p. 154). Swain (1991) discovered that, rather than being an event, the process occurred over time. For several of the participants, the termination of their athletic career was a nonevent, as they had already moved on to other activities. The context was significant since relationships and commitments were influenced. The impact of the transition was acknowledged as one of "the more important features distinguishing transitions" (Swain, 1991, p. 157). Due to the transition, participants developed new roles and relationships.

"Transition Experiences of Division-1 College Student-Athletes: Coach Perspectives"

Bjornsen and Dinkel (2017) sought insight from coaches regarding “factors facilitating a successful transition from sport for college student-athletes” (Bjornsen & Dinkel, 2017, p. 251). The researchers also wanted to identify which existing supports or resources and which additional supports or resources were needed for student-athletes to effectively transition from sport. Bjornsen and Dinkel (2017) found themes related to Schlossberg’s 4 Ss. For instance, coaches were satisfied with the interpersonal support for student-athletes from academic advisors within university athletics. Coaches agreed that the situation, which includes a “demanding schedule of practices, competitions, and sport-related travel serves as the primary barrier to student-athletes gaining experience/exposure to academic majors and career fields” (Bjornsen & Dinkel, 2017, p. 257). Regarding self, coaches noted the importance of athletic involvement on a team. Finally, researchers discovered themes related to strategies. To help with the transition out of sport, coaches recommended job shadowing and mentoring between former and current student-athletes.

### Summary

Although student-athletes are a minor segment of the overall student population in higher education, their athletic participation provides significant contributions toward the notoriety and prestige of the institution. However, in addition to challenges experienced by non-athlete students during matriculation, such as involvement (e.g., Astin, 1999; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1980; Wolf-Wendel, Ward, and Kinzie, 2009), engagement (e.g., Kuh, 2009; Tinto, 1988; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009), and integration (e.g., Tinto, 1993; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009), student-athletes experience various supplemental challenges and barriers that initially and continually influence their success. Student-athletes must effectively navigate these additional challenges to maintain institutional and NCAA requirements for continued academic and athletic eligibility.

Noticing these implicit and explicit challenges, the NCAA has begun taking a more active role in assuring the success of student-athletes. In addition to publishing these rates, the NCAA has provided financial assistance towards academic centers for student-athletes' academic success. Many of the provided services (e.g., tutoring, mentoring, study hall) are based on perceived necessities. Therefore, the NCAA has begun surveying student-athletes regarding their experiences to obtain more data and provide more applicable support and resources. However, much of the data is quantitative and does not include a qualitative analysis from student-athletes, which could reveal valuable insights regarding perceived challenges and the support necessary for student-athlete success. Thus, this study utilized the survey instrument from the NCAA GOALS study and followed quantitative data collection with semi-structured interviews to obtain further evidence and perceptions regarding the challenges and barriers student-athletes experience in higher education and which support and resources are perceived as most necessary for continued success. Using Schlossberg's transition theory, the rationale for the study is to provide institutions of higher education and academic centers for student-athletes with information that could influence how they interact with and assist student-athletes on their campuses.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

This chapter provides the details of the methodology for the proposed study. The purpose of this study is to explore the challenges and barriers that student-athletes experience at a Division I university in the southeastern United States. In addition, the various support services and resources for these student-athletes are examined. Student-athletes experience various challenges throughout their enrollment in higher education (Simiyu, 2010). Considering these challenges, it is imperative to further dissect the various difficulties that many student-athletes face so that institutions of higher education and athletic support departments may determine which available resources should be emphasized to support student-athletes.

The study is distinctive because it will explore the experiences of student-athletes through a mixed-methods approach. Furthermore, the study is relevant because it will supplement much of the existing literature on student-athletes, which has tended to focus on a single challenge or racial group (e.g., Umbach et al., 2006; Beamon, 2008). In contrast, this proposed study will examine the experiences of a variety of student-athletes, considering the various challenges and the support services utilized for their success in higher education.

By employing a mixed-methods approach, participant responses from the NCAA GOALS survey instrument will be supplemented with responses from open-ended questions during in-depth interviews. Thus, the study will close a gap in the literature by using both quantitative and qualitative data to clarify which challenges and support services influence student-athlete success.

This chapter provides the rationale for conducting a mixed-methods analysis and why it is considered the appropriate choice to explore the phenomenon. The rationale for choosing the



NCAA GOALS survey instrument is revealed, and it is further established how open-ended interview questions were developed to provide further elaboration of and support for the quantitative investigation. In addition, the setting, population, and participants are described. Moreover, the rationale and methods of data collection are explained. The research questions are provided, and their alignment with the method is presented. Finally, the ethical considerations, validity, reliability, limitations, and delimitations for the study are reviewed.

### Statement of the Problem

Since the first intercollegiate athletic competition in 1852 between Harvard and Yale, athletics has steadily become more influential in higher education (Hums and MacLean, and Weight and Zullo as cited in Bass et al., 2015), as have student-athletes. According to Navarro and Malvaso (2015), “as Division I athletics now serve as the front porch to American institutions, the visibility of Division I student-athletes has drastically increased” (p. 23). Although the NCAA media has published articles titled “College athletes graduate at record high rates” (Brutlag Hosick, 2018) and “African-American men’s basketball players succeeding in the classroom at highest rates ever” (Brutlag Hosick, 2016), society has remained dubious as to the objectives and place of intercollegiate athletics in higher education. Nevertheless, the reality is that student-athletes experience numerous challenges and barriers throughout their matriculation in higher education, and these continually jeopardize their success.

The NCAA formally split into three divisions in 1973 (White, 1973). The separation was meant to “enable these groups which are more homogeneous now to solve problems they face” (Chapman as cited in White, 1973). However, student-athletes across various institutional types experience an array of similar difficulties as they navigate their educational pathways. With these challenges in mind, institutional administrators, intercollegiate athletics practitioners, and

educational policymakers are forced to continually explore and investigate which difficulties adversely influence student-athletes and which support services may be implemented to improve the student-athlete experience and decrease attrition among this population.

The relationship between academics and athletics has been a highly controversial topic in higher education for nearly 125 years (Engstrom et al., 1995). Still, athletics has continued to provide an opportunity for students to pursue higher education. Without intercollegiate athletics, many student-athletes would not have attended college (Hendricks & Johnson, 2016).

Institutions have recognized and acknowledged the challenges that students encounter as they transition to higher education. Prior research has shown that these include involvement (e.g., Astin, 1999; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1980; Wolf-Wendel, Ward, and Kinzie, 2009), engagement (e.g., Kuh, 2009; Tinto, 1988; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009), and integration (e.g., Tinto, 1993; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009) with the institution. With these findings, colleges and universities have implemented various support services for students. However, the problem under investigation in the study is that institutions remain unaware of the numerous challenges and barriers that specifically affect student-athletes. Thus, student-athletes continue to struggle with the transition into college and the simultaneous transition to collegiate athletics. To further support student-athletes in their success and degree attainment, the study will explore the quantitative and qualitative perceptions of student-athletes regarding the various challenges and barriers they experience and which support services they utilize in higher education.

### Research Questions

The research questions for this study include the following:

RQ 1: Do student-athletes experience challenges and barriers as they navigate higher education? If so, which challenges and barriers do they experience?

RQ 2: What campus and athletic support services or resources are particularly useful to student-athletes in their efforts to overcome the challenges and barriers they face in higher education?

RQ 3: How can institutions and intercollegiate athletics departments enhance or supplement current services to effectively support student-athletes with the challenges and barriers they experience in higher education?

### Research Methodology

The NCAA created the GOALS (2019) survey instrument and has used it to “study of the experiences and well-being of current student-athletes.” The 2019 version of the survey, the quantitative tool to be utilized in this research study, contains closed-ended questions (n=81) with several concluding open-ended questions (n=3). Regarding the closed-ended questions, the survey contains multiple choice questions to gather demographic information (e.g., gender, sport, race, academic standings) and Likert rating scale questions on topics ranging from athletic, academic, and social experiences to health and well-being. A copy of the instrument is provided in Appendix D, as is the communication requesting participants and the message to student-athletes requesting their participation, which are found in Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 10 participants who complete the NCAA GOALS survey instrument and further agree to an additional one-on-one interview. To elicit further interpretation of the survey results, open-ended questions related to the survey tool were established based on an interview protocol. Each individual interview lasted between 35-45 minutes. With the semi-structured format, follow-up questions from the quantitative data will allow the researcher to probe participants and prompt further explanation and specific examples

regarding their experience. A copy of the interview protocol is provided in Appendix E. Each participant was provided and instructed to complete a consent form, which is in Appendix C.

### Research Design

With the mixed methods approach, data collection will occur through quantitative and qualitative procedures, including the NCAA GOALS survey instrument and semi-structured interviews. By utilizing multiple methods, several themes will be explored. Themes will include the challenges and barriers student-athletes experience in higher education, institutional or athletics support services that accommodate student-athletes, and the additional services and resources that should be implemented to support student-athletes during their time in higher education. Table 1 displays the relationships between the theoretical framework, questions from the quantitative instrument, and qualitative open-ended interview questions.

Table 1: Alignment of Theoretical Framework with Instrument Questions and Follow-Up Interview Questions

Schlossberg's Construct	NCAA GOALS instrument question	Open-ended interview question
Situation	Q 24d- I am able to find an appropriate balance between academics and extracurricular activities (including athletics participation).	How has the situation influenced your abilities to appropriately balance academics with athletics?
	Q 54a- In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	How has this thought or feeling influenced your experiences in higher education?
	Q 54b- In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	How has this thought or feeling influenced your experiences in higher education?
	Q 54c- In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?	How has this thought or feeling influenced your experiences in higher education?

Schlossberg's Construct	NCAA GOALS instrument question	Open-ended interview question
	Q 54d- In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	How has this thought or feeling influenced your experiences in higher education?
	Q 17b- Since coming to this institution, I have developed a close, personal relationship with at least one faculty member.	How has your personal relationship with faculty influenced your experiences in higher education?
	Q 53a- How satisfied are you with the care you have received from team or college medical personnel when you have had... Physical health issues.	How has the care received for physical health issues from team or college medical personnel influenced your transitions in higher education?
	Q 53b- How satisfied are you with the care you have received from team or college medical personnel when you have had... Mental health issues.	How has the care received for mental health issues from team or college medical personnel influenced your transitions in higher education?
Support	Q 71- I wish the coaches or athletics administrators at our school talked more with student-athletes about the following topics.	Which resources are absent and which resources do you perceive as most valuable to student-athletes as they transition and are "moving in", "moving through" or "moving out" (Schlossberg et al., 1995) of athletics in higher education?
	Q 72- How often do you typically communicate with your parents/guardians (talk, text, use social media)?	How has support from your parents/guardians influenced your experiences in higher education?
	Q 73a- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with these academic support services offered through your athletics department or college? Academic advisors who assist with course selection and/or monitor degree progress.	How has the academic advising influenced your experiences in higher education?
	Q 73b- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with these academic support services offered through your athletics department or college? Tutoring.	How has the tutoring influenced your experiences in higher education?

Schlossberg's Construct	NCAA GOALS instrument question	Open-ended interview question
	Q 73c- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with these academic support services offered through your athletics department or college? Career counseling.	How has career counseling influenced your experiences in higher education?
Self	Q 54a- In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	How has this thought or feeling influenced your experiences in higher education?
	Q 54b- In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	How has this thought or feeling influenced your experiences in higher education?
	Q 54c- In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?	How has this thought or feeling influenced your experiences in higher education?
	Q 54d- In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	How has this thought or feeling influenced your experiences in higher education?
Strategies	Q 24d- I am able to find an appropriate balance between academics and extracurricular activities (including athletics participation).	Which strategies are beneficial to appropriately balance academics with athletics?

### Population and Sample Selection

The study will take place at a metropolitan research university in the southeastern United States. The four-year public university has an undergraduate enrollment of over 50,000 students and offers an array of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree programs. Although the institution is one of the largest in the country in terms of undergraduate student population (Kowarski, 2018), there are fewer than 450 student-athletes at the university. The study participants are required to be at least 18 years of age and be active student-athletes. Student-athletes at the institution come from different states and even regions of the world. To participate

in the study, student-athletes will be required to be participants on any of the 15 NCAA-sponsored intercollegiate athletic teams at the institution and will be selected through purposeful sampling. According to Creswell (2018), “it is essential that all participants have experience of the phenomenon being studied” (p. 157). Therefore, criterion sampling will be employed to ensure that each participant is a student-athlete who has experience with challenges and who has received support services and resources at the institution. The “maximum variation sampling” (Creswell, 2018, p. 158) approach will be used, in which differences among participants are determined prior to selection. This will provide participants who differ based on the established criteria. For instance, the selection of participants will include both domestic and international student-athletes, athletes from different sports, genders, and at various stages of their academic careers. Dukes has recommended “three to 10 participants, and one phenomenology” (as cited by Creswell, 2018, p. 159). However, Merriam (2009) has argued that there is no specific number of individuals required for a qualitative study. Therefore, 20 selected student-athletes will complete the NCAA GOALS survey. Of these participants, it is expected that 50% will agree to participate in a supplemental interview (n=10).

#### Instrumentation

To explore the phenomenon, questions from the NCAA GOALS survey will be selected as supplemental open-ended questions to be utilized during in-depth interviews with the participants. A copy of the NCAA GOALS instrument is in Appendix D. Regarding this study, most of the questions pertain to college academic, athletics, on-campus support, and social experiences. From the purposefully selected questions, the researcher will establish open-ended questions to elicit responses during interviews to answer the three research questions during data analysis. A copy of the interview protocol is in Appendix D.

The reason for the additional qualitative research is to provide an opportunity for participants to elaborate and elucidate specific examples of their experience when prompted. In-depth interviews will be held with participants across several locations. However, each location will be on the institution's campus, typically within an athletics facility. According to Oberhauser, "the interview is not just an opportunity to gather information by asking questions and engaging in conversation but is also an opportunity for participant observation. Specifically, during an interview, it is important to consider the physical attributes of the site and to observe the people who are present and their interactions with each other and with the interview participant" (as cited in Elwood and Martin, 2000, p. 656). With the enormous undergraduate enrollment profile of the institution, the athletics subculture is often disconnected. Interviews with participants on campus will provide supplemental information pertaining to the phenomenon.

#### Validity and Reliability

According to Zohrabi (2013), "it is believed that using different types of procedures for collecting data and obtaining that information through different sources can augment the validity and reliability of the data and their interpretation" (p. 245). Therefore, it is imperative to use measures that increase the validity and reliability of data and instruments.

This study will use a survey that contains a mixture of closed-ended and open-ended questions. However, the overwhelming majority are structured questions. Of these, most are ranking questions using a Likert scale. In addition, a semi-structured interview guide approach that is consistent with Patton (1990) will be utilized during follow-up interviews. Questions will be prepared in accordance with the survey instrument results and research questions of the study.



The administration of the paper survey will include distribution to participants at the student-athlete academic center on campus. Upon agreeing to participate, the group of student-athletes will be gathered and provided the survey to complete at the same time (Brown, 2001). Careful selection of respondents will increase the validity and reliability of information. The researcher will fully explain the purpose of the follow-up interview to each participant. Since the survey will collect closed-ended question data, the one-on-one interviews will provide the opportunity to obtain “a special kind of information” (Merriam, 1998, p. 71), and participants will be asked to further elaborate on previous survey responses.

### Validity

The NCAA GOALS survey exhibits “content validity” (Zohrabi, 2013, p. 258). Having been administered three prior times, “the experts in the field of research” have previously discarded or reworded obscure questions. With the 2019 version, questions are valid in that they measure what is intended. Another form of validity that this study will ensure is internal validity (Zohrabi, 2013); triangulation will occur, as data collection will be completed through survey responses and in-depth interviews. According to Zohrabi (2013), “through triangulation we can gain qualitative and quantitative data in order to corroborate our findings” (p. 258). Member checking will also be completed. Participants will confirm the researcher’s interpretations following interviews to increase “plausibility and truthfulness of the information” (p. 258). Peer examination will further increased validity. Several academic advisors for student-athletes at the institution will be provided participants’ responses and asked to review and provide feedback. Given their familiarity regarding the phenomenon, the validity of the data will be increased. Ultimately, the researcher will attempt to remain as unbiased as possible throughout the research process. Having previously been employed as an academic advisor for student-athletes at the

institution, maintaining ethical principles and impartiality will ensure honesty in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Utility criterion will also contribute to the validity process (Zohrabi, 2013). Since the NCAA GOALS survey collects mostly quantitative data, previous studies lack additional qualitative data. Furthermore, utility criterion is achieved because the research study has usefulness for institutions and athletic academic support departments who will benefit from the elaboration and specific examples. In addition, the study has external validity because it can be reproduced at various institutions within the NCAA divisional structure, for example, at Division II or Division III institutions.

### Reliability

According to Nunan (1999), reliability includes the consistency, dependability, and replicability of the research results. While obtaining similar results in quantitative research is rather straightforward, the replication of qualitative data is much more difficult due to subjectivity (Zohrabi, 2013). Therefore, to increase the “dependability and consistency of the data” (Zohrabi, 2013, p. 259), several techniques will be employed. For example, the researcher will fully disclose every aspect regarding the processes of inquiry during the study. The rationale will be indicated, as well as the research design and participants of the study. Furthermore, multiple methods of data collection will occur, that is, both quantitative and qualitative means. With this, reliability of the data and the results can be assured, and the research study may be easily replicated. Additionally, an “audit trail” will contribute to the reliability of the study (Zohrabi, 2013, p. 260). The details of data collection and the methods to be used to generate themes will be thoroughly described.

External reliability is achieved by revealing the researcher’s social position. As a former academic advisor working with student-athletes, it is important that participants are unknown to

the researcher. Participants' demographic and personal information will be included in the results so that studies using similar participants can be conducted. Lastly, external reliability will be achieved by explicitly describing the methods of data collection and analysis, such as with descriptive statistics for the quantitative data and descriptive interpretations for the qualitative data (Zohrabi, 2013). Internal reliability will be attained through audio recording participants' interviews; this will allow the researcher to reanalyze the data and share the recordings with future investigators who wish to replicate the study. The prior findings of the NCAA GOALS study have been published; therefore, peer examination of those findings with the findings of this study will serve to enhance internal reliability (Lecompte & Goetz, 1982)

#### Data Collection

Data collection will occur through numerous strategies. First, since the study will utilize a mixed-methods approach, each participant will be asked to complete the NCAA GOALS survey instrument. Next, one-on-one interviews will be conducted utilizing responses from the questionnaire to answer the study's research questions. For the qualitative data collection, Creswell (2018) has noted that phenomenological studies primarily consist of in-depth interviews (p. 161). Furthermore, Creswell (2018) has stated that the "point is to describe the meaning of the phenomenon for a small number of individuals who have experienced it" (p. 161). Therefore, data collection will include references to the responses of other participants in the study to delve deeper into understanding the meaning of their experiences. Rubin and Rubin (2014) have emphasized that this produces multiple descriptions and provides a collective image of the experience so that researchers can acknowledge potentially ineffective policies. Through this strategy, the researcher will be able to understand the meaning of the experiences from the participants' point of view (Brinkmann and Kvale as cited in Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, an

interview protocol will be created prior to conducting interviews, and its core includes exploring the participants' various experiences with the phenomenon. Supplemental probing questions will be "open-ended, general, and focused on understanding" the phenomenon (Creswell, 2018, p. 165). A recording device will be used so that conversations can be continually referenced and replayed for transcribing purposes. Thus, descriptive and reflective notes on the phenomenon will be recorded, as well.

### Data Analysis

Questions from the NCAA GOALS survey instrument will guide the in-depth, open-ended interview questions. Rather than analyzing the quantitative data, the survey responses will be utilized to prompt participants to elaborate on their experiences. The plan to analyze the qualitative data involves several critical steps, which are guided by the approach Moustakas (1994) has described. As previously mentioned, an aspect of being a human instrument includes revealing personal experiences with the phenomenon. As a former student-athlete and former academic advisor with Academic Services for Student-Athletes (ASSA) at the institution, this notion is pertinent so that the "focus can be directed towards the participants in the study" (Creswell, 2018, p. 201). Since the investigation will explore the experiences of student-athletes, a list of significant statements will be created based on responses that align with questions from the NCAA GOALS survey. Horizontalization, which refers to being "receptive to every statement" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122) of the data, will occur as significant statements about challenging experiences and barriers are identified. These statements will then be separated so they do not overlap. The process will continue as these statements are placed into meaning themes (Moustakas, 1994). Through this process, a textual description of the participants' experiences can be developed, and direct quotations will support the description. The following

step will include a structural description. For example, based on the phenomenon, the researcher suspects that student-athletes experience challenges of missing consecutive classes due to travel for away games, becoming involved in non-athletic events on campus, and interacting with faculty and nonathlete students. A composite description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994) will include both textual and structural descriptions to describe the essence of the experience.

### Ethical Considerations

The study will attempt to avoid ethical conflicts. Student-athletes known to the researcher will be excluded, and the consent paragraph for the NCAA GOALS survey instrument will remind participants that their participation is voluntary. Furthermore, participants will be reminded that answers will remain confidential, and that they may choose not to answer certain questions and discontinue their participation at any point. Lastly, participants will be instructed to excuse themselves from the research study if they are under the age of 18. Like the survey, participation in a one-on-one interview will be voluntary. Consent forms that provide the rationale for the research study will be provided to participants. The open-ended questions during the interview will be developed to avoid offending or producing stress for participants. Though names will be collected to associate surveys with interviews, the researcher will create pseudonyms during data collection to protect the identity of each participant.

### Limitations and Delimitations

There are limitations to every type of research. Simon (2011) has defined limitations as weaknesses in the study that cannot be controlled, for example, participant follow-through and time restraints. Since the research study includes 10 participants, these identified limitations will not be relevant. However, the assumption that each participant will answer truthfully is a valid limitation that must be acknowledged. In addition, the long-term reflection required from

participants will be a limitation. Since student-athletes experience challenges and barriers beginning in their first semester, those participants who are seniors at the time of the study may not be able to accurately recollect the emotions and feelings they experienced four years prior, when they first arrived at the institution.

In addition, participant profiles may be a limitation of this study. Due to purposeful sampling, individuals who would complete both the survey and interview will be selected. Therefore, the diverse representation of participants will be influenced because many revenue-generating student-athletes may not have adequate time to devote to the study. Therefore, future studies may consider the valuable insight from revenue-generating student-athletes. The participants will not be familiar with the researcher; however, due to previous employment and relationships in the department, complete unawareness may be unavoidable. Nevertheless, participants' responses will be insightful and contribute to the findings of this study.

As with limitations, delimitations are a part of research. This study will be conducted at an NCAA Division I university in the southeastern United States; thus, not every NCAA student-athlete will be represented. As part of participant exclusion, student-athletes from NCAA Divisions II and III will not be included. Further, Division I student-athletes not enrolled at the institution where the study takes place will be excluded. Another delimitation of the study will be the problem chosen for the investigation and the theoretical framework adopted. While each challenge and barrier for student-athletes in higher education could be investigated on its own, the interest of this study is to identify common themes among the challenges and barriers. Ultimately, institutions and athletics practitioners want student-athletes to be retained through graduation. Therefore, Schlossberg's Transition Theory was selected because it is an adult development theory (Evans, Forney, & Guido-Dibrito, 1998) that explores the transitions adults

experience and how they can cope and adjust to change (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Future studies may consider the investigation of challenges and barriers for NCAA Division II and III student-athletes or Division I student-athletes enrolled in another institution outside the southeastern United States. In addition, another philosophical framework may be selected to investigate a similar population.

### Summary

This chapter provided the details of the methodology for the research study, and the statement of the problem and the purpose of the study were reiterated, which is that student-athletes experience various challenges in higher education. Further, although the NCAA GOALS survey has provided multiple research studies, no supplemental qualitative analysis has been completed. Doing so will provide further information about the specific challenges and support services for student-athletes in higher education. This chapter reintroduced the research questions and aligned them with the theoretical framework, and it explained how the research questions guided the chosen methodology. Moreover, the research methodology was further described, as were the various aspects of the mixed-methods approach. The data collection tools were provided, and an in-depth description of data analyses was given. Methods for ensuring validity and reliability were referenced, as were the ethical considerations and limitations of the study. The following chapter will provide the results.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

### Introduction

Considering the full student populations at colleges and universities, student-athletes represent a rather minor contingent at post-secondary institutions. Nonetheless, student-athletes, like non-athlete students, have a variety of experiences as they transition through higher education. Exploring the experiences of student-athletes with challenges and barriers can help institutions provide support services and resources, which can influence these individuals' success as they transition through higher education.

This paper examines the challenges and barriers experienced by student-athletes in higher education. Furthermore, this study investigates which support services and resources student-athletes count upon and which support services or resources should be introduced to assist them during their transition. The purpose of this study was achieved by examining NCAA GOALS survey responses and conducting semi-structured open-ended interviews to develop emergent themes. This chapter presents the results of the data analysis for the three stated research questions.

The descriptive statistics, which include responses to predetermined survey questions related to each of the research questions, are first reported, followed by an interpretation of the semi-structured open-ended interview responses to develop emergent themes. The presentation of the findings is arranged according to the three research questions. Questions 24 d, 54 a, 54 b, 54 c, and 54 d of the NCAA GOALS instrument (Appendix C) and interview responses were used to answer the first portion of research question 1: "Do student-athletes experience challenges and barriers as they navigate higher education?" The second portion of research



question 1 – “If so, which challenges and barriers do they experience?” – elicited open-ended narratives, which were dependent on participants’ survey responses.

Questions 17 b, 53 a, 53 b, 72, 73 a, 73 b, and 73 c of the NCAA GOALS instrument were used to answer research question 2: “What campus and athletic support services or resources are particularly useful to student-athletes in their efforts to overcome the challenges and barriers they face in higher education?” Finally, question 71 was used to answer research question 3: “How can institutions and intercollegiate athletics departments enhance or supplement current services to effectively support student-athletes with the challenges and barriers they experience in higher education?” In addition to the instrument, semi-structured open-ended interviews provided diverse perspectives, supported the survey responses and helped in answering research questions one and two.

#### Survey Participants

Twenty student-athletes from the institution completed the NCAA GOALS survey instrument. Participants were actively recruited with the assistance of academic advisors for student-athletes at the institution. Participants were identified based on their perceived experiences with the phenomenon. Of the 20 student-athletes who completed the instrument, one participant was from Women’s Tennis, one participant was from Women’s Softball, one participant was from Women’s Soccer, three participants were from Women’s Rowing, two participants were from Women’s Track and Field, one participant was from Women’s Cross Country, two participant were from Women’s Basketball, one participant was from Women’s Golf, four participants were from Men’s Baseball, two participants were from Men’s Football, one participant was from Men’s Basketball, and one participant was from Men’s Golf.

From the 20 participants who completed the NCAA GOALS survey, 10 student-athletes were purposely selected for a subsequent interview. This group included one participant from Women's Track and Field, one from Women's Golf, one from Women's Soccer, one from Women's Rowing, one from Women's Softball, one from Women's Basketball, one from Men's Football, one from Men's Golf, one from Men's Baseball, and one from Men's Basketball.

## Findings

The findings provide information on this phenomenon and are reported according to each of the three research questions that guided the study. The phenomenon investigated and the themes that emerged answer each research question comprehensively but are reported separately for clarity.

### *Research Question 1*

*Research Question 1: Do student-athletes experience challenges and barriers as they navigate higher education? If so, which challenges and barriers do they experience?*

Five questions from the NCAA GOALS instrument were selected by the researcher as indicators of whether student-athletes experience challenges and barriers as they navigate higher education (Table 2 and Table 3). Six possible responses were provided to participants to determine how much they agreed or disagreed that they could appropriately balance academics and extracurricular activities (including athletics participation). Moreover, five possible responses were provided to participants to indicate how often in the past month they felt that they were unable to control the important things in their life; felt confident about their ability to handle their personal problems; felt that things were going their way; and felt difficulties were piling up so high that they could not overcome them.

**RQ 1 Table 2: Ability to appropriately balance academics and extracurricular activities (including athletics participation)**

Number	Question	SA	A	SomeA	SomeD	D	SD	Total
24 d	I am able to find an appropriate balance between academics and extracurricular activities (including athletics participation).	7	4	4	3	2	0	20

*\*SA = strongly agree, A = agree, SomeA = somewhat agree, SomeD = somewhat disagree, D = disagree, SD = strongly disagree*

**RQ 1 Table 3: Feelings and thoughts in the last month**

Number	Question	Very Often	Fairly Often	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never	Total
54 a	In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	1	2	8	5	4	20
54 b	In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	4	7	7	1	1	20
54 c	In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?	4	3	9	3	1	20
54 d	In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	0	4	7	6	3	20

In addition to survey responses, open-ended responses during interviews consistently mentioned agreement that student-athletes experience challenges and barriers as they navigate

higher education. A sample of statements regarding whether student-athletes experience challenges and barriers is listed in Table 4.

**RQ 1 Table 4: Do student-athletes experience challenges and barriers as they navigate higher education?**

Participant	Quotation
Jayda	“Yes, they experience challenges, from adjusting to a schedule that really has no free time in it to balancing our social, academic, and athletics life.”
Noah	“I think the challeng[e] that come[s] with being a student- athlete is managing your time wisely.”
Alyssa	“I definitely believe student-athletes face challenges.”
Takiya	“Yes. Just having to balance, like, school and practice and, like, having enough time to try and make sure you get everything done and get, like, everything that you need done and, like, with the seeing the family part, some of them, like most of my teammates are from California.”
Caroline	“I do think student-athletes experience challenges.”
Levy	“I think [a] challeng[e] is just having the freedom to be, like, a college student.”
Artem	“Yes. Combining rest, studying, and athletics.”
Juan	“They do experience challenges.”
Rusne	“Student-athletes face challenges because we have to wake up early and go to bed late in order to keep up with schoolwork and practices.”

For the second part of research question 1 – “If so, which challenges and barriers do they experience?” – open-ended interviews revealed five emergent themes. Themes were identified as time commitment, major selection, study abroad and internships, health problems or symptoms, and mental wellness.

#### *Theme 1: Time Commitment*

The time required to compete in intercollegiate athletics emerged as a significant theme when participants described the challenges and barriers student-athletes experience. The open-

ended responses from the interviews consistently referenced the time commitment to athletic activities (practicing, training, competing, athletic training room, etc.) and non-athletic activities (meetings with coaches, team functions, film study, etc.). Interview responses referenced challenges balancing academics with athletics, missed classes, and lack of sleep.

The most significant time commitment was the time spent on athletic and non-athletic activities. In the coding of the survey responses, athletic and non-athletic activities were cited 26 separate times as contributing to challenges and barriers experienced by student-athletes. One student-athlete said, “I think [a] challeng[e] that come[s] with being a student-athlete is managing your time wisely” (Noah, personal communication February 2020). Another participant stated,

I think it's more like some days are just so busy. It's like I'm at practice, and then I'm at workouts, and then I'm at tutoring, and then I'm at class, and then I'm at class again, and then it's like nine o'clock. (Alyssa, personal communication February 2020)

One participant also referenced the challenge of balancing activities outside the institution. The participant stated,

Life in general, like I have soccer and school, and I'm, like, involved in other things outside of soccer and UCF, and so I think the time commitment and balancing everything, I think balancing everything is the biggest, like, struggling usually, and feeling like I'm doing well at all the things. (Caroline, personal communication February 2020)

Balancing academics with athletics was cited as the most challenging barrier for one participant:

“The most challenging barrier for a student-athlete is balancing it with academics. It's really difficult to balance both of them” (Brittney, personal communication March 2020).

Missing classes was referenced 10 times. Caroline stated, “But missing lectures can bring up some issues” (personal communication February 2020). One participant referenced challenges or barriers associated with making up missed assignments or exams:

With school, sometimes I can't really help that I can't be in class, and I'll have to miss something. I can make up the work, but it's do it either well before, like two days before everybody or any time before. Like, I had to take my exam the other day three days before everybody because we left. And my teacher wouldn't unlock it when I asked her to. I lost three days of study when everyone else took the test on Friday; I took the test on Tuesday. (Takiya, personal communication March 2020)

Another participant reported that she had missed the same class for several consecutive weeks due to athletic competitions: "I have anatomy and chemistry, and then on Wednesday, I have anatomy in the morning. So, I was constantly missing those classes. I missed that class like four or five weeks in a row. It was really difficult" (Brittney, personal communication March 2020).

In addition, a lack of sleep was mentioned 11 times. Juan stated, "I'd love to get some more sleep" (personal communication February 2020). Several participants referenced early morning athletic requirements, which prevent student-athletes from getting enough sleep: "I didn't even get done doing everything until like eight or nine; I just want to go to bed because I have to be up at 5:30 a.m. tomorrow" (Alyssa, personal communication February 2020). A second participant said, "Our schedule is crazy with 7 a.m. lift and stuff like that" (Caroline, personal communication February 2020). Artem stated, "So, in the morning, we have to wake up at 5 a.m. most of the tim[e]" (personal communication February 2020). A sample of statements regarding time commitment is listed in Table 5.

**RQ 1 Table 5: Quotations regarding time commitment**

Participant	Factor	Quotation
Noah	Balancing academics with athletics	"When I thought about it, I was like, 'I would have way more time to actually be a student and be heavier in my studies.' There are times when it is like that, and there are times where, you know, you want to focus as much as you can in the classroom but you're so fatigued from the previous day or workout or just being up so early, um, it can definitely get hard."

Participant	Factor	Quotation
Noah	Lack of sleep	“Sometimes I'll nap throughout the day and not mean to.”
Alyssa	Balancing academics with athletics	“It was more schedule-related, like go, go, go all the time.”
Alyssa	Missing classes	“Mainly traveling is when I miss class. We leave on a Tuesday normally, and then we play Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. Yeah, Wednesday, practice round, Thursday, Friday, Saturday sometimes during fall. So, it's like I'm missing my Tuesday/Thursday classes.”
Alyssa	Time commitment	“Socially it can be difficult for student-athletes because of time constraints.”
Caroline	Lack of sleep	“Sleeping is something, like, I actually need more.”
Caroline	Balancing academics with athletics	“Juggling all the things and feeling like I'm not balancing things well.”
Artem	Missing classes	“Whenever we travel, it is around three to four days that we are not there. Assuming we miss three to four days, we probably miss three to four classes.”
Juan	Time commitment	“Some days, you're at the field for like a long, long time, like a long time; it's like, I mean, some days you got to stay up late to finish some work, and even then, I got to get eight study hall hours done before Friday, before our game on Friday. And we got practice every day. You're at the field, and then let's say you got to make some food, too, so you really don't have time for much then.”
Takiya	Balancing academics with athletics	“Now I feel like I have no time in the day because it's, like, full out, like my schedule is full every day.”

Participant	Factor	Quotation
Takiya	Balancing academics with athletics; lack of sleep	“Like the work, like, I felt, like, when I was just up to like 3 o’clock in the morning just making sure I did all my work before the weekend came and we had games. I’m not sleeping, probably because I’m studying. I got to study, like, all night because I come here [Center for Student-Athlete Leadership], and I’m here till 9 p.m., and then I go eat, and then I shower, so by the time it’s like 10, and then I’m just doing homework.”
Levy	Balancing academics with athletics; lack of sleep	“As a normal athlete, you’re often traveling or you’re physically tired, so you don’t do as well, or you don’t have as much motivation to get your work done and stuff like that.”
Levy	Balancing academics with athletics	“We pretty much practice every day. It’s not really the length of the practice – it is, we practice, like, every day.”
Rusne	Balancing academics with athletics	“Also, when we are traveling for competitions, we are missing lectures and sometimes exams, which requires extra time and stress to figure out after coming back to campus. With this, we do not have extra time to study while traveling because we also have to focus on performing to the best of our abilities and dealing with stress.”

### *Theme 2: Major Selection*

Major selection or choice of classes was mentioned in 33 different statements as a challenge or barrier that student-athletes experience. The institution offers more than 220 academic degree programs in 13 colleges. However, several participants expressed regret over their current major or courses that they were taking. Survey responses on major selection (question 11 on the GOALS survey) and courses (question 13 of the GOALS survey) are summarized in Table 6 and Table 7, respectively.



**RQ 1 Table 6: If you weren't a college athlete, would you still choose your current major?**

I definitely would choose this major again.	6
I probably would choose this major again.	10
I might choose this major again.	3
I probably would not choose this major again.	0
I definitely would not choose this major again.	1
I have not yet chosen a major area of study.	0
Total	20

**RQ 1 Table 7: Has your athletics participation prevented you from taking classes that you wanted to take?**

No.	14
Yes, but I currently do not have regrets about those course choices.	4
Yes, and I currently do have regrets about those course choices.	2
Total	20

Transferring was indicated as a factor for major selection. For instance, one participant stated, “Right now, I’m doing interdisciplinary studies, and that’s really based off of transferring” (Noah, personal communication February 2020). Limited major options evoked an emotional response: “I was kind of upset and frustrated that I had to switch over” (Noah, personal communication February 2020). Another participant referenced major requirements:

I came in wanting to do Nursing, um yeah, but that was – and my sister is older than me, and she did nursing and stuff – and I saw her doing that, and, um, when she did clinicals and all that, I was like, that’s not physically possible to do. (Caroline, personal communication February 2020)

Several participants referenced incoming test credit:

I told them I sucked at math – like, my SAT scores were pretty bad;

like, the math part was extremely below average. It wasn't like they told me – it was like they let me know; they didn't want to put me in a position where I'd fail. (Juan, personal communication February 2020)

Jayda stated, “It doesn't really match up; like, my scores aren't as high as the average” (personal communication February 2020). Finally, Noah said, “I took the smaller school walk-on because of SAT scores and stuff like that out of high school” (personal communication February 2020). Doing poorly in major courses was also referenced as a factor for major selection:

With school – with, like, my major – like, I was doing accounting, and then my accounting class didn't go so well in the first semester, so I was like, “There's no way I can do accounting, like this class and like practice”; I was getting, like, no sleep. (Takiya, personal communication March 2020)

Originally, I was a business management major, then I was taking a couple classes last year, and I was like, “I don't know if I'm going to be doing too well.” Like, I passed the class, and I did well and stuff like that, but it was pretty difficult, and I wanted to keep my grades up, so I kind of went in a different direction, but it's a similar direction. (Levy, personal communication February 2020)

One participant discussed a major she potentially would have chosen if she were not a student-athlete:

Maybe I would have gone to medical school. But, since being a student-athlete, it does not really allow that. It's just my perspective; because if you're a medical school student, you have to fully commit; because it takes, being a student-athlete, it requires a lot of time for athletics. I don't think I would have made such a big commitment. (Rusne, personal communication February 2020)

Another participant referenced the ability to study more without athletics: “If I wasn't playing softball, I probably would have had more time to, like, study on it” (Takiya, personal communication March 2020). Another participant referenced discouragement from coaches when selecting a major:

My first year I wanted to major in something, and my coaches, everyone, they told me no, I couldn't do that because of my

practice schedule and traveling; it wasn't possible. And I wouldn't be able to get into that program. (Brittney, personal communication March 2020)

Often, student-athletes reported that they were just provided a major and given a class schedule: “A couple times it's been like just, ‘Here’s your classes’ and, like, ‘Okay’” (Caroline, personal communication February 2020).

I’ve never chosen a class in my life. He [athletics academic advisor] basically, just chooses all of my classes, which is, like, kind of annoying, but I don't really get a choice in what I pick, but I'm fine with having online classes because, like, we travel. (Alyssa, personal communication February 2020)

There were a few options, but this was the main one that worked the best. They [athletics academic advisors] gave me the best hand, and then w[ere], like, “These are the worst hands, and you can go back to zero,” and I was like, “I don't want to do that.” (Noah, personal communication, February 2020)

They [athletics academic advisors] put me in communications, and I’m like, “I’m not this stupid, like, come on. Like, I can do something different.” Then I went to psychology, but I failed my Explorations of Math class so she [athletics academic advisor] was like, “I don't want, I don't want you in that class.” (Juan, personal communication February 2020)

It was just given to me because I want to go into the medical field, so I just chose health sciences. But I feel like if I had more time to look into the other options, like the other types of sciences, I could have made a better choice. (Brittney, personal communication March 2020)

A sample of statements regarding major selection is listed in Table 8.

**RQ 1 Table 8: Quotations regarding major selection**

Participant	Quotation
Juan	“Heck no. I mean, because I changed my major, I came in here thinking, ‘Alright, I’m going to do business,’ and then they [athletic academic advisor] told me I couldn't do it because I sucked at math, so they were like, ‘You're probably going to fail it, so we don’t want to put you in that class.’”

Participant	Quotation
Alyssa	“Like, I want to go to law school, and she's [head coach] always like, ‘Well, it’s really hard for a student-athlete to study enough to take the LSAT and go to law school.’”
Alyssa	“He [athletics academic advisor] is like, ‘What do you want your major to be? What do you want your minor to be?’ And I tell him [athletics academic advisor], and it's just like that. I definitely wish I was able to kind of sit and talk to him about it, about what classes, because I was talking with him about, well, what classes am I going to take this summer, and he was like, ‘You're going to take this class and this class.’”

### *Theme 3: Study Abroad and Internships*

A third theme that emerged was studying abroad and internships, and 18 statements were coded as referencing this theme. Studying abroad or participating in internships can provide invaluable experiences that enrich a student’s education. However, several participants expressed an inability to participate in such opportunities because of their commitment to athletics. Other participants had no interest or did not know about these opportunities because they may have assumed these activities were not possible for student-athletes. Survey responses on involvement or planned involvement in study abroad (question 18 on the GOALS survey) and an internship program (question 19 on the GOALS survey) are in Table 9 and Table 10, respectively.

#### **RQ 1 Table 9: Have you been involved or do you plan to be involved in a study abroad program during college?**

Yes, I have or will study abroad.	0
I would like to but can’t because of my athletics participation.	8
I would like to but can’t because of other reasons (e.g., finances, availability).	2
No, I have no interest.	4
I don’t know at this time.	6
Total	20

**RQ 1 Table 10: Have you been involved or do you plan to be involved in an internship program during college?**

Yes, I have or will take part in an internship.	6
I would like to but can't because of my athletics participation.	10
I would like to but can't because of other reasons (e.g., finances, availability).	0
No, I have no interest.	0
I don't know at this time.	4
Total	20

Participants expressed an inability to participate in study abroad or internship opportunities, despite acknowledging the educational value of such experiences:

Internships, just learning really. I really don't have that much time – like, we have scheduled sign-in for all of our meals; like, you have to be there [at] a certain time, a certain window. There's not much time unless, you know, you're doing stuff for the now, like classes, studying for tests, doing essays, assignments like that. (Noah, personal communication February 2020)

Another participant stated,

You pretty much can't have an internship as a student-athlete. Like, unless you do a summer one, but even that's tough because you still have to play golf during summer; it's not like you can just take the whole summer off and automatically come back. Because, I mean, I'm a Criminal Justice major, so a lot of the internships are like eight to five, so it's like I can't take the whole day; it's like Monday to Friday; it's like, I can't just practice on Saturday and Sunday – it doesn't work like that. (Alyssa, personal communication February 2020)

Participants also expressed that they were not aware of opportunities to study abroad or participate in internships: “Never been offered – I didn't even know there was such a thing” (Artem, personal communication February 2020). “I'm not informed much about – nobody ever told me I could go to Italy to study” (Juan, personal communication, February 2020).

Participants also mentioned that it was challenging to attend events that promoted these educational opportunities: “I want to go; there is one [career fair] in March, but I can’t because we’re traveling” (Alyssa, personal communication February 2020). “So, I don't know, it’s, like, stressful. So, I try to go to as many events that Nicci [Director of Student-Athlete Welfare and Development] holds and events with [the College of] Business that I can” (Takiya, personal communication March 2020). Table 11 contains a sample of statements regarding study abroad programs and internships.

**RQ 1 Table 11: Quotations regarding study abroad programs and internships**

Participant	Quotation
Noah	“Just studying abroad seems, like, so cool, from the learning aspect. I think, for me, I want to be able to put a good percentage of my, you know, hard work into something, but I can’t.”
Takiya	“I feel like now I have to rush and do it because like, I'm a junior now, and everyone else already got an internship. And they look for people who, like, have, like, sometimes they require, like, you have to have an internship before you go – can even join the company.”
Artem	“Yeah, it’s [study abroad] out of the question, physically can't.”
Alyssa	“That is my biggest concern as a student-athlete is gaining experience in my field, since it is tough to find internships that could potentially excel me once I graduate.”
Alyssa	“Yeah, because there is a study abroad opportunity where you go for a summer and do, like, a pre-law school thing during the summer, and it's like eight weeks. But I can’t because of golf.”
Noah	“And he was just like, they went to Italy; they went to Europe, and he was asking me, like, ‘You want to go? It’s during summer, like, during July.’ And I was like, ‘I can't because I have to be up here [campus],’ and I turned it down.”
Levy	“Availability would be like the sports thing where I really don’t have the time to be going somewhere else [study abroad] and go to practice and season and stuff like that.”

Participant	Quotation
Brittney	“I just really don't know much about them. Probably not studying abroad, but an internship; I just really don't know what my options are.”

*Theme 4: Health Problems or Symptoms*

A fourth theme that emerged was experiences with health problems or symptoms. Twenty-two statements were coded for this theme. Intercollegiate athletics is physically demanding. Participants described experiences with prior and current injuries, which prevented participation and influenced other aspects of their lives. Survey responses on health problems or symptoms (question 47) and physical demands of sports (question 55 b) are in Tables 12 and 13, respectively.

**RQ 1 Table 12: During the last 30 days, on how many days did you have the following problems or symptoms?**

Problem or Symptom	15+ Days	8–14 Days	4–7 Days	1–3 Days	None
Headache	1	2	2	7	8
Pain (non-headache) that made daily activities difficult	3	2	3	5	7
Cold, flu or similar illness	1	1	1	5	12
Trouble sleeping	0	4	4	3	9
Total	5	9	10	20	36

**RQ 1 Table 13: I feel so tired from the physical demands of my sport that I struggle to find energy to do other things.**

Strongly Agree	7
Agree	1
Somewhat Agree	7
Somewhat Disagree	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	0
Total	20

Minor problems were mentioned: “Just [a] stress and anxiety type of thing. Sometimes I’ll get a tension headache, and I’m like, ‘I just need to lay down for 30 minutes’” (Alyssa, personal communication February 2020). Major health problems were referenced as well: “Like, I played hurt, and I don’t know if I’ll play again” (Juan, personal communication February 2020). Participants also mentioned the lack of athletic training resources to address injuries:

There’s no full time for us; we get two [athletic trainers] that work with multiple sports. The attention, and also, we have a lot of people that come to treatment every day since our team is like 60 people. So, at least 20 or so a day. (Rusne, personal communication February 2020)

We have two trainers; one of them works with rowing and track, and the other one is just track. But, I feel like just having one person that is track and field – he has to work on everyone, and the other one is usually with rowing, and he’s just overwhelmed and going place to place. (Jayda, personal communication February 2020)

One participant also noted frustration with an inability to compete due to health problems and worried about his spot on the roster:

Right now, it's frustrating because I'm hurt and I'm sitting out a whole year. When I would sit down in class, my back would



hurt a little bit. Like, this is a big school for baseball – it’s kind of like “the next man up” kind of thing. Like, let’s say you’re not able to do the job and there’s, like, you still got like two other players in your position who will, like, come up. So, if your body is not in the best physical position – or in, like, a decent physical position – they’re not going to put you out there. They’d rather, like, someone else get experience. (Juan, personal communication February 2020)

Table 14 contains quotations regarding health problems or symptoms.

**RQ 1 Table 14: Quotations regarding health problems or symptoms**

Participant	Quotation
Jadya	“Last year, I was out for outdoor season for the most part because of my ankle. It was really hard to walk and go to class, and now it’s my knee, so walking to class everyday hurts, and every time I go on the track, it gets hurt more and more, so going to class is just harder. It makes it more stressful.”
Jadya	“We face injuries that may interfere with walking to class, and we have to adjust to that.”
Caroline	“Some of it is stress – um, I think I just get headaches. My eyes are kind of weird, so that gives me headaches sometimes, but, um, I think sometimes it's stress and then just being tired and stuff. Lots of Advil.”
Artem	“My back is very tight, and it hurts – I can barely move.”
Juan	“It just, like, more of the physical aspect of it – like, I got banged up during fall, and then I came back, and I didn’t come back the same. I wasn't moving around the same. Came in, 100%, got hurt, right, played through it when I probably shouldn't have, and then when I got that break I came back and I just wasn't the same – like, I wasn't moving around the same. Like, I pulled my groin during fall, but I kept on playing through it, and then they gave me, like, a rehab thing and during break and when I came back, I was still moving around like an old man. Like I couldn't really move at all.”
Juan	“Like, I'm hurt right now so it’s just, like, the fact that I don't even know if I'll be able to move again. Like, that's like, ‘Dang, baseball isn't it.’”
Juan	“The biggest problem right now is me not playing – like, me being hurt, like, me not being healthy.”
Takiya	“Like, when I got them [concussions], the whole next week, like, I really couldn't focus. And my teachers were like, ‘Are you ok?’”

Participant	Quotation
Levy	“Yeah, I pretty much sat out this whole season because I had a stress fracture in my back, and so, like, this is the third time I've had it. Because I had it in middle school, and I had it one time in high school. In my eyes, I was just, ‘Let me take the most time and not just rush back or anything.’ Over time, it just builds up, and it’s just a little fracture in my back. I don’t know if it will, like, ever fully recover; I feel like I’ll just always have it. Sometimes it flares up, and it gets more painful at points. Sometimes, in the beginning of the year, it would bother me to sit down for a while, for long periods of time, or stand up for long periods of time.”
Brittney	“I have stress reactions in both my shins. It hurts to go upstairs and walk and run, all the time.”

*Theme 5: Mental Wellness*

Another emergent theme was mental health or wellness. Intercollegiate athletics can be not only physically demanding but also mentally demanding. In addition to stress, student-athletes experience anxiety and depression, which influence their experiences in higher education. Survey responses on the mental demands of athletics (question 55 d on the GOALS survey) are in Table 15.

**RQ 1 Table 15: I am exhausted by the mental demands of my sport**

Strongly Agree	3
Agree	1
Somewhat Agree	5
Somewhat Disagree	6
Disagree	3
Strongly Disagree	2
Total	20

During interviews, the theme was referenced in 17 statements. Several participants mentioned challenges with the athletics schedule, which caused additional stress and mental health issues:

It was more schedule-related, like go, go, go all the time. I saw him [psychologist] for like six months straight last year, like, around April, and I stopped seeing him around October. Yeah, actually, I want to say every single one of ours [team members], except like me right now, and another girl, don't go to the psychologist. (Alyssa, personal communication February 2020)

Another participant discussed the need to see a psychologist but experienced an unorganized process:

I tried to – or I did, um, last year – and it was good. I think it was pretty unorganized. It was really hard, like, to get the intake paperwork. That was weird; like, we didn't know if it was from Nicci [Director of Student-Athlete Welfare and Development] or the lady [psychologist] I was going to see. And so that was kind of a mess, and then I think there w[ere] like two weeks where I was, like, I showed up for my appointment and someone else showed up for my time. It's inconsistent and frustrating. (Caroline, personal communication February 2020)

One participant mentioned an unwillingness to speak with his coaches about mental wellness and being unaware that resources existed:

I wouldn't have a conversation with them [coaches] about mental health. I've never been presented with the option. Nobody has even gone up to me like, "Hey man, we feel like you should go to a sports psychologist." It's not, like – the resources here are bad; I mean, I just don't really know about them. (Juan, personal communication February 2020)

Table 16 provides a sample of statements regarding mental health.

**RQ 1 Table 16: Quotations regarding mental wellness**

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Participant	Quotation
Jayda	“When I have a bad practice, I'll get upset and keep thinking through it. If I have an afternoon class, I'll be thinking about it in class.”

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Participant	Quotation
Jayda	“They need to talk more about mental wellness. Because last year I needed to see a sports psychologist, but I didn't know we could really go to them until this year.”
Alyssa	“We kind of had a problem, like, my freshman year with a couple girls on the team and also me. We were experiencing a lot of stress or whatever, and we were trying to kind of talk to her [head coach] about it, and she was kind of diminishing it, and she was like, ‘Well every student-athlete’s stressed’ and all that.”
Alyssa	“Sometimes stress is also a factor since we do live hectic lives at a young age.”
Caroline	“I’ve talked to people, and it’s, like, a giant school, so it can take a while to get into it [Counseling and Psychological Services] and stuff.”
Artem	“Especially in golf. Mental wellness, um, I had to ask for a counselor just to figure out how to golf right now. And it turns out I have to sign up for an appointment like three weeks prior. The demand is there; there just isn't enough supply.”
Juan	“For me, it would be definitely mental challenges. I feel like a lot of people don't really realize. Not necessarily me, but I had a roommate who, he went through, like, depression, anxiety. Like, I've gone through anxiety plenty of times.”
Takiya	“It happened to a teammate we had last year. Like, she had, like, really bad mental health, like, episodes during the season. So, our coach, like, made the whole team sit down, and we’ve all had a talk about it and told us, like, what we can do and who we can talk to.”
Brittney	“I feel like people are constantly creating expectations for me, and now I have to live up to so many different expectations. I have to live up to please people, and it’s kind of stressful in that way.”

### *Research Question 2*

*Research question 2: What campus and athletic support services or resources are particularly useful to student-athletes in their efforts to overcome the challenges and barriers they face in higher education?*

Seven questions from the NCAA GOALS instrument were preidentified by the researcher as indicating which campus and athletic support services or resources are particularly useful to student-athletes who experience challenges and barriers in higher education (Tables 17–24).

Six possible responses were provided to participants to determine if, since enrolling in this institution, they had developed a close personal relationship with at least one faculty member.

**RQ 2 Table 17: Since coming to this institution, I have developed a close personal relationship with at least one faculty member.**

Number	SA	A	SomeA	SomeD	D	SD	Total
17b	10	2	3	1	2	2	20

\*SA = strongly agree, A = agree, SomeA = somewhat agree, SomeD = somewhat disagree, D = disagree, SD = strongly disagree

Quotations regarding relationships with faculty are listed in Table 18.

**RQ 2 Table 18: Quotations regarding relationships with faculty**

Participant	Quotation
Jayda	“I saw one of my professors because I told her about my schedule, and I became close with her, and she is young, around my age.”
Alyssa	“All my professors have actually been pretty cool about the whole athlete thing.”
Takiya	“The rest of my professors are, like, so cool.”
Levy	“Actually, now that I think about it, I've probably made a little bit of a connection but not like – not big. Like, one of my professors is the sports minor; he owns the sports business management, so I kind of created a relationship with him. That’s probably the one professor I connect with.”
Levy	“The professors pretty much understand the situation and stuff. As long as you try to stay on top and keep communicating with them, they understand, and they’ll try to adjust to your schedule to help you out.”
Rusne	“The professors are great. No complaints.”
Brittney	“My professors and all the other staff will reach out to me and say, ‘Good luck on your game.’”

Six possible responses were provided to participants to determine whether they were satisfied with the care that they had received from team or college medical personnel. Overall,

participants were highly satisfied with the care received for physical and mental health issues. Participants acknowledged the benefits of mental health resources, such as psychologists. One participant expressed the need for the athletics department to provide more information to student-athletes about mental wellness. Quotations regarding the care received from team or college medical personnel are in Table 20.

**RQ 2 Table 19: How satisfied are you with the care you have received from team or college medical personnel when you have had...?**

Number	Question	VeryS	SomeS	Neither SnorD	SomeD	VeryD	I have not required care	Total
53a	Physical health issues	10	6	0	3	0	1	20
53b	Mental health issues	7	5	1	2	1	4	20

*\*VeryS = very satisfied, SomeS = somewhat satisfied, NeitherSnorD = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, SomeD = somewhat dissatisfied, VeryD = very dissatisfied*

**RQ 2 Table 20: Quotations regarding care received from team or college medical personnel**

Participant	Quotation
Jayda	“They need to talk more about mental wellness.”
Jayda	“I believe the sports psychologists that are provided are really beneficial to athletes because it helps us figure out a way to get through our problems and helps us with issues we may be facing inside and outside of our sport.”
Noah	“Therapy is a huge factor to those who offer; even when someone doesn’t use that as a source of solving problems, it’s a great way to show that the coaching and academic staff cares.”
Alyssa	“They are very useful. I don't even know if there is, like, an actual sports psychologist here or if they are just a regular psychologist.”
Caroline	“There are sports psychologists available to student-athletes to help with challenges.”

Participant	Quotation
Takiya	“They honestly, like, help – like, you can go in there and talk to them and stuff. And then, like, at the health center, they have, like, counselors over there.”
Levy	“We all have our individual trainers and stuff, and, like, they have their assistance and stuff, so everyone pretty much gets equal treatment.”
Brittney	“Having counselors, not just academic advisors, and not having to ask for help, someone we can talk to weekly. I think that would be really beneficial and helpful.”

Five possible responses were provided to participants to determine how often they typically communicated with their parents or guardians (talk, text, social media). Although parents or guardians are not campus and athletic support services staff members or resources, various statements referenced the influence of their support.

**RQ 2 Table 21: How often do you typically communicate with your parents/guardians (talk, text, use social media)?**

Number	Multiple times daily	Once a day	A few times a week	Once a week	Less than weekly	Total
72	11	3	5	1	0	20

Table 22 contains a sample of statements regarding communication with parents or guardians.

**RQ 2 Table 22: Quotations regarding communication with parents or guardians**

Participant	Quotation
Jayda	“I talk to my mom like three times a day. She gets me happy.”
Takiya	“I used to visit them [family] a lot – like, last semester, I tried to go home like every other weekend.”

Participant	Quotation
Levy	“Luckily, I live kind of close, and they [family] usually come up to the games. So, I’ll see them then. Or, if we have an off day on the weekend, I’ll try to go home and stuff like that. I’m just a family guy. So, I like to be home and around my family; I’d rather have more time.
Levy	“I usually talk to my parents a couple times a week. They’re always concerned about my back and stuff since I’ve had it [injuries] in the past.”

Six possible responses were provided to participants to determine how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with academic support services offered through the athletics department or college.

**RQ 2 Table 23: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with these academic support services offered through your athletics department or college?**

Number	Question	S	SomeS	SomeD	D	I did not use	Service not available	Total
73a	Academic advisors who assist with course selection and/or monitor degree progress	17	3	0	0	0	0	20
73b	Tutoring	15	4	1	0	0	0	20
73c	Career counseling	10	7	1	0	2	0	20

*\*S = satisfied, SomeS = somewhat satisfied, SomeD = somewhat dissatisfied, D = dissatisfied*

Quotations regarding academic support services offered through the athletics department or college are listed in Table 24.

**RQ 2 Table 24: Quotations regarding academic support services offered through the athletics department or college**

Participant	Quotation
Jayda	“Workshops, events and just mentors you come across in the academic success centers, they give student-athletes a lot of support so that they can succeed.”



Participant	Quotation
Alyssa	“I definitely believe student-athletes face challenges. Although we are very fortunate to have the resources we do and be able to experience this opportunity.”
Alyssa	“As a student-athlete, we have endless resources.”
Alyssa	“UCF and the athletic department have been amazing when it comes to providing these resources.”
Caroline	“This whole building is, like, meant for us to have those resources. And they do a good job of making us aware of them.”
Caroline	“I think they do a really good job of providing us with a ton of resources in a lot of different areas; I don't really have any to add.”
Artem	“The resources are great, no doubt.”
Levy	“There are a lot of different resources here that they provide that help the students accommodate to living life on their own.”
Juan	“It’s not like the resources here are bad; I mean, I just don't really know about them.”
Rusne	“ASSA [Academic Services for Student-Athletes] is one of the best resources student-athletes have because after missing classes we can get tutors to help us get right back on track, and also we have academic advisors who help us schedule everything with classes and exams.”
Jayda	“I’ve been talking with Mr. Steve [Director of Leadership and Career Development Strategies] up there, and he has been helping me set up internships and stuff like that.”
Noah	“Like, you could go to this building [Center for Student-Athlete Leadership] and find different people, go to tutors and get as much help as you needed.”
Noah	“They help us help others through volunteering and helping build our resumes, so they are filled with community service hours or events for those in need.”
Alyssa	“Kirby [academic advisor] is awesome, and he helps us with pretty much anything we need. Like, if I'm missing something on a Sunday night, he’ll be like, ‘Oh, did you get that done?’”

Participant	Quotation
Alyssa	“There is always someone willing to help, no matter what issues we may be having. Time management was a huge learning curve, but thankfully we have advisors, SAWD [Student-Athlete Welfare and Development], and workshops to help us through changes.”
Levy	“There are a lot of different resources here that they provide that help the students.”
Brittney	“I’m really grateful for this academic center [Center for Student-Athlete Leadership]. The tutors and our different advisors that we have. It is really, extremely helpful with missing classes and trying to keep up.”

*Research Question 3*

*Research question 3: How can institutions and intercollegiate athletics departments enhance or supplement current services to effectively support student-athletes with the challenges and barriers they experience in higher education?*

A single question from the NCAA GOALS instrument was preidentified by the researcher as indicating what institutions and intercollegiate athletics departments can do to increase support for student-athletes (Table 25). Twelve options were provided to participants to determine which topics they wished that the coaches or athletics administrators at their school would discuss more often with student-athletes.

**RQ 3 Table 25: I wish the coaches or athletics administrators at our school talked more with student-athletes about the following topics...**

Responses	Topic
3	Conducting ourselves appropriately on campus and in the community
8	Living away from home
3	Sexual violence prevention
6	Academic resources
10	Proper nutrition

Responses	Topic
5	Getting good sleep
7	Time management
11	Mental wellness
4	Drinking/substance use
1	Concussion awareness
16	Budgeting/financial management
15	Preparing for a career after college

### Conclusion

Students who transition through higher education experience challenges and barriers. Student-athletes who participated in the study pointed to a variety of experiences with challenges and barriers that influenced their success. These experiences also provided insight into the support services and resources utilized to overcome challenges and barriers, and into various ways that institutions and intercollegiate athletics departments can enhance or supplement current support services.

The most significant emergent theme was the time commitment to athletics. Several factors contributed to this theme, including balancing academics with athletics, missing classes, and not getting enough sleep. Other challenges and barriers were also identified as emergent themes. These included major selection, study abroad programs and internships, health problems or symptoms, and mental wellness.

Relationships with faculty, care from team or college medical personnel, communication with parents or guardians, and academic support services offered through the athletics department or college were revealed as emergent themes particularly useful to student-athletes in their efforts to overcome the challenges and barriers that they face in higher education.

While resources and support services were available to student-athletes, participants wished coaches or athletics administrators at their school would discuss specific topics more frequently. These topics included budgeting and financial management (16 responses), preparing for a career after college (15 responses), mental wellness (11 responses), and proper nutrition (10 responses).

These findings provide useful insights as to how institutions and athletics departments can address the phenomenon. Institutions and athletics departments want student-athletes to succeed, and these factors and experiences are valuable pieces of information that can inform support services and resources. These efforts will assist student-athletes as they transition through higher education.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

### Introduction

As acknowledged extensively throughout previous chapters, student-athletes experience various challenges and barriers as they transition through higher education. Although student-athletes experience issues in areas similar to those of students who are not athletes, such as involvement (Astin, 1999; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1980; Wolf-Wendel, Ward, and Kinzie, 2009), engagement (Kuh, 2009; Tinto, 1988; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009), and integration (Tinto, 1993; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009), they experience additional academic, social, physical, personal, and emotional challenges (Jolly, 2008; Watson & Kissinger, 2007), which are distinct and influence their success in various ways. In the previous chapter, relevant data was presented and analyzed. This chapter consists of a summary and discussion of findings, the identification of implications for practice, the alignment of findings with Schlossberg's transition theory, recommendations for future research, and a concluding statement. The intended purpose of this chapter is to expand upon concepts that were studied to provide a better understanding of the experiences that influence the success of student-athletes.

### Summary of the Study

The findings reported in the preceding chapter will now be discussed as they relate to the stated research questions. This is followed by an analysis of the implications for support services and resources that institutions and intercollegiate athletics departments can provide to assist student-athletes as they transition through higher education. Similarities between the phenomenon and Schlossberg's transition theory are identified to support implications for practice.

The study explored the experiences of student-athletes with regard to challenges and barriers in higher education, which support services and resources were utilized by students to overcome these challenges and barriers, and which support services and resources institutions and athletics departments should provide to ensure success. Schlossberg's transition theory (1981), an adult development theory (Evans, Forney, & Guido-Dibrito, 1998) that focuses on the transitions adults experience throughout life and the means by which they cope and adjust (Schlossberg et al., 1995), was revised for this study, which featured 20 participants who were purposefully recruited to complete the NCAA GOALS survey. The participants were selected based on their perceived experiences with the phenomenon. Of the 20 participants, 10 student-athletes were purposefully selected to participate in follow-up interviews regarding their survey responses and experiences with challenges and barriers in higher education. Participants provided significant insights into the challenges and barriers they experienced and the support services and resources utilized to overcome difficulties.

This mixed-methods study focused on the phenomenological experiences of participants as they relate to challenges and barriers in higher education. Moreover, as a dissertation in practice, this study focused on addressing a problem of practice, as it relates to institutions of higher education, intercollegiate athletics departments, and student-athletes. Three research questions guided this study:

1. Do student-athletes experience challenges and barriers as they navigate higher education? If so, which challenges and barriers do they experience?
2. What campus and athletic support services or resources are particularly useful to student-athletes in their efforts to overcome the challenges and barriers they face in higher education?

3. How can institutions and intercollegiate athletics departments enhance or supplement current services to effectively support student-athletes with the challenges and barriers they experience in higher education?

To answer the research questions, quantitative data from the NCAA GOALS survey was presented in the form of descriptive statistics. The responses to open-ended questions during face-to-face interviews were categorized, coded, and triangulated to support survey responses. The discussion of findings is followed by an analysis of the implications with regard to practice for support services and resources that institutions and intercollegiate athletics departments can provide to assist student-athletes as they transition through higher education. The findings are aligned with the theoretical framework used in this study, Schlossberg's transition theory, to support the discussion of implications for practice.

### Discussion of Findings

Previous researchers (Pascarella & Smart, 1991; Parham, 1993; Navarro, 2015; Murty, K., Roebuck & McCamey, 2014) have extensively studied the challenges and barriers experienced by student-athletes. The objective of this study was to understand which experiences with challenges and barriers are pervasive among student-athletes, which support services and resources are utilized to overcome challenges and barriers, and which support services or resources institutions and intercollegiate athletics departments can provide to support the success of student-athletes. This section discusses the implications of the findings for the three research questions.

#### *Research Question 1*

*Research Question 1: Do student-athletes experience challenges and barriers as they navigate higher education? If so, which challenges and barriers do they experience?*

First, the findings indicated that student-athletes do experience challenges and barriers as they navigate higher education. Through the NCAA GOALS survey, each participant referenced a perceived challenge or barrier in response to at least one of the predetermined questions. Questions 24d, 54a, 54b, 54c, and 54d of the GOALS survey were selected to determine whether student-athletes experience challenges and barriers in higher education. Additionally, participants shared narratives during the subsequent face-to-face interviews that provided qualitative insight to support those experiences.

Forty-five percent of participants indicated that they somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed, or disagreed that they were able to find an appropriate balance between academics and extracurricular activities (including athletics participation). Although the percentage is less than half, other participants indicated challenges and barriers through their thoughts and reported feelings over the month in which the research was conducted. Fifty-five percent of participants indicated that they very often, fairly often, or sometimes felt they were unable to control the important things in their life. Forty-five percent of participants indicated that they sometimes, almost never, or never felt confident about their ability to handle their personal problems. Sixty-five percent of participants indicated that they sometimes, almost never, or never felt things were going their way. Finally, fifty-five percent of participants indicated that they sometimes or fairly often felt difficulties were piling up so high that they could not overcome them.

During interviews, five themes emerged regarding the challenges and barriers student-athletes experience: time commitment, major selection, study abroad and internships, health problems or symptoms, and mental wellness. Time commitment was most commonly referenced as a challenge or barrier. Participants referred to commitments in terms of participating in athletic activities (practicing, training, competing, athletic training room, etc.) and non-athletic



activities (meetings with coaches, team functions, film study, etc.). Several participants disclosed that as a result of sport commitments, they had faced challenges with balancing academics and extracurricular activities (including athletics participation), missing classes due to practice, travel, or competition, and not getting sufficient sleep. These findings are consistent with previous research (Pinkney, 1991; Hendricks & Johnson, 2016), which indicates that student-athletes experience challenges in balancing academics with athletics. As participants spend increased time on sport commitments, it becomes more difficult to succeed in other aspects of life. Evidence exists (Hollis, 2001) that students who accept an athletic scholarship are required to miss classes to accommodate their athletic schedules. As such, challenging experiences and barriers can arise.

Similar to time commitment, major selection was identified as an emergent theme. Participants indicated various challenges or barriers with their current major or course schedule. To begin with, only thirty percent of participants would definitely choose their major again. This is similar to the finding presented in previous research (Navarro, 2015), which indicates that most student-athletes express remorse concerning their choice of major. As in Navarro (2015), the participants in the study expressed dissatisfaction with their choice of major. For two participants, lower standardized test scores prevented them from selecting their preferred majors. As earlier research indicates (Hood et al., 1992; Shulman and Bowen, 2001; Stuart, 1985), student-athletes matriculate with below average academic qualifications. Another participant was faced with limited options in terms of remaining athletically eligible after transferring. Earlier research (Lederman as cited in Schneider et al., 2010) indicated that due to pressure to ensure academic eligibility and graduation, academic advisors in athletics departments may implicitly guide student-athletes toward certain majors. One participant was unsuccessful in a course

required for their major. This finding is supported by previous literature (Purdy, Eitzen, & Hufnagel, 1982; Maloney & McCormick, 1993), which indicates that academic underperformance is more pronounced for student-athletes. Two other participants mentioned that various academic requirements within their preferred major would have conflicted with athletic participation (e.g., studying, clinical hours). In addition, thirty percent of participants expressed that athletics participation prevented them from taking their preferred classes. During the interviews, participants noted the requirement to take numerous online courses to accommodate their athletics schedule and the inability to take certain classes because they conflicted with athletics participation; in addition, one participant mentioned that her athletics academic advisor even chose her courses without her input.

Study abroad and internships emerged as a theme. Forty percent of participants reported that they would have liked to have participated in a study abroad program but could not do so due to their athletics obligations. One participant shared that he had to decline an opportunity to study history in Italy due to athletics participation. Another participant mentioned that she could have benefited from an eight-week pre-law school trip overseas but had sport commitments. Furthermore, thirty percent of participants responded that they did not know at that time if they planned to be involved in a study abroad program. During the interviews, many participants indicated to being unaware that opportunities to study abroad existed. It can be surmised that participants did not believe studying abroad is possible for student-athletes. However, participants acknowledged the various educational benefits of study abroad programs (e.g., language acquisition and cultural competency).

Fifty percent of participants reported that they would have liked to be involved in an internship program but could not due to athletics participation. During the interviews, several

participants spoke about sport commitments that prevented involvement in an internship and influenced career opportunities. This finding is consistent with previous research (Wippert & Wippert as cited in Huang et al., 2016), which indicates that due to rigorous academic and athletic schedules, student-athletes can feel unprepared to address career issues. For instance, one participant shared that he was required to sign in for meals at specific times. With required non-athletic activities, much of any remaining free time is spent on studying for classes and completing assignments. Another participant referred to an inability to make the most of an internship at the time of an interview. Due to sport commitments, the decision to participate in an internship would be rushed, and it would be difficult for her to gain adequate experience. One participant also stated that there were other priorities at the moment to consider instead of an internship that could potentially benefit her three years in the future. Twenty percent of participants responded that they did not know at the time of the interview whether they intended to participate in an internship program. During the interviews, participants expressed that they were unaware of their options. One participant did not know that career counseling was offered. Evidence exists (Kissinger, 2007) that student-athletes underutilize career services resources on campus. Another participant did not understand the career outlook associated with his current major. Nonetheless, each participant acknowledged the educational benefits of an internship program (e.g., networking and practical experience).

Health problems or symptoms was another theme that emerged. During the 30 days prior to completing the survey, sixty percent of participants had experienced headaches, sixty-five percent had experienced pain (non-headache) that made daily activities difficult, forty percent had experienced a cold, flu or similar illness, and fifty-five percent had experienced trouble sleeping. Moreover, seventy-five percent of participants somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly

agreed that they felt so tired due to the physical demands of their sport that they struggled to find energy for other activities. Previous literature (Watson & Kissinger, 2007) indicates that student-athletes experience numerous physical and emotional challenges. Narratives from the interviews regarding health problems or symptoms included varying degrees of injuries. One participant suffered an ankle injury, which made walking to class difficult. Another participant referred to stress fractures in both shins that made going up stairs and running difficult. Other participants referred to an injury that could become career-ending and a back injury that limited mobility and made sitting down for long periods uncomfortable. Another participant shared her prior experiences with sport-related concussions, which made focusing and paying attention in class difficult. With regard to physical health problems, participants reported challenges and barriers induced by frequent headaches resulting from stress, a lack of sleep, and a demanding schedule. These findings are consistent with previous research (Danish, Petipas, & Hale, 1993), which indicates that student-athletes experience challenges with maintaining physical health and minimizing athletic injury and rehabilitation.

Mental wellness was the final emergent theme. Forty-five percent of participants somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that they were exhausted by the mental demands of their sport. As earlier research indicates (Parham, 1993), the mental and physical stamina of student-athletes is continually compromised. During the interviews, many participants revealed that they had already seen a mental health counselor or sports psychologist in relation to issues surrounding their athletics participation. One participant stated that she was continually overwhelmed with the constant athletics requirements, so she scheduled an appointment with a sports psychologist to ease her tensions and anxiety. Prior literature (Stone & Strange, 2000) indicates that the demands of participating in athletics lead to stress and anxiety. Other

participants reported that one bad practice could mentally influence an entire day and also that expectations to perform athletically induced stress and anxiety. Earlier research (Parham, 1993) indicates that there is constant pressure to maintain the expectations of “coaches, teammates, their home communities, and the media” (p. 414). It is notable that the responses from several participants included that they were unaware mental health resources were available at the institution or within the athletics department for student-athletes. Several participants also referenced the desire to use mental health services but found them inaccessible due to a lack of organization (e.g., intake paperwork, scheduling) or the length of the waiting list to be seen.

### *Research Question 2*

*Research Question 2: What campus and athletic support services or resources are particularly useful to student-athletes in their efforts to overcome the challenges and barriers they face in higher education?*

The findings indicated that student-athletes utilize several campus and athletic support services or resources to overcome challenges and barriers in higher education. Furthermore, communication with parents/guardians was another resource utilized by student-athletes. Through the NCAA GOALS survey, each participant referenced at least one campus or athletic support service or resource that was particularly useful. Questions 17b, 53a, 53b, 72, 73a, 73b, and 73c of the GOALS survey were selected to determine which campus and athletic support services or resources were particularly useful to student-athletes. Additionally, participants provided narratives during face-to-face interviews that provided support and insight into those experiences.

Seventy-five percent of participants somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that, since coming to this institution, they had developed a close personal relationship with at least one

faculty member. This contradicts previous literature (Engstrom et al., 1995), which indicates that faculty members might have more negative attitudes toward student-athletes. One participant mentioned that a faculty member showed support at a track event on campus. Another participant referenced a personal relationship with the Director of the Undergraduate Sport Business Management Program, which was his minor. Developing relationships with faculty members is essential for student success. Since student-athletes are required to miss classes due to sport commitments, these relationships ensure that a student is able to make up any missed assignments and succeed in a course.

Eighty percent of participants were somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with the care they received from team or college medical personnel when they experienced physical health issues. Furthermore, sixty percent of participants were somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with the care they received from team or college medical personnel when they experienced mental health issues. Intercollegiate athletics departments are equipped with an athletics training staff responsible for the physical and mental well-being of student-athletes. One participant stated that the treatment and rehabilitation for injuries provided by the athletics trainers ensured that the injuries did not worsen and proper healing could occur. Participants also reported satisfaction with mental health counselors and sport psychologists. One participant mentioned that the sport psychologist was able to assist with issues experienced inside and outside sports. This finding is consistent with previous research (Carodine et al. as cited in Storch & Ohlson, 2009), which indicates that athletics departments have begun establishing “collaborative partnerships with clinical psychologists, mental health services providers, and special education professionals to introduce strategies to address[ing] the needs of student-athletes with emotional and learning issues” (p. 79). Another participant mentioned that providing therapy to student-athletes was an

acknowledgement of care and compassion from coaches and the athletics administrators. However, support extended beyond the institution and athletics department.

Regular communication with parents/guardians was indicated as a resource that is particularly useful to student-athletes in their efforts to overcome the challenges and barriers they experience in higher education. Seventy percent of participants communicate with their parents/guardians once a day or multiple times a day. One participant even stated that she spoke with her mother at least three times per day on average. Another participant, who was injured at the time, mentioned that his parents called frequently to check on the status of his injury. Other participants added that they were able to see their parents for every home game or lived close enough to travel home on the weekends. During the interviews, one participant mentioned that her mother had the ability to make her happy after a poor practice.

Participants reported that academic support services offered through their athletics department or college were useful when dealing with challenges and barriers. Every participant was satisfied or somewhat satisfied with academic advisors who assisted with course selection and/or monitored degree progress. Ninety-five percent of participants were satisfied or somewhat satisfied with tutoring, and eighty-five percent of participants were satisfied or somewhat satisfied with career counseling. With demanding schedules, student-athletes stated that academic advisors sent reminders about pending assignments, scheduled tutoring appointments, and helped ensure athletic eligibility. Participants mentioned that tutors provided supplemental instruction on missed assignments due to sport commitments, and several participants had tutors for multiple courses. Evidence exists (Storch & Ohlson, 2009) that “group and individual tutorial services serve to augment the academic performance of student-athletes” (p. 81). Career counseling was another resource referenced as useful to overcome challenges and barriers. Due

to sport commitments, student-athletes are typically unable to attend career services events on campus, such as career fairs or mock interviews. As such, one participant mentioned that the Student-Athlete Welfare and Development office did a good job of reaching out to employers on behalf of student-athletes to set up internships and hosting various programs that focused on preparing student-athletes for a career after sports.

### *Research Question 3*

*Research Question 3: How can institutions and intercollegiate athletics departments enhance or supplement current services to effectively support student-athletes with the challenges and barriers they experience in higher education?*

Participants identified several topics that institutions and intercollegiate athletics departments could consider in order to enhance or supplement current services intended to effectively support student-athletes with challenges and barriers. Through the NCAA GOALS survey, each participant referenced at least one topic that they wished the coaches or athletics administrators at their school had talked more with them about.

Budgeting/financial management was the most frequently reported topic, with eighty percent of participants referencing this topic. During the interviews, one participant mentioned that she wished she had known how to spend her refund check when it first appeared in her checking account. She reminisced that she had gone out and bought several pairs of shoes and clothing items after she received her disbursement. Looking back, she shared that she should have used that money for other purposes. She wished the freshmen on her team would receive messages regarding financial budgeting. Another participant thought that more programming could be done around financial topics such as how mortgages and credit cards work.



Seventy-five percent of participants wished that institutions and intercollegiate athletics departments would discuss preparing for a career after college in greater depth. This finding is consistent with previous research (Sowa & Gressard, 1983), which indicates that student-athletes tend to have less clarity when it comes to identifying career objectives and lower levels of career maturity than non-athlete students. Although the Student-Athlete Welfare and Development office offers career counseling, several student-athletes referenced difficulties in attending sessions. For instance, some of the programs are class-specific (e.g., juniors, seniors). Therefore, topics on preparing for a career after college are usually not provided to freshmen or sophomores. Two student-athletes also referenced a lack of awareness concerning the job opportunities that exist after graduation. Both student-athletes wished to learn more about their respective major and the career opportunities that existed. This finding is supported by the literature (Navarro & McCormick, 2017), indicating that student-athletes felt unprepared to enter the workforce following graduation.

Participants also reported that they wished more conversations were had surrounding mental wellness (fifty-five percent) and proper nutrition (fifty percent). One participant reported that her coach dismissed the topic of mental wellness when it was addressed during a team function. Prior literature (Hollis, 2001) indicates that the primary objective of coaches is to maintain players' athletic eligibility in order to continually compete and win games. Another participant stated that she needed to see a psychologist in the previous year but was unaware of her resources until the subsequent year. Other participants referenced a disorganized intake process and a lack of an adequate number of psychologists in the athletics department to handle the counseling demand from student-athletes. Regarding proper nutrition, not all student-athletes are provided meals as part of their athletics scholarship. Rather than utilizing the student-athlete

nutrition center, many of the participants are required to provide meals for themselves. Due to limited funds, many student-athletes reported eating inexpensive, unhealthy meals. In addition, due to sport commitments, several participants mentioned having missed meals or eating late at night following athletic activities. These participants wished that more information was provided to student-athletes on how to prepare healthy meals on a limited budget.

### Implications for Practice

#### *The transition through higher education for a student-athlete*

Depending on the sport and season, student-athletes tend to wake up daily before the sun rises to participate in either an athletic activity (practicing, training, competing, athletic training room, etc.) or a non-athletic activity (meetings with coaches, team functions, film study, etc.). With careful planning, there may be enough time to quickly eat a very small meal before reporting to the locker room or athletics training facility for pre-treatment.

Following a morning sport commitment, student-athletes must quickly shower and prepare for the day. Many times, student-athletes require supplemental treatment following a training session. As a result, they often arrive late to classes, which may prove irritating for professors and reinforces a negative stereotype among non-athlete students. Exhausted from a lack of sleep and a physically demanding schedule, student-athletes may struggle to stay attentive during lectures. If they manage to remain awake, they are typically unable to effectively comprehend the content, which is necessary for success in the course. Exacerbating the issue are below-average standardized test scores, which were likely obtained prior to matriculation and have limited the choice of majors for these students.

To rehabilitate or prevent injuries, student-athletes require physical treatment throughout the day. This sport commitment interferes with plans such as meeting with a professor or

convening with a study group between classes. When arriving at an afternoon class, a student-athlete must be aware that recent absences due to athletics participation might have constrained their ability to submit several assignments. Due to missing lectures, student-athletes typically struggle with completing assigned coursework; this is compounded by the fact that they may be required to take quizzes and exams before their classmates, meaning that they lose valuable preparation time.

Later in the afternoon, student-athletes generally have a second athletic or non-athletic activity. As these last several hours, the student-athlete can easily become overwhelmed by academic and athletic obligations. This can produce mental health issues, as student-athletes experience increased stress and anxiety regarding their strenuous schedules. After finishing their classes and athletics commitments for the day, student-athletes are frequently mandated to attend tutoring sessions, study hall, or meetings with an athletics academic advisor. These necessary requirements prevent student-athletes from participating in various educational opportunities, such as an internship, a career workshop, or research with faculty. Later in the evening, once they have fulfilled all of their daily requirements, student-athletes may have time to prepare a healthy meal, study, or briefly socialize with their few non-athlete friends. It is more likely, however, that they will be too fatigued to do so and will decide to just sleep in preparation for the next day, which is likely to be similarly demanding.

#### *Schlossberg's Transition Theory*

As the findings have indicated, student-athletes experience various challenges and barriers during their transition through higher education. Many transitions are anticipated, such as athletics participation and higher learning. However, many transitions are unanticipated, such as injuries, course failures, or mental health issues (Schlossberg, 1981). Therefore, institutions

and athletics departments must intervene and provide support services and resources to strengthen student-athletes' abilities to cope with transitions. Schlossberg (1981) identified four factors that influence a person's ability to cope with a transition: situation, self, support, and strategies. The findings of this study determined that each of Schlossberg's four "Ss" influenced the interviewed student-athletes' abilities to cope with transitions.

#### *Schlossberg's Application to Sport Commitments*

Student-athletes experienced challenges and barriers as a result of sport commitments. According to participants, this included balancing academics with athletics. Alyssa reported that the situation influenced her ability to cope with sport commitments. During our conversation, it became apparent that she did not perceive herself as being in control of her schedule, as many of her daily activities were predetermined by academics or athletics. In addition, Caroline expressed that the situation influenced her ability to cope with sport commitments. However, Caroline was influenced by a role change. Due to increased sport commitments, she was no longer able to commit to activities outside the university, such as her involvement with church. Self was a factor that influenced Noah's abilities to cope with balancing academics with athletics. During our interview, the participant mentioned that he developed a commitment to managing his time wisely. As a result, he felt more prepared to balance academics with athletics.

Participants mentioned that missing class due to sport commitments presented challenges and barriers. Takiya stated that the situation influenced her ability to cope with missing class. For Takiya, her professors influenced the transition. As an example, she stated that, due to sport commitments, she was required to take exams several days prior to her classmates. This influenced her ability to cope with the transition, as she lost valuable time in which to prepare, and her success in the course was influenced. Brittany stated that strategies influenced her

abilities to cope with missing class. She mentioned that there was a period where she missed the same class for numerous weeks. To ensure that she was able to listen to the lectures, she received permission from the professor to have a classmate audio-record the lectures, which she could listen to at a later time.

Another factor associated with sport commitments that produced challenges and barriers for student-athletes was a lack of sleep. Self was a factor that influenced the ability to cope with not getting enough sleep for Juan. During our conversation, Juan revealed an ongoing injury that had made sleeping throughout the night nearly impossible. Due to his state of health, Juan was not getting adequate sleep, which influenced his productivity during the day. Self was also a factor that influenced not getting enough sleep for Takiya. Her outlook was that she prided herself on doing well academically. With this outlook, she frequently found herself staying up late into the night to study and complete assignments. Consequently, Takiya stated that she usually did not get into bed until roughly three in the morning. To Noah, his situation influenced his ability to cope with not getting enough sleep. As a result of concurrent stress related to academic, social, physical, personal, and athletic responsibilities, Noah was unable to sleep at night and found himself falling asleep during classes and missing the lectures.

#### *Implications for Sport Commitments*

To assist student-athletes in developing coping mechanisms and strategies, institutions and athletics departments must above all reduce the time student-athletes spend on athletic activities (practicing, training, competing, athletic training room, etc.) and non-athletic activities (meetings with coaches, team functions, film study, etc.). Institutions and athletics departments must also implement explicit guidelines for reporting countable athletically related activities, introduce yearly time management programming, require semester face-to-face (if applicable),

meetings with professors, and reconsider activities established as countable athletically related activities (e.g., health and medical activities).

According to the latest NCAA Division I Manual, “a student-athlete’s participation in countable athletically related activities shall be limited to a maximum of four hours per day and 20 hours per week” (p. 245). In addition, there may not be countable athletically related activities between midnight and five a.m. (NCAA Manual, 2019, p. 251). However, it can be surmised that these policies are often violated, as they are self-disclosed, usually by coaches, and then rarely questioned by reporting athletics administrators. If there were stricter guidelines as to reporting athletic activities, violations might occur less frequently and student-athletes would experience reduced challenges with and barriers to appropriately balancing academics with athletics, missing classes, and getting enough sleep.

Participants acknowledged challenges and barriers with controlling the important things in their life, feeling confident about their ability to handle personal problems, feeling that things were going their way, and feeling that difficulties were piling up so high that they could not overcome them. To address these issues, institutions and athletics departments should implement mandatory time management trainings for student-athletes. Trainings should occur yearly and be tailored to different sport and academic standings (e.g., freshman, sophomore). With proper time management proficiencies, student-athletes can feel confident about their abilities to access support services and resources with which to address personal problems and difficulties that, if left unchecked, may become overwhelming.

Missing class creates challenges and barriers for any student in higher education. This difficulty is exacerbated for student-athletes, who are frequently absent from consecutive classes or multiple classes in a day due to athletic events. Therefore, institutions and athletics

departments should mandate a face-to-face (if applicable) meeting between student-athletes and their professors every semester. If this engagement were to occur, student-athletes and professors could establish semester objectives, thus allowing student-athletes to achieve success in a course despite missing lectures. Additionally, faculty members at the institution should become more knowledgeable about the various challenges and barriers student-athletes experience. By doing so, the faculty may become more understanding and accepting of the various challenges and barriers student-athletes experience.

Presently, time spent on medical evaluations or treatment for the prevention and/or rehabilitation of injuries is not considered to fall within the time set for athletics-related activities. However, student-athletes are obliged to invest a considerable amount of time engaging in these activities in addition to their mandated sports commitments. Consequently, health and medical activities are regularly neglected because there is just not enough time. If these activities were included as countable athletically related activities, student-athletes would be more capable of utilizing health and medical resources, knowing that the time spent on these activities would not interfere with other non-athletics activities.

#### *Schlossberg's Application to Major Selection*

Student-athletes experienced challenges and barriers regarding major selection and course scheduling. Several participants mentioned that their situations influenced their abilities to cope with the transition. For instance, Noah had limited choices in terms of selecting a major after transferring. As such, he felt that he had no control during major selection and was unable to pursue his intended major. Self as a factor further influenced Noah's abilities to cope. His educational outlook once included community engagement through entrepreneurship. Now,

being unable to major in business, he was unsure and not optimistic as to how this could be achieved.

The situation also influenced Rusne's abilities to cope with major selection and course scheduling. For her, the duration of the transition meant that she would spend her entire academic career studying something other than her intended major, medicine. The situation also influenced Caroline's abilities to cope with transition. Due to the timing of the event, being a student-athlete, she was unable to pursue her intended major during this stage of her life. However, she added that she might return to the institution for an additional degree once her athletics eligibility was completed. For Levy, the transition to having to select a new major and manage class schedules was unanticipated. Early in his academic career, he did poorly in a required course. As a result, it was recommended that he change his major. Brittney also indicated that her situation influenced her transition. From her perspective, the coaches were responsible for not allowing her to pursue her intended major. As a result, she felt resentment towards them.

Several participants also stated that support influenced their abilities to cope with major selection and course scheduling. Their experiences were varied. For instance, Alyssa was annoyed by the fact that she was not consulted by her athletics academic advisor when courses were scheduled. However, she appreciated the scheduling of online courses because it provided flexibility in her schedule. Similarly, Juan was dissatisfied when he was placed in the communications major. However, he acknowledged that his athletics academic advisor did not want to see him fail, and he was placed in a major where he could be successful.



### *Implications for Major Selection*

Participants indicated dissatisfaction with their major selection and course schedules. As such, institutions and athletics departments should implement strategies to increase the satisfaction of student-athletes with regard to their selection of majors and courses. To do so, it should be required that prospective student-athletes meet with a faculty member in the department of their anticipated major, participate in an exploratory course, complete a career interest assessment, and connect with a senior student-athlete in their major. It is also recommended that the NCAA reconsider their current freshman eligibility standards.

Often, athletics is over-prioritized during recruiting trips. For instance, a prospective student-athlete meets with the coaches and team and is shown the dormitories and athletics training facilities. This typically includes meetings with athletics trainers, strength and conditioning coaches, and various sport administrators. However, less time is spent on the presentation of academics. To ensure student-athletes are knowledgeable about their anticipated major and the support that is made available to them, they should be required to meet with a faculty member in their desired discipline. During their meetings, the faculty member can discuss major requirements, academic expectations, and potential career opportunities following graduation. If a prospective student-athlete is undecided, he or she should meet with several faculty members throughout the institution or the major exploration office to compare and contrast majors to determine which major would be appropriate.

Although there may be a major exploration office at the institution, exploratory courses provide significant insight into a specific discipline or major. For instance, there are exploratory courses for the social services, the allied health profession, and medical careers. Usually, these types of courses are not required for a major. However, student-athletes should be encouraged to

take an exploratory course during their first semester, especially if they are uncertain of their major. Whether or not a student-athlete is fully satisfied with their choice of major, these courses typically include relevant information regarding campus resources, academic requirements, and career opportunities.

Generally, career aptitude assessments are incorporated as part of the exploratory course curriculum. The faculty members in these courses are qualified to interpret and discuss the results of such assessments with students. If a student-athlete is unable to participate in an exploratory course, institutions and athletics departments should require him or her to complete a career aptitude assessment. Rather than a faculty member, athletics academic advisors should become qualified to review outcomes and have meaningful discussions with student-athletes. Based on the results of the assessment, student-athletes and athletics academic advisors can together choose a major and course schedule that coordinates with career objectives.

Institutions and athletics departments should also implement a mentorship program between freshman and senior student-athletes who share the same major. Upon matriculation, student-athletes should be assigned a senior student-athlete. Senior student-athletes would be encouraged to have discussions with freshmen regarding the former's academic experiences. With continuous guidance, incoming student-athletes would be knowledgeable regarding academic expectations. Senior student-athletes could also discuss how to succeed in a particular major and encourage freshmen to utilize various resources within the athletics department and at the institution.

In 2003, the NCAA introduced the modern academic standards for prospective student-athletes, which utilize a sliding scale (Figure 2) to determine athletic eligibility based on high school GPA and standardized test scores (e.g., SAT or ACT). Participants stated that although

they were admitted to the institution and athletically eligible, lower standardized test scores prevented them from choosing their intended majors. Therefore, the instrument used to determine initial athletic eligibility should be reconsidered. It is recommended that the NCAA introduce higher initial eligibility standards. By introducing such standards, institutions should require student-athletes unable to achieve an appropriate GPA and/or test score to matriculate in the local community college. This would give the student-athlete an opportunity to take transferable, college-level courses without experiencing the challenges or barriers associated with intercollegiate athletics participation. Based on the academic success of a student-athlete at the community college, he or she would be able to transfer into an appropriate major at the institution, which would coordinate with their academic abilities and improve their opportunities for success.

#### *Schlossberg's Application to Study Abroad and Internship*

Student-athletes reported experiencing challenges and barriers regarding study abroad programs and internships. According to participants, the situation influenced their abilities to cope with the transition. For instance, both Noah and Alyssa spoke of study abroad opportunities that they had recently declined due to sport commitments. During this transition, it was perceived that neither participant had control since they had required athletic participation, which prevented them from participating studying aboard.

Support influenced Juan and Artem's abilities to cope with the transition. The participants mentioned that they were unaware study aboard and internship opportunities existed. As a result of a lack of information, neither student had participated in these educational opportunities. Takiya mentioned that strategies influenced her abilities to cope with internships. Since she was unable to attend career services events on campus, she tried her best to attend the

programming events held by athletics. This coping mechanism provided reassurance that she could still obtain career information.

### *Implications for Study Abroad and Internships*

Scholars (Danish et al., 1993; Hood et al., 1992) have recognized the significant advantages associated with study abroad and internship programs. However, many participants expressed an inability to participate in these opportunities due to athletics participation. Therefore, institutions and intercollegiate athletics departments should establish similar opportunities that student-athletes are able to participate in. For instance, institutions and intercollegiate athletics departments should build relationships with local corporations and businesses that remain in operation on the weekends, reconnect with local student-athlete alumni to establish a mentorship program, explore study abroad opportunities that are shorter in duration and connect with local corporations and businesses that operate in foreign countries.

Participants reported extremely demanding schedules, which prevented them from exploiting opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, including internship programs. Since most businesses operate Monday through Friday, when student-athletes are either in class or participating in sport, institutions and athletics departments should develop partnerships with local businesses that have weekend operations. Given that they do not have classes on Saturdays and Sundays, student-athletes have fewer obligations on these days. Thus, they could participate in internship experiences should they be provided with opportunities to do so on weekends.

When students graduate, many secure employment in the vicinity of the institution. This includes former student-athletes. For student-athletes to obtain internship experience, institutions and athletics departments should establish a mentorship program that connects senior student-athletes with recently graduated student-athletes. Utilizing the major of the senior and the

industry of the graduated student-athlete, institutions and athletics departments can pair individuals based on career objectives. Being familiar with the student-athlete experience, the graduated student-athlete can mentor the senior and share their experiences of the transition from athletics to career.

Several participants referenced an inclination to study abroad but an inability to do so due to athletics participation. In situations in which studying abroad for a significant period of time would prohibit athletics participation, institutions and athletics departments should examine means to create similar experiences, but over a more reasonable period of time. For a student-athlete, an entire academic semester abroad is impractical. However, a shorter two-week experience could be plausible. Therefore, the study abroad office at the institution should coordinate with the athletics department to create such opportunities for student-athletes.

If a student-athlete is not able to study abroad, the institution and athletics department should establish relationships with businesses that operate internationally. If a student-athlete can obtain experience at a global corporation, they can be exposed to that company's operations in other countries and gain cultural competencies and valuable insight into how to be successful in a globalized community.

#### *Schlossberg's Application to Health Problems and Symptoms*

Student-athletes experienced challenges and barriers associated with health problems and symptoms. Several participants referred self as having influenced their ability to cope with the transition. For instance, participants strongly self-identify as athletes. For those who suffered injuries, the way in which they viewed life changed. For example, Juan had been a baseball player for the majority of his life. Now that he was experiencing a potentially career-ending injury, his focus on life had shifted, and he began thinking more about life after sports.

Situation also influenced participants' abilities to cope with health problems or symptoms. Jayda suffered a similar injury the previous season and felt comfortable completing the rehabilitation necessary to return from the injury. As in Jayda's case, the situation influenced Brittney's ability to cope with the transition. Her injury was the result of increased playing time and a greater trust on the part of coaches concerning her abilities. Therefore, the trigger of the transition was positive, and she was expected to return to full health in less than a week.

#### *Implications for Health Problems and Symptoms*

Participants referenced challenges and barriers associated with health problems and symptoms. These difficulties ranged from frequent headaches to possibly career-ending injuries. Thus, institutions and athletics departments must implement strategies to reduce sport-related injuries while providing adequate treatment and rehabilitation to student-athletes. For this to occur, the length of preseason training should be shortened, and additional athletic trainers should be provided for student-athletes who participate in non-revenue-generating sports. If this is not financially possible, coaches and student-athletes should be educated on rudimentary injury prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation techniques. Moreover, time spent with athletics trainers should be recognized as countable athletically related activities, and there should be increased communication between athletic trainers and coaches regarding the health problems and symptoms of student-athletes.

The length of preseason practice varies by sport. For instance, "an institution shall not commence on-court preseason basketball practice sessions before the date that is 42 days before the date of the institution's first regular-season contest" (NCAA Manual, 2019, p. 257). For women's beach volleyball, a member institution shall not commence practice sessions prior to September 7 or the institution's first day of classes for the fall term, whichever is earlier (NCAA

Manual, 2019, p. 260). Nonetheless, rigorous preseason practices significantly increase opportunities for injuries. Moreover, they increase the potential for injuries during the remainder of the season. During preseason practices, student-athletes are more likely to ignore minor injuries as they compete for a starting position. By reducing the length of preseason practices, there would be fewer opportunities for injuries among student-athletes.

Non-revenue-generating participants reported insufficient athletic training resources. For instance, several participants mentioned that they had to share an athletic trainer with other sports. However, these participants mentioned that revenue-generating student-athletes had access to multiple athletic trainers. When such a situation arises, the attention that should be devoted to injuries is compromised. For instance, many non-revenue-generating sports have a greater number of participants. Therefore, student-athletes may avoid seeking treatment or rehabilitation if they know they will have to wait to be seen.

Since institutions and athletics departments may not have adequate funding to provide multiple athletic trainers to non-revenue-generating sports, coaches and student-athletes should be instructed on how to handle minor injuries, rehabilitate existing injuries, and perform injury prevention treatments. Once properly prepared, student-athletes can perform treatments and rehabilitate outside the athletics training room. This would allow athletic trainers an opportunity to spend more time with student-athletes who have suffered serious health problems and symptoms.

According to the NCAA Manual (2019), “health and medical activities (e.g., medical evaluations or treatment for prevention and/or rehabilitation of injuries)” (p. 249) are not considered countable athletically related activities. As such, student-athletes are required to attend health and medical activities in addition to their various sport commitments. To avoid

missing classes and other academic obligations, student-athletes are often forced to sacrifice time with athletic trainers. When this occurs, injuries worsen and student-athletes experience significant challenges and barriers associated with health problems. If health and medical activities were to be incorporated as countable athletically related activities, student-athletes would be able to seek treatment without missing classes or academic meetings.

Generally, student-athletes do not disclose the seriousness of their injuries to coaches. This is done to prevent missing practices and competitions. However, if institutions and athletics departments were to implement strategies intended to improve the communication between athletic trainers and coaches, it is likely that fewer student-athletes would continue participating despite having suffered a recent injury. One way in which communication can occur is through weekly meetings between coaches and the athletic training staff. During these meetings, athletic trainers can provide injury updates and make recommendations as to the participation of student-athletes. Knowing that these conversations are being held, student-athletes would be more inclined to fully disclose the status of their injuries and not participate when doing so was not recommended. This would allow proper rehabilitation before returning from an injury.

#### *Schlossberg's Application to Mental Wellness*

Student-athletes experienced challenges and barriers regarding mental wellness. Many of the participants referenced situation as influencing the abilities to cope with the transition. For instance, Alyssa's issues with mental health were triggered by a demanding schedule. Moreover, she felt that she had no control over the schedule, as she was constantly scheduled to be at certain activities throughout the day. Due to her situation, Alyssa suffered stress and anxiety.

Jayda stated that support influenced her abilities to cope with the transition. After a strenuous practice, she relied on her intimate support resources to ensure mental wellness. Other



participants referenced support from sport psychologists to cope with the transition. For instance, Noah felt that having sport psychologists present in the athletics department showed care and compassion on the part of the coaches and administrators.

For Juan, strategies influenced the abilities to cope with the transition. During our conversation, Juan shared a narrative of a former roommate who suffered from anxiety and depression. From speaking with his roommate, Juan developed coping mechanisms which he could use when suffering from anxiety and depression himself. Brittney referenced support as influencing her abilities to cope with the transition. Rather than depending on her support, she felt that expectations from her family, a network of friends, and the institution induced additional stress and anxiety, which influenced her mental wellness.

#### *Implications for Mental Wellness*

Student-athletes experienced challenges and barriers with mental wellness. Participants referenced feelings of stress and anxiety regarding their athletics participation. Therefore, institutions and athletics departments must strategize means to reduce these feelings among student-athletes and provide the support services and resources required to ensure mental wellness. To do this, it is recommended that mental health counselors or sport psychologists be assigned to athletic teams. In addition, coaches, academic advisors, and tutors should receive training on how to recognize underlying mental health issues, and student-athletes should be provided with information on the various mental health resources that are available.

Participants referenced the intention to see a sport psychologist or counselor but indicated that they were unable to do so due to a lack of resources and organization. To avoid such situations, institutions and athletics departments should designate a sport psychologist or counselor to work with a small number of athletic teams. Should this approach be adopted,

student-athletes would be able to relate to their assigned psychologist and develop a relationship with that professional if needed. This would also avoid confusion, which can occur when one sport psychologist works with the schedules of many student-athletes.

Student-athletes spend the majority of their time with coaches and teammates. Outside their sport commitments, they receive academic services, such as tutoring. As such, coaches, student-athletes, and tutors should be properly trained to identify mental health issues when working with student-athletes. In addition, these individuals should be knowledgeable about where to refer student-athletes and how to report mental health issues. Should such an approach be adopted, multiple individuals who come in contact with the student-athlete would be prepared to handle mental health issues.

Participants also mentioned that they were unaware of the mental health resources that existed at the institution and in the athletics department. Therefore, institutions and athletics departments must improve means by which student-athletes can be provided with this information. Although it may be provided to student-athletes upon their arrival at the institution, this information should be continually referenced throughout the semester. One approach could be to create mental health programming where information is regularly shared and student-athletes are able to share their experiences with mental health problems.

### *Summary*

These practices to support student-athletes who experience challenges and barriers in higher education are listed above as separate suggestions. However, their combined influence would be significant. A reduction in sport commitments would reduce class absences, provide more time for sleep, and allow student-athletes an opportunity to strike a better balance between athletics with academics. Providing early and complete information to prospective student-

athletes regarding major opportunities, offering exploratory courses and career aptitude assessment, and reconsidering the NCAA initial eligibility standards would ensure student-athletes are satisfied with their major and course selections while possessing the academic abilities required to succeed. To enable them to obtain study abroad and internship experiences, shortened opportunities should be provided and relationships with local businesses should be developed. Should such an approach be adopted, student-athletes would be able to benefit from similar experiences to those of non-athlete students while also participating in intercollegiate athletics. To reduce injuries, preseason practice should be shortened, and coaches and student-athletes should be educated on various treatment and rehabilitation techniques. Increased access to mental health support services and resources, the ongoing provision of information, and education for coaches, tutors, and student-athletes would address mental wellness challenges and barriers.

#### Suggestions for Future Research

This study provided significant insights concerning challenges and barriers experienced by student-athletes in higher education. Although this research is extensive, further research is necessary to achieve a more complete understanding of the phenomenon. First and foremost, the research only included participants from one institution. Additionally, participants were exclusively NCAA Division I student-athletes. Future studies should include participants from other institutions and divisions. There may be additional experiences with challenges and barriers that influence the success of student-athletes at other institutions who compete in a similar or lower division.

Second, two particular challenges or barriers were pronounced. These were sport commitments and mental wellness. Institutions and athletics departments continually compete

for the attention of student-athletes. Moreover, there has been increased consideration regarding the mental health of college students. Future research should specifically acknowledge the emergent themes of challenges and barriers experienced through balancing athletics with academics and mental wellness. Institutions and athletics departments could benefit from more explicit information with regard to the challenges and barriers associated with these prominent themes.

Third, the students experienced challenges and barriers associated with the admission procedures established by the NCAA. In particular, student-athletes referenced more than just ongoing academic difficulties related to incoming GPA and standardized test scores, such as major and course selection. As the NCAA is an established governing body of intercollegiate athletics, the decisions made by it influence every member institution. However, institutions vary in their academic profiles. Nevertheless, the standards created by the NCAA for athletic eligibility are comprehensive. Therefore, similar studies at various institutions with competitive admissions could be beneficial. Likewise, future research should be completed at institutions with less competitive admissions standards.

Finally, whether a student-athlete was domestic or international was not acknowledged. However, the experiences with challenges and barriers in higher education are significantly different for domestic and international students. Thus, future studies could focus exclusively on the experiences of international student-athletes with regard to challenges and barriers in higher education.

### Conclusion

The experiences of student-athletes in higher education are complicated. Similarly, their experiences of challenges and barriers are diverse. This study intended to provide understanding

into the challenges and barriers experienced by student-athletes in higher education, which support services and resources were utilized to overcome challenges and barriers, and which support services and resources institutions and athletics departments should provide to ensure the success of student-athletes. As the influence of intercollegiate athletics in higher education increases, it is important that an awareness by institutions and athletics departments regarding this student population emerges so that student-athletes can be successful despite the challenges and barriers that they are likely to encounter.

This study revealed that student-athletes experience challenges and barriers associated with sport commitments, major selection, study abroad and internships, health problems and symptoms, and mental wellness. The study also revealed that student-athletes relied on relationships with faculty, care from medical personnel, communication with parents/guardians, and academic support services and resources to overcome challenges and barriers. Finally, participants indicated that institutions and athletics departments should provide further support services and resources regarding budgeting/financial management, preparation for a career after college, mental wellness, and proper nutrition.

Historically, intercollegiate athletics has not always been an important aspect of higher education. However, the influence of intercollegiate athletics has heightened during recent decades. Providing adequate support presents an unusual challenge as it relates to this distinctive student population. This study provides a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of student-athletes with challenges and barriers in higher education and which support services and resources can increase their success.

## APPENDIX A: REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION

Dear Invitee,

My name is Lucas Noboa. I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership, Higher Education program at the University of Central Florida. I am kindly requesting your participation in my doctoral research regarding the challenges and barriers student-athlete experience, and which support services and resources are utilized to address these difficulties.

The purpose of this study is to identify the challenges and barriers that student-athletes experience in higher education, which support services and resources are relied upon, and how institutions and intercollegiate athletics departments may enhance resources to improve the student-athlete experience while helping student-athletes persist through graduation.

The study includes the completion of the NCAA GOALS (Growth, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Learning of Students in College) survey. In addition, you may be requested to complete a follow-up interview lasting between 35-45 minutes regarding your responses to the survey.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw your participation at any moment. The results will remain anonymous. Names will be only be collected by the researcher so NCAA GOALS surveys may be identified for follow-up interviews. However, pseudonym will be created for reporting purposes. If you would like to participate in the study, please read the Informed Consent letter on the following page.

Your participation in this research is imperative to ensuring NCAA student-athletes are provided adequate support in higher education. Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Lucas Noboa  
Doctoral Student  
University of Central Florida  
Lucas.Noboa@ucf.edu  
305-762-5067

APPENDIX B: INFORMED LETTER OF CONSENT



## Letter of Consent

### **Introduction:**

You have been invited to participate in a study regarding the challenges and barriers student-athletes experience in higher education and the availability of support services and resources, which influence success in higher education. You have been asked because you represent the sample under investigation. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate.

### **Purpose of the research study:**

The purpose of this research is to explore the challenges and barriers that influence the success of student-athletes. In addition, the purpose is to identify which support services and resources student-athletes perceive as necessary to succeed.

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. The researcher will respect the decision to not participate. Pseudonyms will be generated for confidentiality. You can decide to discontinue participation at any point.

### **What you will be asked to do in the study:**

The processes for this study require completion of a paper survey and a potential face-to-face interview. The survey contains 84 questions. The face-to-face interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes, in a location codetermined by participant and researcher.

### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Participation includes foreseeable discomforts. Such as, vulnerability and the recollection of emotional experiences. However, the study does not present physical danger. Benefits of participation include revealing personal experiences with challenges and barriers in higher education and acknowledging which support services and resources were influential to success so recommendations can be provided to institutions and athletics departments.

### **Privacy:**

Personal information will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be generated to protect identities but associate survey responses with face-to-face interviews.

### **Contacts and Questions:**

If you have questions or concerns, contact the researcher at Lucas.Noboa@ucf.edu or (305) 762-0567. You are welcomed to ask questions prior to beginning the study.

### **Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I feel I understand the study well enough to decide about my involvement. By signing below, I understand and agree to the terms described above.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C: NCAA GOALS SURVEY INSTRUMENT



Dear Student:

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the NCAA's study of Growth, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Learning of Students in college (GOALS). This is the most comprehensive study ever conducted on the experiences of student-athletes, and your participation is greatly appreciated. By completing and returning this questionnaire, you are consenting to volunteer for this study. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to answer specific questions and you can discontinue your participation at any time without penalty.

The information you provide is completely confidential. That means nobody, including the NCAA researchers, will report your responses as coming from you, your team, or your school. All reported results will be in terms of sport trends or national averages: an individual's response will never be reported in isolation.

If you are under 18 years of age, or below the age of legal consent to participate in your state, you are excused from further participation in this research study.

If you have questions regarding the study, the survey instrument, or the survey procedures please contact the survey administrator, Michael Miranda, at 317/917-6304 or [mmiranda@ncaa.org](mailto:mmiranda@ncaa.org).

**MARKING INSTRUCTIONS**

Use Blue or Black ink pen or Black Lead Pencil Only

Correct Mark: ●

Incorrect Marks: ✗ ✖ ✎ ○

**PART 1: COLLEGE ATHLETICS EXPERIENCE**

1. Are you playing on men's or women's team(s)?

- Men's
- Women's

2. NCAA sport(s) you are playing: (Select all that apply)

- Baseball
- Basketball
- Bowling
- Cross Country
- Fencing
- Field Hockey
- Football
- Golf
- Gymnastics
- Ice Hockey
- Lacrosse
- Rifle
- Rowing
- Skiing
- Soccer
- Softball
- Swimming/Diving
- Tennis
- Track (Indoor or Outdoor)
- Volleyball (Indoor)
- Volleyball (Beach)
- Water Polo
- Wrestling

3. How do you describe yourself? (Select all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Other

4. Based on your roster spot or frequency of competition, how would you classify your current status in your main sport?

- First team (you start in a team sport or compete in your preferred events in individual sports)
- Second team (regular substitute in a team sport, often compete in some event in individual sports)
- Third team (participate in practice but compete infrequently)
- Practicing or training but not competing

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5. This year, did you receive an athletics scholarship of any kind in your sport?

- No
- Yes, partial athletics scholarship
- Yes, full athletics scholarship

6. How likely do you think it is that you will become a professional and/or Olympic athlete in your sport?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Somewhat likely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely

7. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. I consider myself a <u>dedicated athlete</u> .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. I consider myself a <u>dedicated student</u> .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. I have many personal <u>goals</u> related to <u>my sport</u> .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. I have many personal <u>goals</u> related to my <u>academics</u> .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. I need to <u>excel in athletic</u> pursuits to feel good about myself.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. I need to <u>excel in academic</u> pursuits to feel good about myself ..	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. My <u>sports experiences</u> are an important part of my overall college experience .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. My <u>academic experiences</u> are an important part of my overall college experience .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. I would have gone to a <u>4-year college somewhere</u> even if I hadn't been an athlete.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**PART 2: COLLEGE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE**

8. What is your current academic standing?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Completed bachelor's degree

9. Did you transfer into your current school?

- No
- Yes, from a 2-year college
- Yes, from a 4-year college

10. If you have transferred, what were your reasons for doing so? (Select all that apply)

- I did not transfer
- Academic
- Athletics
- Medical
- Financial
- Family / Personal

11. If you weren't a college athlete, would you still choose your current major?

- I definitely would choose this major again
- I probably would choose this major again
- I might choose this major again
- I probably would not choose this major again
- I definitely would not choose this major again
- I have not yet chosen a major area of study

12. Has athletics participation prevented you from majoring in what you really want?

- No
- Yes, but I currently do not have regrets about my choice of major
- Yes, and I currently do have regrets about my choice of major

13. Has your athletics participation prevented you from taking classes that you wanted to take?

- No
- Yes, but I currently do not have regrets about those course choices
- Yes, and I currently do have regrets about those course choices

14. Have your coaches or others in the athletics department (e.g., academic advisors) discouraged you from choosing certain classes?

- Never
- Once or twice
- Often

15. How do you feel about...

- a. The efforts you've made in your college classes?.....
- b. Your ability to keep up with your classes while your sport is in-season?.....
- c. Your likelihood of graduating from college?.....
- d. Your overall college academic experience to this point?.....
- e. Your overall college athletics experience to this point?.....

Very Positive      Somewhat Positive      Neutral      Somewhat Negative      Very Negative

16. This year, how many courses have you taken that were entirely online?

- No online courses
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more online courses

17. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following...

- a. Taking traditional in-person classes on campus is an important part of the student-athlete experience.....
- b. Since coming to this institution, I have developed a close, personal relationship with at least one faculty member.....

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

18. Have you been involved or do you plan to be involved in a study abroad program during college? (Fill in only one circle)

- Yes, I have or will study abroad
- I would like to but can't because of my athletics participation
- I would like to but can't because of other reasons (e.g., finances, availability)
- No, I have no interest
- I don't know at this time

19. Have you been involved or do you plan to be involved in an internship program during college? (Fill in only one circle)

- Yes, I have or will take part in an internship
- I would like to but can't because of my athletics participation
- I would like to but can't because of other reasons (e.g., finances, availability)
- No, I have no interest
- I don't know at this time



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20. How long do you think it will take to complete your undergraduate degree? (Select all that apply)

- Four years or less
- More than four years due to athletics reasons (e.g., redshirted as a freshman, delaying in order to complete my NCAA eligibility)
- More than four years due to academic or transfer reasons (e.g., failed classes, changed majors, credits didn't transfer)
- More than four years due to medical issues (e.g., medical redshirt)
- More than four years due to financial reasons
- More than four years due to family or personal reasons
- It's unlikely I'll earn my degree

21. In your first year after leaving college, what do you intend to be doing? (Fill in only one circle)

- Working at a job related to my major
- Working at a job, but not necessarily one that is related to my major
- Attending graduate school
- Serving in the military
- Devoting myself to my sport (e.g., training, playing professional sports, etc.)
- Taking some transition time before embarking upon a career
- Staying at home / serving as a caregiver
- I don't yet have any post-graduate plans or goals

22. Do you expect that your job after college will involve sports?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not sure
- Somewhat unlikely
- Very unlikely

23. How likely is it that you will go to graduate school or obtain an advanced professional degree (e.g., law degree, medical degree, master's degree, doctorate) at some point after college?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not sure
- Somewhat unlikely
- Very unlikely

### PART 3: COLLEGE SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

24. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. I have a sense of belonging at this college .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Being an athlete has helped me fit in socially at this college .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. I frequently socialize with non-athletes at this college .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. I am able to find an appropriate balance between academics and extracurricular activities (including athletics participation) .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. How many of your closest friends at this college are on your sports team?

- All of my closest college friends are teammates
- Many of my closest college friends are teammates
- Some of my closest college friends are teammates
- Few of my closest college friends are teammates
- None of my closest college friends are teammates

26. With whom do you currently live during the school year? (Choose one best response)

- I live alone
- With parents, family or a significant other
- With teammates or other student-athletes only
- With a mix of student-athletes and others
- Only with other students who are not athletes
- Other living arrangement

27. On average over the past year, how much time have you spent taking part in service projects or volunteer activities of any type? (Fill in only one circle)

- One or more hours per day
- A few hours per week
- A few hours per month
- A few hours during the year
- Did not participate in service or volunteerism in the past year

28. Are you required to take part in service projects or volunteer activities as part of your athletics participation? (Fill in only one circle)
- Yes, my coach/team requires it frequently
  - Yes, my coach/team requires it occasionally
  - My coach/team suggests we take part in these types of activities, but it is not required
  - No, we don't take part in such activities as a team

29. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about the atmosphere or climate on your team:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
|   |   |
| a. My coaches have created an inclusive environment for all members of the team.....              | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| b. My coaches and teammates are accepting of differing viewpoints and cultures.....               | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| c. My coaches and teammates are always respectful of persons from other racial/ethnic groups..... | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |

30. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  |   |
| <u>My head coach...</u>  |   |
| a. Sets an example of how to do things the "right way" in terms of ethics..... | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| b. Defines success not just by winning, but by winning fairly.....             | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| c. Has team members' best interests in mind.....                               | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| d. Can be trusted.....   | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| e. Listens to what members of this team have to say.....                       | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| f. Treats all members of the team equally.....                                 | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |

31. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  |   |
| <u>My head coach...</u>                            |   |
| a. Puts me down in front of others.....            | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| b. Ridicules me.....                               | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| c. Makes negative comments about me to others..... | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |

32. Please indicate the type of effect that your college athletics experience has on each of the following skills or qualities in yourself:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  |   |
| a. Leadership skills.....                                      | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| b. Teamwork.....   | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| c. Commitment to community service.....                        | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| d. Understanding of people of other races and backgrounds..... | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| e. Goal setting.....   | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| f. Time management.....  | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| g. Work ethic.....   | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| h. Dealing with change.....                                    | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| i. Ability to take responsibility for yourself.....            | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| j. Attention to detail.....                                    | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| k. Self-confidence.....  | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |

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**PART 4: RECRUITMENT**

33. Where did you attend high school?

- In the United States
- In Canada
- In another country

34. How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following reasons contributed to your decision to attend your current college?

- |  | Strongly Agree        | Somewhat Agree        | Disagree              | Strongly Disagree     |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a. Academic offerings, academic reputation, etc. ....                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b. Athletics participation .....   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c. Cost of college .....   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| d. Good place to develop my athletic skills to compete at a higher level ... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| e. Playing time / opportunity to compete .....                               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| f. Felt a strong connection to the team .....                                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| g. Proximity to home, family, friends.....                                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| h. Social scene at this school or have friends attending .....               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| i. Expectations (of parents, teachers, community, etc.).....                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| j. Presence of a particular coach.....                                       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| k. The quality of the athletics facilities .....                             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| l. The team's NCAA division.....   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

35. Based on what you know now and what others (e.g., friends, coaches, alumni) told you to expect, how accurate were your initial expectations of....

- |   | Very Accurate         | Mostly Accurate       | Somewhat Accurate     | Not at all Accurate   |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a. The <u>athletics</u> experience at this college? .....             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b. The <u>academic</u> experience at this college? .....              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c. The <u>social</u> experience at this college? .....                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| d. The time demands of being a student-athlete at this college? ..... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

36. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- |  | Strongly Agree        | Somewhat Agree        | Disagree              | Strongly Disagree     |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a. I am glad that I made the choice to be at this school .....                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b. I would have attended this college even if a different coach was here ..... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c. If my current coach left this school I would consider transferring .....    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| d. I would recommend my college to a high school student-athlete .....         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

37. Prior to enrolling in your current college, did you visit the campus (either on an official or unofficial visit)?

- Yes
- No

38. In what grade were you first contacted (directly or through a third party such as your high school or club coach) by a college coach interested in recruiting you?

- Before high school
- 9th grade
- 10th grade
- 11th grade
- 12th grade
- I was not recruited prior to college

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39. In what grade did you decide or commit to attend this college (or the college where you first enrolled if you have transferred)?
- 9th grade or earlier
  - 10th grade
  - 11th grade
  - 12th grade

40. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as they relate to your recruiting process:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Disagree	Not Recruited
a. The college athletics recruiting process was a positive experience for me.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. In general, college coaches contacted me too often during recruitment.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. What I was told during my recruitment about my <u>role on the team</u> has turned out to be accurate.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. What I was told during my recruitment about my <u>academic options</u> has turned out to be accurate.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

41. How old were you when you started competing in your main sport?
- 6 years old or younger
  - 7-9 years old
  - 10-12 years old
  - 13-15 years old
  - 16 years old+



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42. How old were you when you started specializing in your main sport (competing only in that one)?
- 6 years old or younger
  - 7-9 years old
  - 10-12 years old
  - 13-15 years old
  - 16-18 years old
  - Competed in multiple sports through the end of high school (or into college)

43. During high school did you compete in your main sport... (please respond to each item)

	Yes	No
a. On a high school team? .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. On a club team (includes AAU, national, academy or other elite teams not affiliated with your school)? .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

44. Before college, did you or your family move for reasons related to your athletic pursuits?
- Yes
  - No

45. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding high school and youth athletics?

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
a. Competing on my <u>high school team</u> played a big role in my development as an athlete .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Competing on my <u>club team</u> played a big role in my development as an athlete .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. I enjoyed my experiences on the <u>high school team</u> .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. I enjoyed my experiences on my <u>club team</u> .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Youth in my main sport play in too many games/competitions before entering college.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. I wish I had spent more time participating in other sports growing up .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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46. Since I was young, my family expected that I would...

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Disagree
a. Be a college athlete.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Be a professional or Olympic athlete.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Earn a college degree.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**PART 5: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

47. During the last 30 days, on how many days did you have the following problems or symptoms?

	15+ Days	8-14 Days	4-7 Days	1-3 Days	None
a. Headache.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Pain (non-headache) that made daily activities difficult.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Cold, flu or similar illness.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Trouble sleeping.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

48. How many times have you been diagnosed with a concussion by a medical professional?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8+
a. During college.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Before you entered college.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The items in the box below are symptoms that some athletes experience after a concussion.

Use this list to answer question 49.

A blow to the head may result in a concussion if any of the following symptoms are present for any amount of time: Blurred/double vision, seeing stars, light/noise sensitivity, headache, dizziness, balance problems, nausea, vomiting, trouble sleeping, fatigue, confusion, difficulty remembering/concentrating, or loss of consciousness. This may also be referred to as a "ding" or "getting your bell rung."

49. During your college career, have you sustained a blow to the head that was followed by one or more of the symptoms listed above, but did not disclose that blow to a medical professional?

- I have not experienced a blow to the head that caused such symptoms.
- I have experienced one or more such blows to the head, but I reported each one.
- I have experienced one or more such blows to the head, but I did not report all of them.

50. How many sport-related injuries have you sustained that required surgery, hospitalization or more than one month of time off from training or competition?

	0	1	2	3	4	5+
a. During college.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Before you entered college.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

51. Are you currently unable to compete in your sport due to a long-term (e.g., month or more) injury or health concern?

- Yes
- No



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52. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. My coaches care about my <u>physical</u> well-being .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. My coaches care about my <u>mental</u> well-being .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. I would feel comfortable talking with my coaches about <u>physical health</u> issues .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. I would feel comfortable talking with my coaches about <u>mental health</u> issues .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

53. How satisfied are you with the care you have received from team or college medical personnel when you have had...

	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	I have not required care
a. Physical health issues .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Mental health issues .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

54. The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. For each, please indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way.

	Very Often	Fairly Often	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never
a. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life? .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems? .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way? .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them? .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

55. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. I am accomplishing many worthwhile things in my sport .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. I feel so tired from the <u>physical</u> demands of my sport that I struggle to find energy to do other things .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. The effort I spend in my sport would be better spent doing other things .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. I am exhausted by the <u>mental</u> demands of my sport .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. I am performing up to my ability in my sport .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. I care about my sport as much or more than I ever have .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

56. How do you describe your weight?

- Very underweight for my sport
- Slightly underweight for my sport
- About the right weight for my sport
- Slightly overweight for my sport
- Very overweight for my sport

57. Which of the following are you trying to do about your weight?

- Gain weight
- Lose weight
- Stay the same weight
- I am not trying to do anything about my weight



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58. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Strongly Agree  
Somewhat Agree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Strongly Disagree

- a. Healthy food options are reliably available to me after practice and competition..... ○○○○○○
- b. I have time to eat healthy meals each day..... ○○○○○○
- c. I can afford to eat healthy meals each day..... ○○○○○○

59. On how many of the past 7 days did you get enough sleep so that you felt rested when you woke up in the morning?

- 0 days             4 days
- 1 day              5 days
- 2 days              6 days
- 3 days              7 days

60. All things considered, how happy are you today?

- Very happy
- Somewhat happy
- Somewhat unhappy
- Not happy at all



**PART 6: TIME COMMITMENTS**

For questions 61-62, think about the current (or most recent) season in which you played your sport:

61. While school was in session during the season, picture the weekday (Monday to Friday) that most felt like your "typical" day on campus. On that day, how many HOURS did you spend on each of the following activities?

	Number of Hours								
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8+
a. Attending class, lab, discussion groups, etc.....	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. Studying or academic work outside of class.....	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. Sport commitments:									
i. Athletic Activities (Practicing, training, competing, athletic training room, etc.).....	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
ii. Non-Athletic Activities (Meetings with coaches, team functions, film study, etc.).....	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. Other extracurricular activities.....	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. A job (for pay).....	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. Socializing, relaxing, family...	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
g. Sleeping.....	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

62. While school was in session during your season, picture what your weekends were like.

In total (that is, adding up your commitments for Saturday and Sunday), how many hours did you spend on each of the following activities during a typical weekend on campus?

	0 hours	1-2 hours	3-4 hours	5-6 hours	7-9 hours	10 hours	11-12 hours	13-14 hours	15+ hours
a. Attending class, lab, discussion groups, etc.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Studying or academic work outside of class.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Sport commitments:									
i. <u>Athletic Activities</u> (Practicing, training, competing, athletic training room, etc.).....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ii. <u>Non-Athletic Activities</u> (Meetings with coaches, team functions, film study, etc.).....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Other extracurricular activities.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. A job (for pay).....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Socializing, relaxing, family...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Sleeping.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

63. During the season, how much time in a typical week (including weekends) do you spend away from campus due to athletics competition?

- No time spent away / Didn't travel
- One-half day or less away per week
- 1 day away per week
- 2 days away per week
- 3 days away per week
- 4 or more days away per week

64. During periods in the school year when your sports team is not competing, do you spend more or less time on the following?

	About the Same A Little More Much More	A Little Less Much Less
a. Attending class, lab, discussion groups, etc.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Studying or academic work outside of class.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Sport commitments:		
i. <u>Athletic Activities</u> (Practicing, training, competing, athletic training room, etc.).....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ii. <u>Non-Athletic Activities</u> (Meetings with coaches, team functions, film study, etc.).....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Other extracurricular activities.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

65. If you could, would you prefer to spend more or less time in each of these areas while in college?

	OK with current time spent A Little More Time Much More Time	A Little Less Time Much Less Time
a. My classwork or other educational opportunities.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Athletics training, competition, etc.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. One or more extracurricular activities.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Visiting home/family.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Traveling to away competitions.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Working at a job.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Socializing with friends.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Relaxing by myself.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Sleeping.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

66. How do you feel about the number of games / competitions scheduled for your team during the course of the year?
- I am satisfied with the number of games / competitions that we have
  - I wish we had more games / competitions
  - I wish we had fewer games / competitions
67. How many hours per week do you spend working at a job for pay (including work-study)?
- 0 hours
  - 1-5 hours
  - 6-10 hours
  - 11-15 hours
  - 16-20 hours
  - More than 20 hours
68. If you had one extra hour each day during the school year that you could use any way that you wanted, on what one activity (other than sleeping) would you most want to spend it? (Fill in only one circle)
- My classwork or other educational opportunities
  - Sport / exercise
  - An extracurricular activity
  - Spending time with family
  - A job
  - Socializing with friends
  - Relaxing by myself
69. During your most recent athletic season, how many classes did you miss on average each week for any reason (practice, travel, competition, skipped)?
- None
  - 1 class
  - 2 classes
  - 3 classes
  - 4 classes
  - 5 classes
  - 6+ classes

**PART 7: ON-CAMPUS SUPPORT**

70. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. Faculty at my school show interest in my athletic experiences and results.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Students on my campus show support for my team.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. My coaches care about whether I earn my degree.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

71. I wish the coaches or athletics administrators at our school talked more with student-athletes about the following topics: (Select all that apply)
- Conducting ourselves appropriately on campus and in the community
  - Living away from home
  - Sexual violence prevention
  - Academic resources
  - Study habits
  - Proper nutrition
  - Getting good sleep
  - Time management
  - Mental wellness
  - Drinking / substance use
  - Concussion awareness
  - Budgeting / financial management
  - Preparing for a career after college
72. How often do you typically communicate with your parents/guardians (talk, text, use social media)? (Fill in only one circle)
- Multiple times daily
  - Once a day
  - A few times a week
  - Once a week
  - Less than weekly

73. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with these academic support services offered through your athletics department or college? (Fill in only one circle per row)

	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	I did not use	Service not available at my school
a. Academic advisors who assist with course selection and/or monitor degree progress.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Tutoring .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Career counseling .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

76. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
a. Quitting my sport would make staying at this college a problem financially .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. I usually <u>have enough</u> money to buy things I <u>need</u> (e.g., groceries).....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

77. In the past year, how often have you contributed money to help support your family?

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Not at All

78. What is the highest level of education that your parent(s) have completed? (Mark one circle per column)

	Parent 1	Parent 2
a. Did not finish high school .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Graduated from high school.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Attended college but did not complete degree.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Completed an associate's degree (A.A., A.S., etc.).....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Completed a bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.).....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Completed a master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.) .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Completed a doctoral degree (Ph.D., J.D., M.D., etc.).....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Don't know.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**PART 8: FINANCES**

74. Do you rely on the following to help pay for college? (Please respond to each item)

	Yes	No
a. Family contribution .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Personal contribution / Job.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Pell Grant.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Need-based financial aid (including state or Institutional grants).....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Academic scholarship .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Athletics scholarship .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Loans .....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

75. Are you concerned that financial considerations may affect your ability to complete your degree?

- Yes, I'm very concerned
- Yes, I'm somewhat concerned
- No, I'm not concerned



79. Birth year:
- 1994 or earlier
  - 1995
  - 1996
  - 1997
  - 1998
  - 1999
  - 2000
  - 2001
  - 2002 or later

80. Birth month:
- January
  - February
  - March
  - April
  - May
  - June
  - July
  - August
  - September
  - October
  - November
  - December

81. ZIP (postal) code where you lived during your senior year in high school (if lived in USA):

0	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9
0	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9
0	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9
0	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9
0	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9

82. If you didn't live in the USA during high school, in what country did you live?

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**PART 9: OPPORTUNITY FOR ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK & COMMENTS**

83. What has been the best part of your student-athlete experience so far?

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84. If you could change one thing about your student-athlete experience, what would it be?

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SERIAL #

0310101-308



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## Thank you for your participation in GOALS!

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The survey you just completed is part of the largest study on student-athletes the NCAA has ever undertaken. Your responses will help us to better understand how participation in athletics impacts a student's college experience.

As part of our research on the student-athlete experience, we would like to link the results of this survey to other NCAA data on academic performance. This will be accomplished through a combination of variables that may include sport, ZIP code and birth month/year. If you prefer not to have your data linked, please indicate below.

Neither your identity nor your school's identity will ever be connected to your survey responses in any publicly accessible data file, analysis or write-up of these data.

I prefer that my survey data not be linked to other NCAA individual-level data

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## Thank you again and best wishes!

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SERIAL #

## APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Part 1: College Athletics Experience	Q 1- Are you playing on men's or women's team(s)?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 1: College Athletics Experience	Q 2- NCAA sport(s) you are playing:	Select all that apply	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 1: College Athletics Experience	Q 3- How do you describe yourself?	Select all that apply	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 1: College Athletics Experience	Q 4- Based on your roster spot or frequency of competition, how would you classify your current status in your main sport?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 1: College Athletics Experience	Q 5- This year, did you receive an athletics scholarship of any kind in your sport?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 1: College Athletics Experience	Q 6- How likely do you think it is that you will become a professional and/or Olympic athlete in your sport?	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 1: College Athletics Experience	Q 7a- I consider myself a dedicated athlete	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 1: College Athletics Experience	Q 7b- I consider myself a dedicated student	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 1: College Athletics Experience	Q 7c- I have many personal goals related to my sport	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 1: College Athletics Experience	Q 7d- I have many personal goals related to my academics	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 1: College Athletics Experience	Q 7e- I need to excel in athletic pursuits to feel good about myself	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 1: College Athletics Experience	Q 7f- I need to excel in academic pursuits to feel good about myself	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 1: College Athletics Experience	Q 7g- My sports experiences are an important part of my overall college experience	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 1: College Athletics Experience	Q 7h- My academic experiences are an important part of my overall college experience	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Part 1: College Athletics Experience	Q 7i- I would have gone to a 4-year college somewhere even if I hadn't been an athlete	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 1: College Athletics Experience	Q 8- What is your current academic standing?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 9- Did you transfer into your current school?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 10- If you have transferred, what were your reasons for doing so?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 11- If you weren't a college athlete, would you still choose your current major	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 12- Has athletics participation prevented you from majoring in what you really want?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 13- Has your athletics participation prevented you from taking classes that you wanted to take	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 14- Have your coaches or others in the athletics department (e.g., academic advisors) discouraged you from choosing certain classes?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 15a- The efforts you've made in your college classes	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 15b- Your ability to keep up with your classes while your sport is in-season?	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 15c- Your likelihood of graduating from college	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 15d- Your overall college academic experience to this point	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 15e- Your overall college athletics experience to this point?	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 16- This year, how many courses have you taken that were entirely online?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 17a- Taking traditional in-person classes on campus is an important part of the student athlete experience	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
<b>Part 2: College Academic Experience</b>	<b>Q 17b- Since coming to this institution, I have developed a close, personal relationship with at least one faculty member</b>	<b>Likert scale</b>	<b>RQ 1</b>	<b>Support</b>
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 18- Have you been involved, or do you plan to be involved in a study abroad program during college?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 19- Have you been involved, or do you plan to be involved in an internship program during college?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 20- How long do you think it will take to complete your undergraduate degree	Select all that apply	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 21- In your first year after leaving college, what do you intend to be doing?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 22- Do you expect that your job after college will involve sports?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 2: College Academic Experience	Q 23- How likely is it that you will go to graduate school or obtain an advanced professional degree (e.g., law degree, medical degree, master's degree, doctorate) at some point after college?	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 24a- I have a sense of belonging at this college	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 24b- Being an athlete has helped me fit in socially at this college	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 24c- I frequently socialize with non-athletes at this college	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
<b>Part 3: College Social Experience</b>	<b>Q 24d- I am able to find an appropriate balance between academics and extracurricular activities (including athletics participation)</b>	<b>Likert scale</b>	<b>RQ 1</b>	<b>Situation and Strategies</b>

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 25- How many of your closest friends at this college are on your sports team?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 26- With whom do you currently live during the school year?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 27- On average over the past year, how much time have you spent taking part in service projects or volunteer activities of any type?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 28- Are you required to take part in service projects or volunteer activities as part of your athletics participation?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 29a- My coaches have created an inclusive environment for all members of the team	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 29b- My coaches and teammates are accepting of differing viewpoints and culture	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 29c- My coaches and teammates are always respectful of persons from other racial/ethnic groups	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 30a-My head coach... Sets an example of how to do things the "right way" in terms of ethics	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 30b-My head coach...Defines success not just by winning, but by winning fairly	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 30c- My head coach...Has team members' best interests in mind	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 30d- My head coach... Can be trusted	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 30e- My head coach... Listens to what members of this team have to say	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 30f- My head coach... Treats all members of the team equally	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 31a- My head coach...Puts me down in front of others	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 31b- My head coach... Ridicules me	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 31c- My head coach...Makes negative comments about me to others	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 32a- Please indicate the type of effect that your college athletics experience has on each of the following skills or qualities in yourself: Leadership skills	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 32b- Please indicate the type of effect that your college athletics experience has on each of the following skills or qualities in yourself: Teamwork	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 32c- Please indicate the type of effect that your college athletics experience has on each of the following skills or qualities in yourself: Commitment to community service	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 32d- Please indicate the type of effect that your college athletics experience has on each of the following skills or qualities in yourself: Understanding of people of other races and background	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 32e- Please indicate the type of effect that your college athletics experience has on each of the following skills or qualities in yourself: Goal setting	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 32f- Please indicate the type of effect that your college athletics experience has on each of the following skills or qualities in yourself: Time management	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 32g- Please indicate the type of effect that your college athletics experience has on each of the following skills or qualities in yourself: Work ethic	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 32h- Please indicate the type of effect that your college athletics	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
	experience has on each of the following skills or qualities in yourself: Dealing with change			
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 32i- Please indicate the type of effect that your college athletics experience has on each of the following skills or qualities in yourself: Ability to take responsibility for yourself	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 32j- Please indicate the type of effect that your college athletics experience has on each of the following skills or qualities in yourself: Attention to detail	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 3: College Social Experience	Q 32k- Please indicate the type of effect that your college athletics experience has on each of the following skills or qualities in yourself: Self-confidence	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 33-Where did you attend high school?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 34a- How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following reasons contributed to your decision to attend your current college? Academic offerings, academic reputation, etc.	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 34b- How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following reasons contributed to your decision to attend your current college? Athletics participation	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 34c- How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following reasons contributed to your decision to attend your current college? Cost of college	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable



Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 34d- How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following reasons contributed to your decision to attend your current college? Good place to develop my athletic skills to compete at a higher level	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 34e- How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following reasons contributed to your decision to attend your current college? Playing time / opportunity to compete	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 34f- How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following reasons contributed to your decision to attend your current college? Felt a strong connection to the team	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 34g- How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following reasons contributed to your decision to attend your current college? Proximity to home, family, friends	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 34h- How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following reasons contributed to your decision to attend your current college? Social scene at this school or have friends attending	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 34i- How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following reasons contributed to your decision to attend your current college? Expectations (of parents, teachers, community, etc.	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 34j- How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following reasons contributed to your decision to attend your current college? Presence of a particular coach	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 34k- How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following reasons contributed to your decision	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
	to attend your current college? The quality of the athletics facilities			
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 34l- How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following reasons contributed to your decision to attend your current college? The team's NCAA division	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 35a- Based on what you know now and what others (e.g., friends, coaches, alumni) told you to expect, how accurate were your initial expectations of.... The athletics experience at this college	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 35b- Based on what you know now and what others (e.g., friends, coaches, alumni) told you to expect, how accurate were your initial expectations of.... The academic experience at this college?	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 35c- Based on what you know now and what others (e.g., friends, coaches, alumni) told you to expect, how accurate were your initial expectations of.... The social experience at this college?	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 35d- Based on what you know now and what others (e.g., friends, coaches, alumni) told you to expect, how accurate were your initial expectations of.... The time demands of being a student-athlete at this college?	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 36a- I am glad that I made the choice to be at this school	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 36b- I would have attended this college even if a different coach was here	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 36c- If my current coach left this school, I would consider transferring	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 36d- I would recommend my college to a high school student-athlete	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 37- Prior to enrolling in your current college, did you visit the campus (either on an official or unofficial visit)?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 38- In what grade were you first contacted (directly or through a third party such as your high school or club coach) by a college coach interested in recruiting you?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 39- In what grade did you decide or commit to attend this college (or the college where you first enrolled if you have transferred)?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 40a-Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as they relate to your recruiting process: The college athletics recruiting process was a positive experience for me	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 40b-Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as they relate to your recruiting process: In general, college coaches contacted me too often during recruitment.	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 40c-Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as they relate to your recruiting process: What I was told during my recruitment about my role on the team has turned out to be accurate	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 40d-Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as they relate to your recruiting process: What I was told during my recruitment about my academic options has turned out to be accurate	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 41-How old were you when you started competing in your main sport?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 42- How old were you when you started specializing in your main sport?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 43a- During high school did you compete in your main sport... On a high school team?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 43b- During high school did you compete in your main sport... On a club team (includes AAU, national, academy or other elite teams not affiliated with your school)	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 44- Before college, did you or your family move for reasons related to your athletic pursuits?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 45a- How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding high school and youth athletics? Competing on my high school team played a big role in my development as an athlete	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 45b- How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding high school and youth athletics? Competing on my club team played a big role in my development as an athlete	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 45c- How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding high school and youth athletics? I enjoyed my experiences on the high school team	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 45d- How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding high school and youth athletics? I enjoyed my experiences on my club team	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 45e- How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding high school and youth athletics? Youth in my main sport play in too many games/competitions before entering college	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 45f- How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding high school and youth athletics? I wish I had spent more time participating in other sports growing up	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 46a- Since I was young, my family expected that I would...Be a college athlete	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 46b- Since I was young, my family expected that I would... Be a professional or Olympic athlete	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 4: Recruitment	Q 46c- Since I was young, my family expected that I would... Earn a college degree	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 47a- During the last 30 days, on how many days did you have the following problems or symptoms? Headache	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 47b- During the last 30 days, on how many days did you have the following problems or symptoms? Pain (non-headache) that made daily activities difficult	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 47c- During the last 30 days, on how many days did you have the following problems or symptoms? Cold, flu or similar illness	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 47d- During the last 30 days, on how many days did you have the following problems or symptoms? Trouble sleeping	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 48a- How many times have you been diagnosed with a concussion by a medical professional? During college	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 48b- How many times have you been diagnosed with a concussion by a medical professional? Before you entered college	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 49- During your college career, have you sustained a blow to the head that was followed by one or	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
	more of the symptoms listed above, but did not disclose that blow to a medical professional?			
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 50a- How many sport-related injuries have you sustained that required surgery, hospitalization or more than one month of time off from training or competition? During college	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 50b- How many sport-related injuries have you sustained that required surgery, hospitalization or more than one month of time off from training or competition? Before you entered college	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 51- Are you currently unable to compete in your sport due to a long-term (e.g., month or more) injury or health concern?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 52a- My coaches care about my physical well-being	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 52b - My coaches care about my mental well-being	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 52c- I would feel comfortable talking with my coaches about physical health issues	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 52d- I would feel comfortable talking with my coaches about mental health issues	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
<b>Part 5: Health and well-being</b>	<b>Q 53a- How satisfied are you with the care you have received from team or college medical personnel when you have had... Physical health issues</b>	<b>Likert scale</b>	<b>RQ 2</b>	<b>Support</b>
<b>Part 5: Health and well-being</b>	<b>Q 53b- How satisfied are you with the care you have received from team or college medical personnel when you have had... Mental health issues</b>	<b>Likert scale</b>	<b>RQ 2</b>	<b>Support</b>
<b>Part 5: Health and well-being</b>	<b>Q 54a- In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?</b>	<b>Likert scale</b>	<b>RQ 1</b>	<b>Self and Situation</b>

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
<b>Part 5: Health and well-being</b>	<b>Q 54b- In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?</b>	<b>Likert scale</b>	<b>RQ 1</b>	<b>Self and Situation</b>
<b>Part 5: Health and well-being</b>	<b>Q 54c- In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?</b>	<b>Likert scale</b>	<b>RQ 1</b>	<b>Self and Situation</b>
<b>Part 5: Health and well-being</b>	<b>Q 54d- In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?</b>	<b>Likert scale</b>	<b>RQ 1</b>	<b>Self and Situation</b>
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 55a- I am accomplishing many worthwhile things in my sport	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 55b- I feel so tired from the physical demands of my sport that I struggle to find energy to do other things	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 55c- The effort I spend in my sport would be better spent doing other things	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 55d- I am exhausted by the mental demands of my sport	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 55e- I am performing up to my ability in my sport	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 55f- I care about my sport as much or more than I ever have	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 56- How do you describe your weight?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 57- Which of the following are you trying to do about your weight?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 58a - Healthy food options are reliably available to me after practice and competition	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 58b- I have time to eat healthy meals each day	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 58c- I can afford to eat healthy meals each day.	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 59- On how many of the past 7 days did you get enough sleep so that you felt rested when you woke up in the morning?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 5: Health and well-being	Q 60- All things considered, how happy are you today?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 61a- During the season, how many HOURS did you spend on each of the following activities? Attending class, lab, discussion groups, etc.	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 61b- During the season, how many HOURS did you spend on each of the following activities? Studying or academic work outside of class	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 61ci- During the season, how many HOURS did you spend on each of the following activities? Athletic Activities (Practicing, training, competing, athletic training room, etc.)	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 61cii- During the season, how many HOURS did you spend on each of the following activities? Non-Athletic Activities (Meetings with coaches, team functions, film study, etc.)	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 61d- During the season, how many HOURS did you spend on each of the following activities? Other extracurricular activities	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 61e- During the season, how many HOURS did you spend on each of the following activities? A job (for pay)	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 61f- During the season, how many HOURS did you spend on each of the following activities? Socializing, relaxing, family	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 61g- During the season, how many HOURS did you spend on each of the following activities? Sleeping	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 62a- During your season, how many hours did you spend on each of the following activities during a typical weekend on campus? Attending class, lab, discussion groups, etc.	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 62b- During your season, how many hours did you spend on each of	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable



Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
	the following activities during a typical weekend on campus? Studying or academic work outside of class			
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 62ci- During your season, how many hours did you spend on each of the following activities during a typical weekend on campus? Athletic Activities (Practicing, training, competing, athletic training room, etc.)	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 62cii- During your season, how many hours did you spend on each of the following activities during a typical weekend on campus? Non-Athletic Activities (Meetings with coaches, team functions, film study, etc.)	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 62d- During your season, how many hours did you spend on each of the following activities during a typical weekend on campus? Other extracurricular activities	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 62e- During your season, how many hours did you spend on each of the following activities during a typical weekend on campus? A job (for pay)	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 62f- During your season, how many hours did you spend on each of the following activities during a typical weekend on campus? Socializing, relaxing, family	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 62g- During your season, how many hours did you spend on each of the following activities during a typical weekend on campus? Sleeping	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 63- During the season, how much time in a typical week (including weekends) do you spend away from campus due to athletics competition?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 64a- During periods in the school year when your sports team is not competing, do you spend more or less time on the following? Attending class, lab, discussion groups, etc.	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 64b- During periods in the school year when your sports team is not competing, do you spend more or less time on the following? Studying or academic work outside of class	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 64ci- During periods in the school year when your sports team is not competing, do you spend more or less time on the following? Athletic Activities (Practicing, training, competing, athletic training room, etc.).	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 64cii- During periods in the school year when your sports team is not competing, do you spend more or less time on the following? Non-Athletic Activities (Meetings with coaches, team functions, film study, etc.)	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 64d- During periods in the school year when your sports team is not competing, do you spend more or less time on the following? Other extracurricular activities	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 65a- If you could, would you prefer to spend more or less time in each of these areas while in college? My classwork or other educational opportunities	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 65b- If you could, would you prefer to spend more or less time in each of these areas while in college? Athletics training, competition, etc.	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 65c- If you could, would you prefer to spend more or less time in each of these areas while in college? One or more extracurricular activities	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 65d- If you could, would you prefer to spend more or less time in each of these areas while in college? Visiting home/family	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 65e- If you could, would you prefer to spend more or less time in each of these areas while in college? Traveling to away competitions	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 65f- If you could, would you prefer to spend more or less time in each of these areas while in college? Working at a job	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 65g- If you could, would you prefer to spend more or less time in each of these areas while in college? Socializing with friends	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 65h- If you could, would you prefer to spend more or less time in each of these areas while in college? Relaxing by myself	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 65i- If you could, would you prefer to spend more or less time in each of these areas while in college? Sleeping	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 66- How do you feel about the number of games / competitions scheduled for your team during the course of the year	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 67- How many hours per week do you spend working at a job for pay (including work-study)?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 68- If you had one extra hour each day during the school year that you could use any way that you wanted, on what one activity (other than sleeping) would you most want to spend it?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 6: Time Commitments	Q 69- During your most recent athletic season, how many classes did you miss on average each week for any reason (practice, travel, competition, skipped)?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Part 7: On-campus support	Q 70a- Faculty at my school show interest in my athletic experiences and results	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 7: On-campus support	Q 70b- Students on my campus show support for my team	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 7: On-campus support	Q 70c- My coaches care about whether I earn my degree	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
<b>Part 7: On-campus support</b>	<b>Q 71- I wish the coaches or athletics administrators at our school talked more with student-athletes about the following topics</b>	<b>Select all that apply</b>	<b>RQ 3</b>	<b>Support</b>
<b>Part 7: On-campus support</b>	<b>Q 72- How often do you typically communicate with your parents/guardians (talk, text, use social media)?</b>	<b>Select one</b>	<b>RQ 2</b>	<b>Support</b>
<b>Part 7: On-campus support</b>	<b>Q 73a- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with these academic support services offered through your athletics department or college? Academic advisors who assist with course selection and/or monitor degree progress</b>	<b>Likert scale</b>	<b>RQ 2</b>	<b>Support</b>
<b>Part 7: On-campus support</b>	<b>Q 73b- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with these academic support services offered through your athletics department or college? Tutoring</b>	<b>Likert scale</b>	<b>RQ 2</b>	<b>Support</b>
<b>Part 7: On-campus support</b>	<b>Q 73c- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with these academic support services offered through your athletics department or college? Career counseling</b>	<b>Likert scale</b>	<b>RQ 2</b>	<b>Support</b>
Part 8: Finances	Q 74a- Do you rely on the following to help pay for college? Family contribution	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 74b- Do you rely on the following to help pay for college? Personal contribution / Job	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 74c- Do you rely on the following to help pay for college? Pell Grant	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 74d- Do you rely on the following to help pay for college? Need-based	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
	financial aid (including state or institutional grants)			
Part 8: Finances	Q 74e- Do you rely on the following to help pay for college? Academic scholarship	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 74f- Do you rely on the following to help pay for college? Athletics scholarship	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 74g- Do you rely on the following to help pay for college? Loans	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 75- Are you concerned that financial considerations may affect your ability to complete your degree?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 76a- Quitting my sport would make staying at this college a problem financially	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 76b- I usually have enough money to buy things I need (e.g., groceries)	Likert scale	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 77- In the past year, how often have you contributed money to help support your family?	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 78a- What is the highest level of education that your parent(s) have completed? Did not finish high school	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 78b- What is the highest level of education that your parent(s) have completed? Graduated from high school	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 78c- What is the highest level of education that your parent(s) have completed? Attended college but did not complete degree	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 78d- What is the highest level of education that your parent(s) have completed? Completed an associate's degree (A.A., A.S., etc.)	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 78e- What is the highest level of education that your parent(s) have completed? Completed a bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.)	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 78f- What is the highest level of education that your parent(s) have	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part of GOALS Survey	GOALS Survey question	Participant Response	Associated Research Question	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
	completed? Completed a master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.)			
Part 8: Finances	Q 78g- What is the highest level of education that your parent(s) have completed? Completed a doctoral degree (Ph.D., J.D., M.D., etc.)	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 78h- What is the highest level of education that your parent(s) have completed? Don't know	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 79- Birth year:	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 80- Birth month:	Select one	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 81- ZIP (postal) code where you lived during your senior year in high school (if lived in USA):	Enter digits	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 82- If you didn't live in the USA during high school, in what country did you live?	Open-ended	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 83- What has been the best part of your student-athlete experience so far?	Open-ended	Not applicable	Not applicable
Part 8: Finances	Q 84- If you could change one thing about your student-athlete experience, what would it be?	Open-ended	Not applicable	Not applicable

APPENDIX E: IRB HUMAN SUBJECTS PERMISSION LETTER



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Institutional Review Board  
FWA0000351  
IRB00001138  
Office of Research  
12201 Research Parkway  
Orlando, FL 32826-3246

EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

December 13, 2019

Dear Lucas Noboa:

On 12/13/2019, the IRB determined the following submission to be human subjects research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Initial Study, Category 2
Title:	The Transition Through Higher Education: An Exploration of Challenges, Barrier, and Support Services for Student- Athletes
Investigator:	Lucas Noboa
IRB ID:	STUDY00001270
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made, and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request so that IRB records will be accurate.

If you have any questions, please contact the UCF IRB at 407-823-2901 or [irb@ucf.edu](mailto:irb@ucf.edu). Please include your project title and IRB number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Racine Jacques, Ph.D.  
Designated Reviewer



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