

Athletic Academic Counseling: A Survey of Members of the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics

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The National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics (NAAAA) has experienced rapid growth since its creation in 1976. In the past two years the association has doubled its membership. Presently there are 240 members (Monhagan, 1985). In an attempt to keep up with this fast growth and because of the youth of this organization of professionals, the need for research and investigation is imperative.

Review of Literature

Only limited studies have been conducted to investigate the status, trends and characteristics of athletic academic counselling in higher education. Gurney, Robinson, and Pygetakis (1983) investigated trends of staffing and academic support services among athletically competitive institutions in a mail survey. A study conducted by Brennan (1983) surveying 85 athletic academic counselors provides a profile of their responsibilities and duties. Demographic information is also presented. Mand and Fletcher (1986) modeled their study after the Brennan study. The purpose of the survey was to identify trends and changes in the field of athletic academic counseling over the association's 10 years of existence.

The rest of the available literature is comprised of reports about individual programs. These reports describe established programs (Sutherland and Car-lile, 1986; Lashbrook, 1984; Walter & Smith, 1986); special services offered (Lee and Harvey, 1985; Wilson, 1985; Toscano, 1982); reports regarding the outcomes of different interventions (NCAA News, 1986), and the creation and development of new programs (McGuire and McCoy, 1986).

These reports are beneficial in illustrating different jobs performed by some professionals. However, such glimpses of individual programs do not contribute to the broad structure of professional literature necessary for the growth

of the profession. The present survey adds empirical evidence of the conditions existing in professional programs by sampling a more comprehensive population of athletic academic counselors.

Method

The following survey was designed to gather information regarding the present nature of athletic academic counselling programs within the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics.

The questions used in this survey were selected by 10 professionals in the fields of counselling and guidance, educational psychology and athletics. The questionnaire consisted of 29 questions covering five different areas: demographic variables; programs and services provided; interdisciplinary interaction between athletic academic counselor and athletic department staff; discipline methods, goals of athletic academic counseling programs and types of educational training considered important for the profession; athletic academic counselor's perception of level of cooperation by coaches and faculty, and counselor's feelings towards job.

Once the questionnaire had been constructed, it was distributed to athletic academic counselors who were members of the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletes (NAAAAA). The names of 188 counselors were obtained from the associations's official roster for the years 1985 and 1986. One hundred and twelve questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 59.57 percent.

Statistical Procedures

The data was collected and the responses were tabulated according to the requirements of the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

The SAS produced the frequency and percentage of response to each item. Pearson product-moment correlations were computed to ascertain relationships which exist among counselor's attitudes and program practices. Analysis of variance techniques was applied to investigate the effects of sex and geographic region (as specified by the United States Bureau of the Census,

1985) on counselor responses. In all cases, the .05 level of statistical significance was applied. Where significant relationships were found, Tukey post hoc tests were applied.

Results

AREA 1: Demographic Variables

Analysis of the demographic information shows that there are more male counselors (59.8%) than women counselors (40.2%). The majority of them have a Master's degree (52.7%) and their main areas of academic specialization are counselling and guidance (22%), education (20%), and physical education (18%). Also, their previous areas of employment involved both coaching and teaching (38.7%). 32.4% of the respondent counselors do not know how their salary compares to those of coaches although 56.75% of the counselors are aware that they are renumarated at the level of assistant coaches (27.9%) or below assistant coaches (28.8%). Most athletic academic counselling programs belong to NCAA division I-A institutions (80.7%), serve both men and women student-athletes (92.6%) and have a ratio of 101 to 150 student-athletes per one full-time counselor (30.3%). In general, the plurality of the survey respondents are from the southern regions of the country (38.4%).

AREA 2: Programs and Services Provided

Athletic academic programs from survey respondents provide more services for entering freshman students (94.6%) than for students that have completed their eligibility (88.3%). Also, 89.3% of the participants indicate that they offer some form of counselling services for student-athletes. Of the respondents that offer counselling services, 99 percent provides individual counselling, 52 percent provide group counselling and 66 percent offers crisis counselling. The majority of counselling services are practiced on voluntary basis (75.6%), and deal with academic concerns (62.2%). In addition, 100 percent of the respondents expressed that tutorial services are a very important component in their program. Building team cohesiveness is considered important (26.5%), and somewhat important (27.6%) by the participants. Imagery and relaxation exercises are also considered important (24.5%) or somewhat important (33.7%). Providing programs to improve communication skills among coaches and student athletes is ranked higher in the respondents' priorities than building team cohesiveness or imagery and relaxation exercises, which are ranked similar.

AREA 3: Interdisciplinary Interaction Between Athletic Academic Counselor and Athletic Department Staff

Respondents suggest that when academic concerns are being discussed, the academic counselor deals with the student on one-to-one basis most of the time (92.8%), while the coach also participates, but to a lesser extent (51.6%). Personal concerns are in general discussed in twosomes, either by the counselor with student (38.4%) or to a lesser degree by the coach with the student (29.3%). Injury concerns are addressed mostly by the coach and the student. In addition 14 participants, or 14.5 percent of the participants, suggest that when an athlete is injured, a meeting is held with the student by the coach and the trainer. The athletic academic counselor is not included. Athletic academic counselors (79.8%) report that when a student-athlete is dismissed they are notified either immediately or within a week. Also, survey respondents say that they rarely participate in the decision-making process of the dismissal of a student for athletic reasons. Counselors indicate that most of their participation takes place when dealing with academic dismissal.

AREA 4: Discipline Methods, Goals of Athletic Academic Counselling Program and Type of Educational Training You Consider Important for the Profession

The most often used methods of discipline are extra practice time (68.9%) and extra study sessions (52.8%). Suspension from practice or games is used only in more serious offenses. For the profession of athletic academic counselling, the respondent counselors consider guidance and counselling (essential and/or important 86%) the most helpful academic area of training, followed in order by administration/management (57.7%), educational psychology (52.8%), curriculum and instruction (38.1%), sport psychology (36.3%) and physical education or coaching (25.7%). In reference to the main goals of their academic programs, the participants state that their first goal is motivation of students to improve academic performance (97.1%), followed in order by personal growth of the students (92.3%), improved graduation rate (84.7%), improved student grade-point average (86.4%), selection of career choice (63.5%), and motivation to improve athletic performance (36.4%).

AREA 5: Athletic Academic Counselor's Perception of Level of Cooperation by Coaches and Faculty, as well as, Counselor's Feelings Towards Job.

Athletic academic counselors strongly agree and/or agree that coaches consider athletic academic counseling programs very important (90.1%), while faculty members (86.5%) are perceived as providing more active support to the program than coaches (79.2%). In general, survey participants do not feel enthusiastic about pursuing athletic academic counselling as a permanent career (52.3%). Nevertheless, student-athletes perceive their counseling services as very helpful (92.8%), and athletic academic counseling is considered an essential component to the athletic program (89.2%). The areas of greatest concern for the counselors are poor resources and "study table".

Analysis of Results

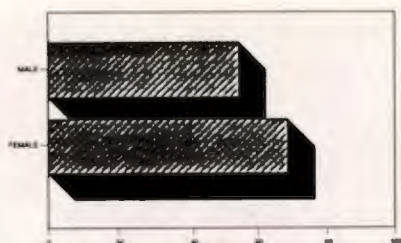
Correlational research was performed to determine the extent to which variables are related to each other. Only correlational values above .50 were included as significant.

When counselors are pleased with the resources they have available to conduct counseling programs, they tend to feel that: 1) Coaches consider academic counseling programs important, $r = .607$; 2) Coaches actively support academic counseling program, $r = .630$; 3) They feel comfortable with their roles as academic counselors in the athletic department, $r = .502$.

Moderate correlations of $r = .531$ and $r = .565$ were discovered when the group of counselors that feel comfortable with their role of academic counselor within the athletic department was interrelated with counselors that are enthusiastic about pursuing athletic academic counseling as a permanent career, and coaches that actively support the academic counseling program. A strong correlation $r = .789$ was found when counselors believed that coaches consider academic counseling program important and actively support the academic counseling program.

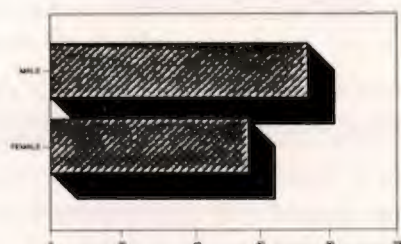
Analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to investigate possible differences between the means of the whole survey, as compared with the means of opposite sex and the means of four different regions. Results revealed two statistically significant findings when the variable sex (male vs. female) was examined. Females considered building team cohesiveness a services more viable

within their program than did males ($F = 4.07$, $df = 1, 96$, $p.05$) (see Figure 1). Male athletic academic counselors participate more than female athletic academic counselors in the decision-making process regarding the academic dismissal of a student-athlete ($F = 5.05$, $df = 1, 105$, $p.05$) (see Figure 2).



Building Team Cohesiveness (Percent)

Figure 1. Importance of Building Team Cohesiveness



Participation in Academic Dismissal (Percent)

Figure 2. Gender Participation in Athletic Dismissal

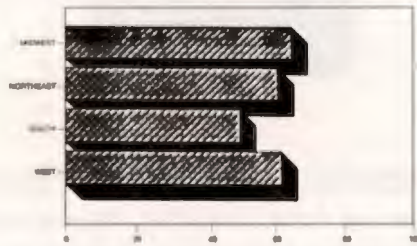
The results of individual ANOVAs performed on the four different regions revealed only four statistical significant findings. A Tukey post hoc test was conducted in each of the four statistically significant variables in an attempt to discover how each of the regions differs from others.

The tendency for only the coach and athlete to meet when there is an injury concern differs by regions ($F = 3.96$, $df = 3, 85$, $p = .01$). Tukey tests revealed that regarding injuries, the coach and student-athlete meet alone more often in the Midwest than in the South ($p.05$). The West and Northeast are not significantly different from any other region (see Figure 3).

The propensity to use extra practice (i.e. running extra laps) as a form of punishment when a student-athlete fails to meet a commitment previously

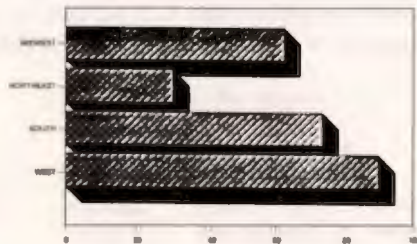
agreed upon differs by region ($F = 5.18$, $df = 3$, 102 , $p.05$). Tukey post hoc comparison showed that the West and South use this type of punishment significantly more when compared to the North-east ($p.05$). The Midwest is not significantly different from any other region (see Figure 4). The usage of suspension from practice as a form of punishment differs by region ($F = 4.04$, $df = 3$, 102 , $p.05$). The results of Tukey post hoc comparison indicates that the West uses this type of punishment significantly more than the South ($p.05$). The Northeast and Midwest show no significant difference from other regions (see Figure 5).

Regions perceive differently the importance of administration and management as one of the academic areas considered important for the training of athletic academic counselors ($F = 3.06$, $df = 3$, 100 , $p.05$). Results of the Tukey post hoc test revealed that the South considered administration and management significantly more important than the Northeast ($p.05$). The Midwest and West are not significantly different from the other regions (see Figure 6).



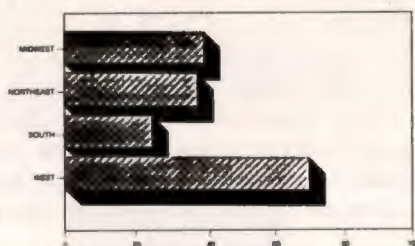
Injury Meetings (Percent)

Figure 3. Meetings Between Coach and Athlete Regarding Injury



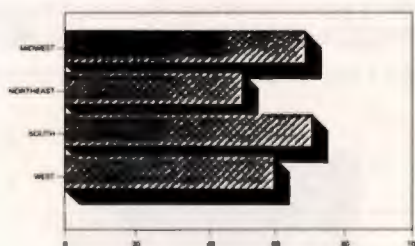
Extra Practice (Percent)

Figure 4. Percent of Students Within Region Punished with Extra Practice



Suspended from Practice (Percent)

Figure 5. Percentage of Students Within Region Suspended from Practice



Administration and Management (Percent)

Figure 6. Importance of Administration/Management for Athletic Academic Counseling Profession

Some of the correlations, differences and comparisons which did not prove to be statistically significant may usefully be brought forth as general tendencies. For instance, when analyzing comparisons by sex, almost 60 percent of the respondents are male counselors and 40.2 percent are female counselors. Table 1 provides the breakdown of respondents' sex by different regions.

Table 1. Sex by Region

	Midwest	Northeast	South	West	Total
Male	17	10	25	15	67
Female	14	6	18	7	45
Total	31	16	43	22	112

Male counselors have a tendency to have more advanced academic degrees than their female counterparts (see Table 2).

Female athletic academic counselors have an inclination to have less coaching and teaching experience than male athletic academic counselors. Generally, they come to the profession from other fields. (see Table 3).

Results indicate that female counselors tend to receive lower salaries than men counselors, but they are more aware as to how their salary compares to those of coaches (or they are more willing to share this information) (see Table 4).

Table 2. Sex by Educational Background

	Bachelor's	Master's	Ph.D.	Total
Male	5	37	24	66
Female	6	21	17	44
Total	11	58	41	110

Table 3. Sex by Previous Employment

	Coaching	Teaching	Coaching/ Teaching	Other	Total
Male	7	21	27	12	67
Female	1	14	16	13	44
Total	8	35	43	25	111

Table 4. Sex by Salary

Salary of the level of	Head Coach	Assistant Coach	Below Asst. Coach	Don't Know	Total
Male	7	18	17	25	67
Female	5	13	15	11	45
Total	12	31	32	36	N = 111

Analyzing comparisons by different regions, the Midwest is prone to pay higher salaries and to be better informed as to how their salaries compare to those of coaches (or they are more willing to share this information) (see Table 5).

Table 5. Region by Salary

Salary: Region	Head Coach	Assistant Coach	Below Asst. Coach	Don't Know	Total
Midwest	7	7	12	4	30
Northeast	0	5	4	7	16
South	2	12	11	18	43
West	3	7	5	7	22
Total	12	31	32	36	N = 111

The West and Northeast attach less importance to physical education and coaching as areas of academic training necessary for the profession of athletic academic counseling than the South and Midwest.

Discussion

A few common dimensions exist in almost all athletic academic counseling programs, no matter what the geographical location of the program or whether staffed by males or females. This research suggests that most athletic academic counseling programs serve both men and women student-athletes and that the majority of the institutions that belong to NAAAA belong to NCAA division I. Also, the research indicates that there is less interdisciplinary interaction between the athletic staff and counselors when dealing with academic or personal concerns of a student-athlete. Most of the interdisciplinary interaction occurs when dealing with injury concerns of a student-athlete.

Athletic academic counselors consider guidance and counseling the most helpful educational area of training for the profession. Though counselors indicate that they receive support from coaches and student-athletes, they are hesitant in pursuing athletic academic counseling as a permanent career.

However, in regard to other variables male and female counselors seem to have differences. Female counselors tend to come into the athletic academic counseling profession from different professional areas than males, and the

former receive lower salaries. Male counselors have more advanced academic degrees and are more likely to have coaching and teaching experience. Also, female counselors consider building team cohesiveness a service more viable within their program. Male counselors participate more in the decision-making process regarding the academic dismissal of a student-athlete, and they will be more involved in the new NCAA drug counseling program at their institutions.

Regional differences also exist. The Northeast seems to be the region that is least likely to use punitive actions on student-athletes. The Midwest is prone to pay higher salaries, and counselors there are better informed as how their salaries compare to those of coaches. The South, more than other regions, values physical education/coaching and administration/management as educational backgrounds for the profession of athletic academic counseling.

Further study could be directed toward examining the different services already being provided at member institutions, counselors' feelings and attitudes regarding the working atmosphere and profession, the possibility of adding new services such as workshops on stress and time management, improving communication skills and the enhancement of academic and athletic performances, so student-athletes can have an opportunity to receive the well-rounded education they deserve. The review of the literature also made evident some directions for future investigations. More research on the effectiveness of athletic academic counseling needs to be done. Future investigations need to have some methodological improvements. It is necessary to have better designed studies in order to be able to draw more definite conclusions about the implications of athletic academic counseling. Finally, future research could concern itself with how coaches and student-athletes perceive the role and responsibilities of athletic academic counselors.

As members of a young profession, athletic academic counselors should originate new investigations and scholarly work in order to gain support, respect and status in the perception of university administrators, faculty and the professional community. A strength of the present survey is the representation of the population studied. The response rate covers almost 50 percent of the entire association's membership. The results of the survey analyzed herein, together with the wide representation covered allow us to make a cautious hypothesis that athletic academic counseling in the NAAAA is growing beyond what Tutko and Tossi (1976, p. 11) called "the golden age of the physical side of sports" and moving toward a more comprehensive and humanistic attitude regarding athletics.

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