

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES AND BACKGROUNDS OF NCAA DIVISION I ATHLETIC ADVISERS AND COUNSELORS: A REPLICATION

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ABSTRACT

A replication of a 1985 national survey of the educational backgrounds and job responsibilities of athletic advisers and counselors from National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I institutions was conducted. Two hundred and ninety-six advisers and counselors were sent surveys: 193 (65%) returned completed questionnaires. Data revealed that the majority of respondents continue to be former athletes from revenue-producing sports who hold masters degrees in education, with counseling or psychology representing their next most frequent background. Although more women are involved in advising and counseling than in 1985, the majority remain men in the mid-1990's. Respondents are primarily employed by athletic departments. The majority work under the titles of either adviser/administrator or counselor/adviser. Counseling services for college athletes continue to focus on academic matters, with considerably less attention devoted to personal/social or vocational counseling. Advisers and counselors still devote nearly two-thirds of their time to male student-athletes.

INTRODUCTION

Considerable concern has been raised about the nature of intercollegiate athletics and the welfare of student-athletes (SAs) (Brooks & Althouse, 1993; Knight Commission Report, 1990; Sperber, 1990). Likewise,

evidence of interest in and awareness of the distinctive lifestyles and needs of SAs has appeared in the literature (American Institutes for Research, 1988; Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1991; Kirk & Kirk, 1993; Parham, 1993; Pinkerton, Hinz, & Barrow, 1987). Various authors have discussed SA needs and described service models and programming to provide formal assistance to these young people (Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Ferrante, Etzel, & Pinkney, 1991; Gabbard & Halischak, 1993; Jordan & Denson, 1990; Petitpas & Champagne, 1988). Along with increasing participation and interest in intercollegiate athletics over the past decade, there seems to have been an expanding range of support services (e.g., academic advising, tutoring, career, personal/social, and sport performance-enhancement counseling) being made available to SAs (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1991; Gurney, Robinson, & Fygetakis, 1983).

Almost a decade has passed since Brooks, Etzel, and Ostrow (1987) surveyed National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I athletic advisers and counselors about their training and professional activities. Recently, the authors became curious again about who was doing what and what their qualifications were nearly ten years later. What differences, if any, might exist between the general "profiles" of SA service providers of the mid-1990s and their predecessors? What services are advisers and counselors providing to SAs today? Are they being provided by people from similar or different backgrounds and training? What implications does this have for the future?

METHOD

A copy of a questionnaire developed by Brooks et al. (1987) was mailed to 296 athletic advisers and counselors employed by institutions that sponsored NCAA Division I men's basketball, the sport with the highest number of sponsors. Of those 296 professionals listed in *The 1993-94 National Directory of College Athletics* (1993), 193 returned a usable survey — a 65% rate of return. The questionnaire inquired about a variety of demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, athletic and educational backgrounds) as well as information concerning current occupational activities (e.g., employers, services provided, populations served). (See Table 1.) The only item added to the questionnaire that did not appear on the first version of the survey asked respondents to indicate the percent of time they devote to assisting SAs from different racial backgrounds (i.e., African-American, Caucasian, Asian-American).

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 presents descriptive data regarding the personal attributes of those athletic advisers and counselors ($n = 193$) surveyed and provides comparative demographic data collected from the 1985 survey (Brooks et al., 1987) of athletic advisers ($n = 134$). The table also contains the results of the

Table 1

Comparison of Demographic Characteristics of NCAA Division I Athletic Advisers Surveyed in 1985 ($N=134$) and in 1994 ($N=193$)

Characteristic	1985 Sample		1994 Sample		Chi-square
	n	%	n	%	
Gender					
Male	93	69.40	104	53.89	7.95*
Female	41	30.60	89	46.11	
Former Athlete					
Yes	83	61.90	119	61.66	0.00
No	51	38.10	73	37.82	
Sport Background ^a					137.15**
Football	32	23.90	60	31.11	
Basketball	19	14.20	77	39.90	
Baseball	10	7.50	45	23.32	
Soccer	3	2.20	9	4.67	
Track	3	2.20	39	20.21	
Wrestling	3	2.20	5	2.59	
Other	13	9.20	51	26.42	
Highest Academic Degree					3.64
Baccalaureate	16	12.10	23	11.92	
Masters	73	55.30	125	64.77	
Doctoral	43	32.60	45	23.31	
Area of Academic Preparation ^a					84.11**
Business	4	3.00	20	10.36	
Counseling/ Psychology	33	24.60	59	30.57	
Education	39	29.10	82	42.49	
Physical Education	33	24.60	45	23.32	
Other	25	18.70	57	29.53	

* $p < .01$

** $p < .001$

^aThe summation of percentage scores exceeds 100% because subjects chose to respond to more than one subcategory.

chi-square analyses conducted to compare the demographic data originally collected in 1985 with that of 1994.

As can be seen in Table 1, significantly more females are currently employed as athletic advisers or counselors relative to 1985 ($\bar{x} = 7.95$, $p < .01$). Also, the majority of advisers continue to be former athletes, with basketball (39.90%) and football (31.11%) still the most frequently mentioned sports in which these individuals had previously participated.

The distribution of data by highest academic degree attained was similar to that reported for the 1985 survey ($\bar{x} = 3.64$ NS). The majority of advisers/counselors (64.77%) continue to indicate that their highest degree is a master's degree. On the average, it has been 10.44 years ($SD = 8.67$) since these individuals completed their highest degrees.

These advisers and counselors were also asked to specify the area(s) of their academic training, based on five categories designated in the survey: (1) business, (2) physical education, (3) counseling/psychology, (4) education, or (5) other. The data indicate that (relative to 1985) the academic training of academic advisers and counselors continues to be principally in the field of education. However, the data also suggest that there has been an increase since 1985 ($\bar{x} = 84.11$, $p < .001$) in the number of academic advisers/counselors trained in either counseling/psychology (30.57%) or business (10.36%).

In the current survey, athletic advisers and counselors were asked to indicate whether they were licensed professionals. Among those responding, only 13 (6.74%) indicated that they were licensed. Of these, the majority indicated that they were licensed in the area of counseling (i.e., seven of 13, or 53%).

Employment Responsibilities

Table 2 presents descriptive data outlining the employment responsibilities of academic advisers/counselors ($n = 134$) employed in 1994 in a capacity similar to those who were surveyed in 1985. As evident from Table 2, athletic advisers/counselors continue to be principally employed by athletic departments (71.50%), with no discernible change since 1985 ($\bar{x} = 0.43$ NS) in the type of department within colleges and universities in which they are employed.

Those surveyed were also asked to indicate how their specific job titles could be categorized from among the following: (a) counselor-adviser, (b) adviser-coach, or (c) adviser-administrator. The majority (69.91%) of respondents said that their specific job title could best be labeled as adviser-administrator, with significantly more ($\bar{x} = 17.94$, $p < .001$) choosing this category than in the 1985 survey.

As was true in the 1985 survey, Table 2 indicates that these people devote more of their time to providing support services to male SAs (62.16%) in revenue sports (56.59%); the percentage of time they devoted to African-American (42.69%) versus Caucasian SAs (43.40%) was almost equal. Of

Table 2

Comparison of Demographic Characteristics of NCAA Division I Athletic Advisers Surveyed in 1985 (N=134) and in 1994 (N=193)

Characteristic	1985 Sample		1994 Sample		Chi-square
	n	%	n	%	
Department Employed By					
Athletics	115	85.82	138	71.50	0.43
Physical Education	3	2.24	3	1.55	
Student Services	14	10.45	21	10.88	
Other	—	—	44	22.80	
Specific Job Title					
Adviser/Coach	12	8.96	7	3.63	17.94**
Adviser/Administrator	32	23.88	133	68.91	
Counselor/Adviser	—	—	59	30.57	
Percent of Time Devoted To:					
Academic Advising	134	45.69	187	42.74	
Personal/Social					
Counseling	134	13.93	186	13.46	
Vocational					
Counseling	134	8.15	186	4.71	
Consultation	—	—	186	9.13	
Sport Performance					
Enhancement	—	—	186	1.92	
Other	134	22.72	187	22.74	
Percent of Time Devoted To:					
Revenue Athletes	134	63.79	175	56.59	
Non-revenue					
Athletes	134	30.47	175	42.34	
Percent of Time Devoted To:					
Male Athletes	134	72.54	160	62.16	
Female Athletes	134	25.07	160	35.17	
Percent of Time Devoted To:					
African-American					
Athletes	—	—	153	42.69	
Caucasian Athletes	—	—	153	43.40	
Asian-American					
Athletes	—	—	153	4.58	

** $p < .01$

The summation of percentage scores exceeds 100% because subjects chose to respond to more than one subcategory.

Missing data denote that these subcategory items were not included in the 1985 survey.

course, these data must be interpreted cautiously, given that the survey did not assess the number of male versus female, African-American versus Caucasian SAs, and so forth, with whom athletic advisers are in contact at the institutions surveyed.

Pearson product moment correlation coefficients were computed between the percent of time that academic advisers/counselors devote to revenue athletes and the percent of time they allocate to various support services (e.g., academic advising, personal/social counseling). The results indicated low, but statistically significant, correlation coefficients for academic advising ($r = .15, p < .05$) and for consultation ($r = .18, p < .05$), i.e., much of the respondent's time is involved with these activities. However, for the most part, the athletic advisers' gender evidenced no relationship to the percent of time they devoted to providing support services to either male or female SAs or to the type of support services provided (i.e., academic advising, personal/social counseling, etc.). Further, whether academic advisers/counselors were former athletes had no bearing on the percent of time they devoted to providing support services for SAs in revenue-producing sports.

The extent to which the terminal degree (i.e., masters versus doctoral degree) and/or the area of academic preparation (i.e., counseling/psychology, education, or physical education) of the academic adviser/counselors affected the percentage of time they allocated to five types of support services (academic advising, consultation, and so forth) was examined through 2 X 3 multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The obtained F-ratio was not statistically significant at the .05 level.

In addition, a 2 X 3 (Median Split on Years Since Completing Last Degree X Job Title) MANOVA was computed to determine if these factors influenced the percentage of time these advisers devoted to the five types of support services identified in the survey. The resultant F-ratio of 4.26 was statistically significant ($p < .001$). Follow-up univariate 2 X 3 ANOVA revealed that recency of completing the last degree affected academic advising ($F = 5.84, p < .05$), and the job titles of the advisers affected the percentage of time they devoted to both academic advising ($F = 4.18, p < .05$) and sport performance enhancement ($F = 11.97, p < .001$). Further, the percentage of time these academic advisers/counselors devoted to sport performance enhancement was influenced by the interaction of how recently they completed their last degree and their job title ($F = 18.93, p < .001$). Post hoc analyses were conducted using Duncan's Multiple Range Test. The results indicated that those advisers/counselors who received their degrees more recently spent less of their time (37.93%) in the area of academic advising than did those advisers who indicated that they had received their last degree years earlier (46.52% of time devoted to academic advising). Those individuals ($n = 7$) who indicated that their principal job title was adviser/coach devoted more time (15.71%) to sport performance enhancement than did adviser/administrators ($n = 118$; 1.47%) or counselor/advisers ($n = 47$). However, these results are questionable given the small number who identified their job titles as adviser/coach.

Finally, 2 (Gender) X 2 (Former Athlete or Not) MANOVA was computed to determine if these factors affected the percentage of time devoted to the five types of support services listed in the survey. The resultant F-ratio of 1.01 was not statistically significant at the .05 level.

Discussion

Have the "profiles" of those who provide advising and counseling assistance to SAs at the NCAA Division I level changed over the past decade? Yes and no. In general, the data indicate that, like those surveyed in the mid-1980s, athletic advisers and counselors in the mid-1990s are still predominantly male former athletes who have obtained master's degrees. Similarly, these people continue to provide academic advising to male SAs who participate in so-called "revenue-producing" sports. However, noteworthy differences exist between our sample profiles.

First, the findings indicate that considerably more women (i.e., roughly 46%) are now working in these capacities than they did ten years ago. This trend appears to parallel employment trends in other helping professions (e.g., psychology) where more entering professionals are women than men. This finding is encouraging because the number of women who participate in collegiate athletics has grown rapidly since Title IX legislation was passed in the 1970s and because they may now more readily receive assistance from professionals of the same gender.

Another noteworthy finding was that respondents said they devoted nearly the same amount of time providing assistance to African-American SAs as Caucasian SAs. Although no comparisons could be made with the 1985 sample in this area, it is encouraging to see that advisers/counselors are attempting to meet the needs of a diverse group of athletics participants—a group that will continue to be more diverse as the years go by. However, as mentioned above, these observations should be interpreted with care, given the noted limitations of the survey.

Another remarkable finding was that many advisers and counselors continue to report having participated in sport. The distribution of participation in the current set of respondents reflected involvement in more than one sport as well as a wider range of sports, to include not only football and basketball but also the so-called "Olympic" or "minor" sports as well. Adviser/counselor involvement in sport is seen as a useful experience for advisers and counselors. Indeed, it may contribute to better understanding of SA needs and lifestyles, which may lead to greater acceptance and trust of helpers by SAs who often struggle with the developmental issue of identifying someone on whom they can rely.

As mentioned earlier, from an educational perspective, little change was noted in a decade. Most respondents still own a terminal master's degree; nearly ten percent more than in the previous survey said they had earned a degree at that level. Other research (Burton, 1992) has produced similar educational background profiles of SA support program personnel at National

Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) schools (i.e., nearly two-thirds of personnel held master's degrees and one-third doctoral degrees). This is also seen as an advancement, in that advisers/counselors as a group are probably better trained to work with college-aged people than their predecessors. Graduate education and training in these fields clearly is essential to providing high quality direct and indirect services to SAs in the mid-1990s and beyond.

Shifts also were observed in some of the fields of academic preparation of respondents. Indeed, more people said that they came from counseling/psychology, education, and business backgrounds than ten years ago. Just how or why people from business backgrounds have entered the field and how useful education and training in business is to working as athletic advisers and counselors is unclear. However, the finding that gradually increasing numbers of professionals have preparation in counseling, psychology, or education is encouraging since the roles of athletic advisers/counselors appear to more closely match many of the roles and responsibilities of professionals from these fields today. Other research that has examined the demographics of academic advisers at NCAA Division I-A and I-AA institutions (Rader, 1991) revealed education and training background similarities: the majority of respondents indicated they have graduate degrees in higher education, counseling and guidance, and student personnel.

It should be noted that only a small percentage of our survey respondents said they are involved in the provision of personal/social or vocational counseling services. The percentages of respondents who said they do so (approximately 14% and 8% respectively) remained rather low and virtually unchanged (in the personal/social area) over ten years. This was unfortunately the case despite growing awareness of the unique psychosocial needs of SAs and an increase in the provision of holistic support services to SAs (Parham, 1993).

Few respondents reported that they were licensed professionals. Given the increasing complexity of SA concerns and the growing number of states that have passed legislation specifying and restricting professional activities (e.g., the practice of counseling and the use of the title "counselor"), it would seem useful and wise from competency as well as from ethical and legal standpoints for more license-eligible SA support service providers to seek licensure in the states where they work.

Little change was observed in the employment affiliations of advisers and counselors since 1985. Not surprisingly, the majority still work for athletic departments. Although this makes sense from historical and various practical standpoints (e.g., SA service accessibility), some argue that support services should be housed outside of athletics to minimize SA isolation, to encourage SAs to seek assistance from the full range of resources in the university community, to avoid potential conflicts of interest, and often to save departments money (Denson, in press).

SUMMARY

If colleges and universities are to continue to attend to the needs of SAs into the next century, they must focus much of their efforts on understanding and meeting the holistic needs of this often misunderstood, increasingly diverse group of people. Athletic advisers and counselors will have critical roles to play in these future efforts. Considerable and consistent attention will have to be paid to the education and training experiences of these professionals which will affect the quality of the services they will provide.

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