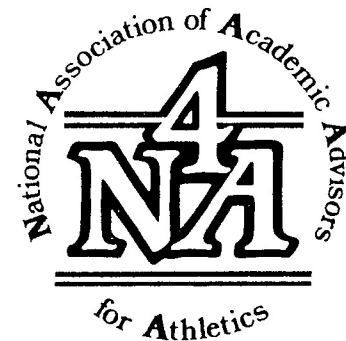


ACADEMIC ATHLETIC JOURNAL

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National Association of Academic
Advisors for Athletics



FALL 1991
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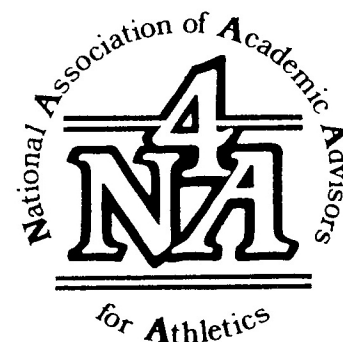
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The primary audience is the membership of the N4A, that is, athletic academic counselors. The secondary audience includes other professionals working with student-athletes in the fields of education or counseling at the secondary and post-secondary levels.

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Articles should add new knowledge, challenge existing opinion, and/or explain the implications of research. The arguments should be well grounded in theory or research and clearly related to practice. In essence, the material should be original and stimulating without being extremely technical.

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Relevant topics include, but are not limited to, the following: historical overviews of topics related to student-athletes; reviews of publications related to student-athletes; practical applications of theoretical or research-based conclusions; and research on student-athletes, including a full discussion of results and implications.

Please do not submit a text that has been previously published, is scheduled for publication elsewhere, or is being considered for publication elsewhere.

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Articles should be 1250-5000 words in length (roughly 5-20 pages of typed, double-spaced text) with ample margins for comments. Amplify the text with appropriate headings/subheadings, figures, and bibliography done in American Psychological Association style. Also include an abstract of not more than 100 words.

Articles for the fall issue should be submitted no later than August 1, and for the spring issue no later than February 1.

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MENTORS FOR BEGINNING COLLEGE STUDENT-ATHLETES: A POSSIBLE AID FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

**Leann M. Willoughby
Darryn S. Willoughby
Phillip A. Moses
Texas A&M University**

ABSTRACT

The responsibility of giving scholarship student-athletes a well-rounded start at the collegiate level may be too immense for only coaches and academic advisors to carry out efficiently without additional help. Transferring part of this responsibility to "mentors" who help freshman student-athletes develop basic study habits and time management skills may be one resolution to the "academics vs. athletics" debate. The following is a discussion of the needs of student-athletes and a description of one organization's attempt to give the members of this special population a better foundation early in their academic careers.

INTRODUCTION

College freshmen were deemed eligible for athletic participation in 1972, and it is commonly believed that at this point academics "took on less meaning" for college students (Stratten, 1990). The academic plight of student-athletes quickly worsened, until the early 1980s when Propositions 48 and 42 were passed. These propositions have tried to re-establish some order to the academic/athletic situation of the student-athlete, but without changes on the individual level these rules can be marginally effective at best.

Scholarship student-athletes, especially those who attend large NCAA Division I schools, are under increased pressure to succeed on the academic as well as the athletic level. In order to meet eligibility requirements under the rules of Propositions 48 and 42, student-athletes must be able to maintain an

academic load equal to most college students in addition to the practices, chalk talks, and travel time required of them as student-athletes (Wilbur & Wilbur, 1986). This presents a problem for even the most mature, well-organized, and academically prepared student-athletes; unfortunately, not all scholarship student-athletes fit into this category. Some of the individuals who receive athletic scholarships invested so much time in athletics at the high school level that they enter college with marginal academic capabilities at best. There has to be a solution to this problem, whether it is psychological, organizational, personal, or a combination thereof.

Many athletic counselors (Sparent, 1986; Whitner & Sanz, 1988; Wittmer, Bostic, Phillips, & Waters, 1981) and psychologists (Camp & Epps, 1986; Petitpas & Champagne, 1988; Stratten, 1990) have proposed a variety of programs as possible solutions. The problems with many of these programs are that they are impersonal, complicated, and expensive to administer. What will be discussed in this article are the academic/athletic demands placed on student-athletes, how these pressures are related to their overall academic success, and a possible alternative to their present situation to give them a better start in their college careers.

In an innovative new program, Texas A&M University's athletic department provided beginning scholarship student-athletes with older student mentors. The concept of mentoring is not new; its basis actually dates back many centuries in Greek mythology. In the Iliad, Odysseus, a great hero leaving on a long journey, entrusted his son's guidance and development to an old friend, Mentor. A strong bond developed between Mentor and the young boy which influenced the boy forever.

The mentor ideally is a person with whom the student-athlete can develop academic habits and beneficial time management skills which may have been lacking in the student-athlete's secondary education. A relationship with an upperclass non-athlete can also give the student-athlete a broader notion of being a student upon which to base his or her own academic habits, a concept lacking in many student-athletes' repertoire (Wilbur & Wilbur, 1986). This program is easy to administer and monitor, and it can be conducted on a relatively inexpensive basis.

WHY STUDENT-ATHLETES NEED SPECIAL ASSISTANCE

The academic preparation of high school student-athletes is a major contributing factor in their immediate college successes (Steinbrecher, 1989; Wilbur & Wilbur, 1986). However, the emotional and psychological impacts of the transition into college can also be influencing factors in all student-athletes' success: they have to deal with the added pressure of competition with experienced upperclass student-athletes and the change from being a "hometown star" to a "little fish" (Wilbur & Wilbur, 1986).

An extended study conducted by Steinbrecher (1989) on the effect freshman participation has on academic achievement showed that playing or not playing in varsity competition as a freshman had no significant role in either the grade point averages or the graduation rates of scholarship football and male basketball players. What was found to have a significant effect in all cases were high school grade point average, high school rank, and standardized college entrance examination grades.

Student-athletes in general score lower on the SAT than their non-athletic counterparts (Stratten, 1990), and black male student-athletes who attend revenue-producing schools exhibit weaker academic performance than other athletic populations (Brigham, 1981; Purdy, Eitzen, & Hufnagel, 1982; Spivey & Jones, 1975; Snyder, 1978). According to the College Testing Service, in 1988 the average SAT score was 757 for black males vs. 965 for white males. Black females averaged 724 and white females 907 (Stratten, 1990). However, student-athletes are allowed to enter many colleges with SAT scores of 700, a score lower than the usual non-athletic student criterion. This is a practice which automatically places a low SAT student-athlete at a disadvantage. There is some concern regarding whether the SAT is a racially biased test (Stratten, 1990), but until this debate is reconciled, black student-athletes will continue to enter college less prepared overall than their white counterparts (Eitzen & Purdy, 1986; Eitzen, 1988).

Black student-athletes make up a large percentage of the athletic scholarship recipients each year. However, the NCAA's March 1989 report, "Experiences of Black Intercollegiate Athletes at NCAA Division I Institutions," states that twice as many black student-athletes as non-blacks would have chosen not to attend college were it not for their athletic recruitment (Stratten, 1990). This may be due to "black culture," which tends to place a strong emphasis on sports as a social binder (second only to religion) and consequently detracts from academics (Spreitzer & Snyder, 1990). It also may be due to marginal preparation at the secondary level where the basic skills needed for academic success are not developed (Foster, 1986).

The average black scholarship student-athletes may be receiving less than ideal preparation on the secondary level because of substandard academic settings (i.e., overcrowded inner city schools) or because of their own lack of desire to take on academic challenges, since many black athletes intend to pursue a professional athletic career (Sparent, 1988). As many as 35 percent of all freshman student-athletes have the intention of "going pro," although in actuality less than 2 percent will ever play a professional sport (Sparent, 1988). Student-athletes from lower income families of varied ethnic backgrounds often place a high level of emphasis on sports as a career and are more inclined to see professional sports as a mode of upward mobility (Spreitzer & Snyder, 1990).

Many student-athletes are allowed special privileges in high school, privileges which translate into under-developed study skills, lowered self-perception, and limited goal setting abilities on the collegiate level (Foster,

1986; Wilbur & Wilbur, 1986). Of course, the argument can be made that student-athletes have the skills that make them athletic successes and these skills can be transferred to academics (Berg, 1989). But low academic statistics for high school student-athletes show that this is not necessarily the case (Lapchick, 1989). The development of basic study skills and time management techniques is crucial to academic success for every college student. Student-athletes, with enormous time commitments and physical demands, need these skills even more than others, but they cannot be supposed to know them innately. Student-athletes cannot be expected to come from an academic setting of "special privileges" and conform to the rigorous demands of college without help in developing the skills needed for academic success. If these student-athletes start out academically "at risk" (Stratten, 1990) and then have to contend with the demands of their sports, they should be supported in any way which may help them develop and succeed academically.

Another problem new student-athletes encounter is a common one for all freshmen. Homesickness—missing one's family, friends, and hometown—is an expected part of going off to college. However, many student-athletes have enjoyed an inordinate amount of attention from family, classmates, the community, and the press because of their athletic prowess (Camp & Epps, 1986). Especially during the recruiting period, student-athletes are made to feel special and important (Wilbur & Wilbur, 1986). The transition then from this environment to a university that may have over 100 new scholarship freshman student-athletes can be difficult. It is not uncommon for these individuals to experience a period of self-doubt during which both their academic and athletic performances may suffer (Petipas & Champagne, 1988; Camp & Epps, 1986). These feelings of homesickness or isolation may be hard to deal with. In many instances student-athletes do not know who to turn to outside of team members or coaches; such approaches may be hard if they are trying to establish themselves as "one of the team." Advisors may or may not have established themselves as accessible for personal discussions by this time, and they are authority figures with whom some student-athletes may not feel comfortable.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Universities known for having high academic concerns for their students (e.g., Notre Dame, Duke, Georgetown) have invested large amounts of time and money into their programs. For example, Georgetown has tutors who travel with the student-athletes, keep track of their schedules, and help them with assignments (Wood & Miller, 1989). The University of Texas women's athletic department has developed a triphasic approach to their student-athletes' success: (1) a stringent battery of aptitude tests beginning at the outset of the freshman year and continuing through graduation; (2) an ongoing physiological course which deals with athletic issues pertaining to the human body; and (3) a required tutorial system (Rice, 1989). The University of Florida has a program in which the athletic counselor is responsible for helping

student-athletes identify areas of personal, vocational, and academic concerns as well as learn about their academic abilities through a series of aptitude tests and applications (Wittmer et al., 1981). There are also companies which specialize in collegiate programs. One such corporation, PACE Sports, Inc., has developed a 26-phase learning assessment test which identifies learning abilities needed by student-athletes to do college work or subsequent job tasks (Stratten, 1990). All of these programs have qualities which probably contribute greatly to the student-athletes' eventual success; however, many new student-athletes need more basic academic and psychological support at the beginning of their college careers than these programs afford.

Unfortunately, not all schools have the finances needed to provide full-time tutorial support or expensive psychological batteries. These responsibilities are often largely placed on the academic advisor, who may have too many advisees to spend quality personalized time with each of them. Tutors contribute in course-related areas but are not normally expected to help the student-athletes with time management or study habit skills that do not pertain to the tutor's specific area of interest. A relatively inexpensive and simple form of support for newcomers, who in this case are incoming scholarship student-athletes, is found in many professional organizations today and is discussed in the section below.

MENTOR PROGRAMS IN BUSINESS

Formalized mentor programs have become common training vehicles in a variety of organizations during the last ten years (Zey, 1984). Mentor programs have been successful in corporations such as IBM, Hughes Aircraft, and Merrill Lynch and in divisions of the federal government (Phillips-Jones, 1983). These programs are utilized in a variety of fashions to help the new or upwardly mobile employee assimilate into a (usually large) institution more readily.

"The main purpose of the programs is to introduce new people to the inner workings of the organization and to help them with career advancement," states Linda Phillips-Jones, a research scientist who specializes in developing mentor programs for large corporations (1983). Although mentor programs are highly individualized according to the specific needs of each situation, they all have two basic attributes: individuality and coherent goals.

A primary facet of any mentor system is its pliancy, and the companies who have recognized this aspect of mentoring report the greatest successes (Lawrie, 1987). It seems that not only does the mentoring concept vary from organization to organization, but it also varies on an individual basis and over time as well. Most mentoring relationships evolve and include periods of acclimation, progress, independence, and eventually dissolution.

On the organizational level, the mentor and mentee may be expected to find each other by chance (probably the least effective method), they may meet at a special gathering (i.e., cocktail party) arranged for willing mentors

and new mentees to meet, or they may be assigned to each other (Zey, 1984). While the last option does not take into consideration possible personality or scheduling conflicts, it is commonly thought to be the most successful method used (Phillips-Jones, 1983). A mentor and mentee can be paired in a variety of fashions. For instance, an upwardly mobile specialist may be assigned a retiring mentor in the same field with the intention that the younger will eventually replace the older, or a newly hired employee may be assigned a mentor who has an outstanding work record. Regardless of how a team is paired, however, the shaping of the learner's attitudes and skills is a primary goal of the mentor relationship (Lawrie, 1987).

New members or members who are in transition greatly benefit from guidance. "Initial entry shock" (Phillips-Jones, 1983) can be greatly reduced when support from a member of the establishment is provided. Mentors who help their mentees set goals and then help attain them are valuable assets to any corporation. This goal-setting activity gives the mentor and mentee a common bond and builds confidence in the mentee. In the process of achieving physical or mental goals, the mentee often gains something even more valuable. Often the most valuable outcome of the mentoring relationship is a set of attitudes learned by the apprentice (Lawrie, 1987). Since mentors are usually chosen for their positive attitudes toward their jobs, this attitude is transferred to the mentee and thus eventually manifested throughout the organization (Lawrie, 1987).

MENTORS IN THE TEAM PROGRAM

By providing mature upperclass mentors (preferably graduate students), an athletic department may be able to help beginning student-athletes in a variety of ways. The Texas A&M University athletic department began a unique project in the fall semester of 1990 in which each scholarship student-athlete ("ment") was provided with a mentor. The mentors were individuals who had excellent tutorial records with the department. In addition to weekly tutoring sessions, they spent time with the student-athletes on a variety of topics, including campus acclimation, calendar development (time management skills), and good study habit development.

Mentor training for this program (dubbed "The TEAM," an acronym for "Together in Excellence for Athletes with Mentors") did not involve an extensive format or complicated guidelines. It was felt that the simpler and more relaxed a mentor/ment relationship could be, the better its chance of survival. Mentor training consisted of two-hour orientation sessions in which the goals and expectations of the program were outlined and speakers from the faculty mentor organization and the student counseling center were heard. It was stressed that mentors are not intended in any way to replace the advisor in any of his or her respective duties; they are meant to enhance the advisor's position. Mentors serve as liaisons between the academic administration and the student-athletes, and above all as companions to their ments.

Reports on the progress of the TEAM program were collected in three ways. First, each mentor was asked to communicate with the student-athlete's advisor on a weekly written basis and on a monthly personal meeting basis to keep the advisor informed about the personal progress of the student-athlete. Second, a mentor supervisor made telephone and written follow-ups to the mentors throughout the semester to get feedback on the progress of the program. Third, the student-athletes filled out response sheets on their mentor experiences near the end of the first semester. All information will be compiled and compared longitudinally for graduation success rates of the student-athletes who complete the TEAM program.

GOALS OF THE TEAM PROGRAM

The TEAM program is based on the philosophy that if student-athletes become familiar with an upperclass model (a mentor), they will have a beginning advantage that past student-athletes have not had. The mentor can introduce not only the campus and its basic attributes (like the library) but also the basic study and time management skills necessary for academic success.

The program's goals were as follows:

- (1) To help orient the beginning scholarship student-athlete
 - (a) by making them feel personally welcomed
 - (b) by helping them become familiar with the campus
- (2) To help student-athletes develop academic/athletic calendars
- (3) To help student-athletes identify weaknesses in their study habits and then to help student-athletes develop skills to fortify their academic abilities

The mentors' first priority is to let the student-athletes know that they are there as friends, as "big brother and big sister" figures. Often, new student-athletes feel that everyone is interested in them for specific reasons: the coach wants them to perform athletically, the professor wants them to perform academically, and even the advisor wants them to be able to perform in a decision-making capacity. Also, many student-athletes may benefit greatly from a relationship with a "normal" student role model since their contact with upperclass or graduate non-athletes is limited because of living arrangements and time constraints. According to a study conducted by Wilbur & Wilbur (1986), many student-athletes think that "normal" students like to study. By exposing them to students who have had years of experience in college, student-athletes may realize that this is not necessarily so.

STEPS OF THE TEAM PROGRAM

The first step in the mentor/ment meetings was to help the student-athletes learn their way around campus. Many student-athletes are at a disadvantage from the very beginning of their college experience because, when other freshmen are going through university orientation, they are involved with practice, whether formal or informal. Football players especially suffer since their season often opens with the semester. In addition, some scholarship recipients are not able to attend an official college orientation because of the expense involved. For this reason, the mentors' first concern was the student-athletes' physical acclimation. Mentors took student-athletes on campus or library walking tours, helped them find classes and buildings on maps, and answered any questions.

Mentors spent the first few meetings getting to know the student-athletes and making them feel comfortable and welcome. Mentors stressed the idea that they were there to be "big brother or sister" figures if the student-athletes needed or wanted that type of interaction.

By attempting to identify with the student-athletes as people, mentors can become confidantes to them during normal and high stress periods. Student-athletes may have questions or needs unique to their own situations. Two common reasons for poor collegiate academic performance have been identified by Wilbur and Wilbur (1986): (1) the student-athlete does not understand how college academic demands differ from those of high school; and (2) the student-athlete lacks information on how to act like a college student. These may seem like trivial issues, but having mentors to answer "silly" questions may help guide student-athletes in the right direction. Growth in the mentor/ment relationship may, over time, help student-athletes develop into stronger students and individuals.

All freshmen have to make substantial adjustments when going away to a university: a new living environment (sometimes in an athletic dorm, which limits contact with non-athletes even more); a new lifestyle; different academic expectations; the "little fish in a big pond syndrome." All of these adjustments have to be made in addition to the adjustments that student-athletes have to make athletically, which may be substantial considering that they may be involved with sports more than classroom and study time combined ("A Study," 1988).

The second step in the mentoring sessions was development of a semester calendar. Early in the semester (usually the third meeting), the mentors and ments filled out a calendar form (provided by the department) of the ments' daily obligations for the semester. Of course, they know only a limited amount of information about their schedules at the beginning of the semester; therefore, maintenance of the calendar is conducted regularly as a team effort for the entire first semester or until the student-athletes display an ability and a desire to do it on their own.

This calendar is a record of both formal and informal commitments. Formal commitments include class and practice times, event dates (if any), reading assignments, quizzes, tests, paper due dates, and special academic events like extra-credit attendance at forums, plays, or lectures. Commitments are considered to be informal if no studying or athletic commitments are involved (e.g., weekend visitors or trips home). The purposes of maintaining such a specific calendar are listed below:

- (1) Student-athletes need to gain a visual picture of how busy their personal schedules actually are.
- (2) High demand periods need to be made visible long before they are a reality.
- (3) Student-athletes need to begin to regard time management as a personal responsibility.

The third step of the mentoring sessions, development of study habits, came later in the semester (around the third week), depending on the mentor/ment relationship and the student-athletes' progress. Since the mentors' primary goal is to be a "big brother/sister" figure, discussion of study habits was pursued only after the mentors and ments agreed that it would be helpful. Since part of the mentors' responsibility was to help their ments in the areas where they were not assigned formal tutors, the mentors examined the student-athletes' notes to develop a general concept of their study and note-taking habits and thus were better able to provide constructive comments on the students' obvious note-taking habits.

An assortment of note-taking and study hint sheets was provided in the mentors' orientation packets, and the mentors were encouraged to give their ments copies of these sheets. The mentors approached study habit advisement in a variety of ways according to the needs of the individual ments. Some felt that providing bits of information was more beneficial for their ments, and others shared a large amount of information at once.

Study habit suggestions were shared with the ments in the hope that this information could help them avoid what are often irreversibly bad habits. These "helpful hints" included three elements: (1) an outline guide for lecture note-taking; (2) a list of easy abbreviations to use during note-taking; and (3) a short essay on the importance of taking thorough class notes. If even a small portion of this information is utilized by a student-athlete in the freshman year, the chances of this habit continuing are far greater than if undesirable study habits are allowed to be carried over from high school.

In addition to the three main goals of the mentor program, the mentors helped the ments in areas of personal interest. For instance, some student-athletes were concerned about developing relationships with teachers. There is an overwhelming consensus among freshmen that college professors do not care to know them personally and do not want to be bothered with their individual

questions (Camp & Epps, 1986). In most cases, this is not true, and the ments were encouraged to establish personal relationships with their instructors.

CONCLUSION

Many student-athletes leave secondary school with marginal study habits and time management skills, as well as a low academic self-esteem. If these fundamental aspects of college success can be developed early in the student-athletes' college career, they may have a much better chance of remaining eligible and eventually graduating. Since college student-athletes dedicate so much time to their sports, those who are lacking in these fundamental skills are not likely to develop them alone.

Successful professional mentor programs are the basis for the academic/athletic TEAM mentor program at Texas A&M University. The TEAM program is one alternative in the ongoing quest to find a solution to student-athletes' academic and athletic challenges. By providing new student-athletes with one upperclass model with whom they can begin to develop beneficial skills early in their college careers, they are likely to enjoy more academic successes and to develop greater overall self-esteem.

The TEAM program is not mandatory for the student-athletes at Texas A&M, but those who participate will be monitored, and their academic records and graduation rates will be compared to non-mentored student-athletes in the years to come.

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ACADEMIC COUNSELING FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES: A MODEL

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ABSTRACT

Counseling for student-athletes is gaining national prominence as new regulations, guidelines, institutional requirements, and public concern focus on academic performance. Big-time athletics has presented colleges and universities with new challenges for educating and graduating student-athletes. While academic counseling is often provided for this population, comprehensive programs that address personal, academic, social, and athletic needs are limited. This article describes an academic counseling model for student-athletes that can enhance their academic performance. The model consists of the following components: (1) individual assessment and evaluation; (2) study table; (3) academic support and monitoring; (4) staff development; and (5) information dissemination, research, and evaluation.

ACADEMIC COUNSELING FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES: A MODEL

The challenge to colleges and universities to provide appropriate academic support services for student-athletes is becoming more difficult as pressures and demands on student-athletes increase. While educational institutions struggle to find an appropriate balance between academics and athletics, comprehensive counseling models that address the personal, academic, social, and athletic needs and concerns of student-athletes are essential in order to ensure academic integrity.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although the life of an athlete can be exciting, sports careers are short, and few athletes play beyond the age of forty (Lerch, 1981). However, by the time many student-athletes realize that most of their working years will not be spent playing professionally, they may be too far behind academically to initiate a second career.

Today's student-athletes are confronted with pressures and expectations to a degree unheard of a generation ago (House Hearings, 1989). The educational success of college athletes has become a major national concern, and the need for universities to provide special academic support for marginally prepared student-athletes is seen as a reasonable solution (Whitner & Myers, 1987).

The necessity for early intervention to maximize the student-athlete's potential for academic success is becoming increasingly more apparent. This intervention must include educating student-athletes toward a new, more realistic understanding of other career opportunities, as well as institutional accountability on the part of athletic directors, coaches, faculty, athletic academic counselors, and the NCAA (Underwood, 1984).

Proposition 48 and higher institutional standards now required of entering college student-athletes have created the need for a comprehensive program that fuses athletics and academics (Thompson, 1986) while addressing the special needs of ethnic minority group student-athletes in general, and black student-athletes in particular (Henderson, 1986). Many of these athletes enter college with optimism, only to become progressively more detached from academics and resigned to inferior academic performance in response to negative athletic, social, and classroom experiences (Adler & Adler, 1985). Even those who graduate often find themselves lacking the skills needed to function in the simplest working environment (Nikow & Dinardo, 1985). The extent to which student-athletes are adversely affected by barriers to their career development must be determined early in the college experience by counselors and other professionals who work with them (Coleman & Barker, 1991).

Consequently, there is a serious need for the design and implementation of academic counseling programs, since these support services provide an opportunity to enhance the success of student-athletes.

ACADEMIC COUNSELING MODEL

A comprehensive academic counseling model that will facilitate the academic performance and career success of student-athletes consists of the following components: (1) individual assessment and evaluation; (2) study table; (3) academic support and monitoring; (4) staff development; and (5) information dissemination, research, and evaluation.

Individual Assessment and Evaluation

Individual assessment and evaluation consists of a critical examination of a number of variables that influence the academic performance of student-athletes. These variables include values, interests, abilities, personality, decision making strategies and styles, and academic performance. All variables can be correlated to determine an individual academic schedule for each student-athlete. Each variable is discussed briefly below.

Values. Values are those areas that are important to an individual, such as family, education, financial security, and athletics. Values are important because choosing a course of study also means selecting a value system and a lifestyle. Individual values and academic values must be congruent to facilitate academic and career success.

Interests. Likes and dislikes are significant with respect to academic performance. Vocational and avocational interests, or what a person likes to do for fun, are important in terms of selecting an appropriate major. Oftentimes an interest, with proper cultivation, may lead to success in a particular discipline.

Abilities. Identification of the student-athlete's abilities, achievements, and accomplishments, as well as weaknesses, will enhance the potential for improved academic performance.

Personality. Individual idiosyncrasies, nuances, and preferences are what make each person unique. The closer an individual can match personality type with academic, athletic, and career goals, the more likely that person is to be successful.

Decision Making Strategies and Styles. Decision making is a skill that can be learned, and the student-athlete's decision making strategies and styles are important with respect to issues such as the selection of a major, the scheduling of classes, time management, and interpersonal relationships.

Academic Performance. The level of academic performance will highly depend on the identification and remediation of academic deficiencies. Reading level and comprehension, limited preparation in mathematics and science, and inadequate study skills should be carefully assessed to determine what influence these might have on academic progress.

Study Table

Study tables have long been used as the anchor for academic support of student-athletes. However, such remedial services have been found to be less effective for black students than for white. Speculation is that faculty expectations may be that blacks would perform poorly, based on their previous high school records. Edmunds (1984) found that black students have low expectations for themselves, along with perceptions of unfair grading and insensitive attitudes among faculty members. These perceptions are often extended to include academic support staff as well as study table supervisors.

Also, it has been found that minority student academic performance is more variable than that of their white peers (Lunneborg & Lunneborg, 1986). This finding indicates that careful attention to the needs of these students is required. For example, in literature related to the academic performance of black students, orality has been associated with their learning and with the transmission of their cultural values (Boykin, 1983; Gay, 1975). This emphasis on oral communication is in direct contrast to the literary culture of schools and may indicate a need to help black student-athletes develop skills for handling written discourse. Dunn and Veltman (1989) suggest that these differences in students' perceptual strengths require instructors to approach the presentation of new material through each student's strongest modality and to reinforce learning through their second modality.

While study tables are limited in their ability to address all of these concerns, attention to the following recommendations should benefit multicultural and white student-athletes alike.

- (1) Study table should be required for all student-athletes with less than a "B" average, or those experiencing academic difficulty in a particular term or course.
- (2) Study table should be structured, with supervision by faculty and/or professional staff. The staff should reflect the specific ethnic groups represented by the student-athletes.
- (3) Study table should include the integration of academic, athletic, and career issues and concerns.
- (4) Study table should be scheduled a minimum of three times per week for a minimum of two hours.
- (5) Additional study time should be scheduled individually as needed.
- (6) Tutorial services should be scheduled separately from study table.
- (7) Mentoring programs should be scheduled separately from study table.

Academic Support and Monitoring

The provision of academic support services and the monitoring of such services is probably one of the most critical endeavors of the academic counseling model. The components identified below should be considered when an academic support and monitoring program is designed:

- (1) Weekly evaluation of grades
- (2) Supervised tutorial services
- (3) Regularly scheduled individual and group academic, personal, and career counseling
- (4) Career development workshops and seminars related to academics
- (5) Mentoring

Staff Development

The ultimate success of an academic counseling program is highly contingent on the abilities, skills, and talents of the staff. Any staff member (including counselors, tutors, and mentors) participating in an academic program for student-athletes must receive specialized training in areas such as communication skills, study skills, tutoring, interviewing, counseling, and mentoring. Issues such as cultural diversity and race awareness training are of the utmost importance since many of the student-athletes are from various ethnic backgrounds and have different experiences. Factors such as racial homogeneity of mentors can have real validity in mentoring relationships (Stenberg, 1990).

Finally, monthly evaluation of all staff is recommended to ensure that individual and programmatic goals and objectives are being addressed. Regular feedback provides an opportunity to modify and change approaches so that student-athletes receive the highest quality of service.

Information Dissemination, Research, and Evaluation

The dissemination of information related to an academic counseling model will allow the institution to provide the public with data concerning the status of the program. Reporting mechanisms which include longitudinal studies can address issues and concerns that arise as institutions are required to be more accountable to student-athletes and to the public. Research on topics such as self-esteem, vocational maturity, decision making, and academic success should be an integral component of an on-going program evaluation.

SUMMARY

It is apparent that much of the academic success experienced by student-athletes depends upon the variety of support services provided for this special population. Academic support services and monitoring are critical components of student success. The willingness of individuals involved in the provision of academic support services to expand cross-cultural communication skills and awareness can be important to the success of such programs. As

institutions acknowledge their responsibility for facilitating the academic success of student-athletes, new paradigms are evolving. Documentation of such models will aid professionals who are attempting to develop programs for their own institutions.

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LIFE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK STUDENT-ATHLETES IN REVENUE-PRODUCING SPORTS: A DESCRIPTIVE EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS¹

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ABSTRACT

Recent NCAA reforms (Propositions 48 and 42) have made imperative a better understanding of the social and psychological factors affecting black student-athletes in revenue-producing sports. The present study focuses on the college experiences of black student-athletes at 42 NCAA Division I schools in comparison to white student-athletes and other black college students in four areas: demographic and academic background; college life experience; mental health; and social support. Black student-athletes differed from both comparison groups across all four topic areas. Results of the comparison are discussed, and policy recommendations are presented.

¹Conclusions drawn from or recommendations based on the data provided by the National Collegiate Athletic Association are those of the authors based on analyses/evaluations of the authors and do not represent the view of the officers, staff or membership of the NCAA. All correspondence concerning this manuscript should be addressed to the first author at the Department of Psychology, University of Virginia, Charlottesville VA 22903.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

During the past ten years there has been an ongoing debate concerning the status of intercollegiate athletics as it relates to the educational missions of institutions of higher education. This debate has centered on the issue of academic integrity in intercollegiate athletics. Are major college athletics counterproductive to the educational mission of our universities? Do "student-athletes" belong in the same educational environment as other students? Questions such as these have led to legislation intended to restore academic integrity to intercollegiate athletics with the emphasis placed upon the academic preparation of potential student-athletes. As an example of this approach, the NCAA has passed and implemented Propositions 48 and 42, which set minimum eligibility requirements for incoming freshman student-athletes.

These eligibility requirements imposed by the NCAA have come under criticism for the adverse impact they have on black student-athletes. These reforms affect a much greater proportion of black student-athletes participating in the revenue-producing sports of football and men's and women's basketball. Unfortunately, relatively little empirical documentation of the college experiences of black student-athletes was available prior to the formulation and implementation of these reforms. Thus, the reform legislation was initiated without the benefit of a detailed understanding of the experiences of those individuals who were most likely to be affected. The dearth of empirical information on the black student-athlete has left no baseline data by which to evaluate the effects of the present reforms. Since the reform movement within the NCAA is gaining momentum, it is critical that we have a better understanding of the experiences of black student-athletes in revenue-producing sports during their college tenure.

Black student-athletes from Division I revenue-producing sports represent unique entities on our campuses. Whereas the median enrollment of black students at Division I universities is approximately 4 percent, blacks comprise approximately 12 percent of the student-athlete population. Black student-athletes are much more concentrated in the revenue-producing sports, where they comprise 37 percent of the football players, 56 percent of the men's basketball players, and 33 percent of the women's basketball players at Division I institutions. In the non-revenue sports, by contrast, black student-athletes make up approximately 8 percent of the female and 11 percent of the male student-athletes. At many institutions, black student-athletes comprise as much as half of the black student population (Center for the Study of Athletics, 1989).

Clearly there are disproportionate numbers of blacks in Division I intercollegiate athletics. They often come from very different backgrounds from the rest of the student body. Moreover, black student-athletes are different from the two student constituencies with whom they share the most in common: white student-athletes and black non-athletic students. As such, black student-athletes must be studied exclusively from white student-athletes and black non-athletes. It is inappropriate to assume that either white student-athletes or non-athletic black students represent the norm by which black student-athletes should be evaluated.

Despite the diverse demographic landscape in intercollegiate athletics, very few empirical studies have investigated the different experiences of black and

white student-athletes. Among the studies that have compared the two groups, most have focused on academic performance. These studies have yielded two consistent findings: (1) black student-athletes come to college less prepared than their white counterparts; and (2) black student-athletes do not perform as well academically once they are admitted (Ervin et al., 1985; Kiger & Lorentzen, 1986; Purdy et al., 1982; Sellers, in press; Shapiro, 1984). Few empirical studies have examined race differences in the actual experiences of student-athletes during their tenure as student-athletes. In a study of role conflict in student-athletes, Sack and Thiel (1985) found no race differences in the degree to which individuals felt they had to be "an athlete first and a student second." Other studies suggest that black student-athletes are coming from less advantaged backgrounds (Center for the Study of Athletics, 1989), are at greater risk for mental health trauma following academic failure (Edwards, 1984), and are more likely to experience racial isolation and alienation (Eitzen, 1989).

Even fewer studies have compared black student-athletes to black non-athletic students. In 1986, the Center for the Study of Athletics was commissioned by the Presidents' Commission of the NCAA to survey student-athletes at 42 Division I universities. In a report devoted to the experiences of the black student-athlete, the Center (1989) concluded that black student-athletes are less prepared and demonstrate a poorer academic performance than black non-athletic students. The report also concluded that black student-athletes differ from other black students with regard to their sources of perceived support, career aspirations, and life goals. One interesting finding of the report is that despite having significantly lower grade point averages, black student-athletes were more likely than other black students to respond that getting a degree was of the highest importance.

THE BLACK STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

The purpose of the present study is to provide an empirical description of the unique experiences of black student-athletes who participate in Division I revenue-producing sports. This study specifically examines differences between black student-athletes and two relevant comparison groups, i.e., white student-athletes and black non-athletic students. The comparisons highlight four important areas of the black student-athlete's life: demographic and academic background; college life experiences; mental health, and social support. The results of the analysis are discussed in terms of the unique experiences of black student-athletes. Finally, interventions on the institutional level are proposed to enhance both the college experiences and life chances of black student-athletes.

It is important to note that hypotheses are not being tested in this study, but rather that a descriptive analysis is provided of the psychological and socio-cultural factors influencing the college experiences of black student-athletes. It is also important to note that this paper does not treat differences as deficits or deviance; on the contrary, these comparisons of black student-athletes with white student-athletes and with other black students provide a context in which to illuminate the unique experiences of black student-athletes.

Demographic Background

The individual's demographic background provides a lens through which all subsequent experiences are filtered; thus, it has an important influence on college performance and experience. Previous investigations have found that students' socioeconomic status affects academic performance (Crouse & Trusheim, 1988). Lang et al. (1988) found that family income and mother's education were important predictors of college grade point averages for a major college football team. In explaining the finding that mother's income was an important predictor of college GPA for black student-athletes but not for white student-athletes, Sellers (in press) noted that because of the greater prevalence of female-headed households in the black community, mother's income may determine the quality of high schools available to black student-athletes to a greater extent than for other groups of students. Given the apparent importance of background variables in the academic success of college students, researchers must account for differences between these groups.

College Life Experiences

Recent reports of increased racial tension on college campuses have unfortunately made matriculation in many universities an adverse experience for many black students; their adjustment to the adverse environment has implications for their academic performance. Allen (1988) found that for a national sample of non-athletic black students, measures of social integration such as campus race relations and student relations with faculty were important predictors of academic performance. Sedlacek (1987), in a review of twenty years of research on black students on white campuses, concluded that along with the adjustments and responsibilities faced by all college students, black students also must deal with racism, as well as develop both a healthy self-concept and a sense of community in an often hostile environment.

The hostile environment and racial isolation experienced by black non-athletic students leads to an important question regarding black student-athletes: Is the campus environment as socially adverse for black student-athletes as it is for other black students on predominantly white campuses? One possibility is that black student-athletes may experience a more hostile environment than other black students because they are different from other student-athletes and from other black students. Or conversely, the celebrity status that goes along with being a student-athlete often may serve as a buffer against many of the noxious incidents experienced by black non-athletic students.

Mental Health Status

Few studies have examined the mental health status of student-athletes. The body of literature that most closely pertains to the mental health status of student-athletes is the literature regarding mood states and athletes. Most of the investigations in this literature utilize the Profile of Mood States (POMS) questionnaire (e.g., Frazier, 1988; Friend & LeUnes, 1990; Ungerleider et al., 1989). Unfortunately, many of these studies inappropriately extrapolate results obtained from the state-specific POMS questionnaire to more trait-like

interpretations and conclusions (Rejeski et al., 1991). Other studies have focused on personality differences in athletes according to the sport or the positions in which they play (Kirkcaldy, 1982; Nation & LeUnes, 1983; Shurr, Ruble, Nisbet, & Wallace, 1984). While these studies use more stable personality measures, these scales are not measures of mental health status. Because of the scarcity of studies regarding the mental health status of student-athletes in general, an empirical description of the mental health status of black student-athletes would provide a valuable foundation for future investigations.

Social Support

As strangers in a strange land, where do black student-athletes get social support? To whom do they turn when they want to discuss their problems? Are their support networks any different from those of other student-athletes or other black students? Tracey and Sedlacek (1984; 1987) found that social support was an important positive factor in the academic success of black students. On the other hand, social support may also influence academic performance in negative ways. This too remains an open question. In an extensive qualitative investigation of the life experiences of major college basketball players, Adler and Adler (1991) documented the ways in which student-athletes' views of their role as students are shaped—and often misshaped—by teammates, coaches, advisors, and faculty.

METHOD

Sample

The present study examines data from a national representative sample of full-time undergraduate student-athletes at Division I institutions commissioned by the Presidents Commission of the NCAA. Forty-two of the 291 Division I institutions for 1987-1988 were randomly selected to participate. Institutions were relatively evenly distributed across the NCAA's geographic districts and regions and were representative on a variety of indicators of institutional and student body characteristics, as well as sports history and involvement.

A total of 5123 student-athletes and students was sampled. The present study focuses on three subgroups within the sample: black student-athletes participating in revenue-producing sports ($n=847$); white student-athletes participating in revenue-producing sports ($n=1161$); and a random sample of black students who were not members of an athletic team ($n=511$). The participants' informed consent was obtained. Questionnaires were administered in groups of four or five students, with at least one data collector present. The data collector also provided participants with an assurance of confidentiality in their responses to the questionnaire. (For a more complete description of the sample, see Center for the Study of Athletics, 1988b).

Procedures and Measures

The student-athletes and the other black students were administered questionnaires that were nearly identical in content but differing in their wording to

reflect the diversity of activities in which the student-athletes and the black students were involved. The questionnaires elicited information on a variety of topics such as general academic and social background, personal and interpersonal experiences at college, and expectations and attitudes regarding education and career goals, as well as mental health status.

Four categories of variables were the focus of the present study, representing the major areas of the black student-athlete's life, i.e., demographic and academic background, college life experiences, mental health status, and social support.

Demographic and Academic Background. Demographic and academic background information was represented by six variables. Students self-reported their high school grade point average according to an 8-point scale in which "1" was a C- or below and "8" was an A or A+ average. Students' cumulative college GPA and actual SAT scores were collected from transcripts (SAT equivalent scores were computed for students who took the ACT). Socioeconomic status (SES) was derived from family income, parents' occupational status, and parents' education. Students reported their parents' education levels on a 6-point scale in which "1" represented less than high school graduation and "6" represented a post-baccalaureate degree (i.e., M.A. or Ph.D.).

College Life Experiences. Students' perceptions of college life experiences were represented by ten variables. Frequency of feeling racial isolation and of feeling different from other students was reported on a four-point scale from 1="never" to 4="frequently." Importance of earning a degree was rated on a four-point scale from 1="not important at all" to 4="of greatest importance." Satisfaction with coaches and with life in general was rated on a four-point scale from 1="not satisfied at all" to 4="totally satisfied." The extent to which student-athletes feel their head coach knows and understands what college life is like was rated on a four-point scale from 1="terribly" to 4="excellently." Scores for perceived difficulty with three aspects of personal growth and development were composites derived from twenty items rated on a five-point scale from 1="much easier" to 5="much harder." These composites were labeled "Social Development" ($\alpha=.81$), "Opportunities" ($\alpha=.72$), and "Assertiveness" ($\alpha=.73$).

Mental Health Status. In addition, four self-description inventories were included to gather information on students' mental health status. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) includes ten items measuring levels of self-acceptance and self-esteem. The Spielberger Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, 1977) includes twenty items measuring the tendency to see stressful situations as dangerous and threatening and to respond with heightened anxiety. The Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (Radloff, 1974) measures the presence and frequency of twenty major clinical symptoms of depression. Finally, the Levenson Locus of Control Scales (Levenson, 1974) include 24 items measuring beliefs about three dimensions of control: internal control, powerful others, and chance.

Social Support. Social support networks were assessed using eleven items pertaining to knowing and being able to confide in people about personal

problems. Students responded to these items with either "yes" or "no." Variables that were relevant only to student-athletes' college experiences were omitted from the comparisons between black student-athletes and non-athletic students.

RESULTS

Two sets of pair-wise comparisons were performed using t-test and chi-square procedures to examine the demographic/academic background, college life experiences, social support, and mental health characteristics of black student-athletes in relation to two relevant comparison groups: white student-athletes and black non-athletic students. Because of the large sample sizes included in these comparisons and the power of these statistical tests to detect mean differences between groups, a conservative standard of $p < .001$ was chosen to control for Type I error.

Comparisons of Black and White Student-Athletes

Demographic and Academic Background. Black student-athletes differed from white student-athletes on all six comparisons performed (see Figure 1). Black student-athletes lagged behind white student-athletes in educational achievement ($t = -17.16$), with their mean college grade point average just above the minimum standard of 2.00 for eligibility ($m = 2.12$), while white student-athletes averaged about a C+ ($m = 2.53$). Black student-athletes also lagged behind white student-athletes in their high school educational achievement, with an average of B- compared to B for white student-athletes ($t = -15.96$). Black student-athletes' mean SAT score of 753.14 was just 53 points above the minimum standard set in the NCAA's Propositions 48 and 42 and was significantly lower than the mean score of 899.83 of white student-athletes ($t = -19.46$).

Black student-athletes also differed from their white counterparts with regard to socioeconomic status ($t = -20.09$) and parental education. In terms of raw frequencies, both the fathers and mothers of the average black student-athlete had no training beyond high school. In contrast, both parents of the average white student-athlete had some training beyond high school, and the father had at least some college education. These differences were statistically significant ($t = -13.48$ for fathers and $t = -6.42$ for mothers).

Figure 1:
Comparisons of Black vs. White Student-Athletes¹

Variable	Black Mean	(SD)	White Mean	(SD)	T-Statistic
<i>Demographic and Academic Background:</i>					
Socio-Economic Status	44.69	(7.46)	51.36	(7.19)	-20.09*
Mother's Education	3.01	(1.56)	3.51	(1.48)	-6.42*
Father's Education	2.88	(1.59)	4.02	(1.65)	-13.48*
High School GPA	4.21	(1.69)	.44	(1.71)	-15.96*
SAT Score	753.14	(157.39)	899.83	(178.97)	-19.46*
College GPA	2.14	(0.43)	2.53	(0.57)	-17.96*
<i>College Life</i>					
Feel Racial Isolation	2.21	(1.08)	1.27	(0.65)	22.49*
Feel Different	2.90	(1.03)	3.06	(0.98)	-3.48*
Impt. of getting degree	3.83	(0.43)	3.84	(0.42)	-0.10 ^{ns}
Satis. with coaches	2.92	(0.87)	2.87	(0.85)	1.30 ^{ns}
Head Coach knows	3.12	(0.73)	3.03	(0.73)	2.72 ^{ns}
Satis. with life in general	3.22	(0.61)	3.29	(0.57)	-2.65 ^{ns}
Harder to be Assertive	-0.20	(0.81)	0.12	(0.69)	-9.56*
Harder to gain Opportunities	-0.10	(0.71)	-0.10	(0.58)	-0.13 ^{ns}
Harder to gain Social Skills	0.02	(0.69)	0.04	(0.57)	-0.98 ^{ns}
<i>Mental Health:</i>					
Trait Anxiety	37.93	(9.17)	37.08	(8.47)	2.14 ^{ns}
Self Esteem	25.10	(4.64)	25.45	(4.39)	-1.70 ^{ns}
Depression (CESD)	13.84	(8.54)	12.41	(8.08)	3.77*
Locus of Control:					
Chance	20.45	(8.68)	17.30	(8.56)	8.07*
Internal	37.69	(5.86)	38.53	(5.70)	-3.22
Powerful Others	21.96	(10.68)	20.33	(10.72)	3.37*

¹N(Black) = 847; N(White) = 1161 (sample sizes vary slightly due to missing data)

*Significant at $p < .001$

^{ns}Not Significant

College Life Experiences. Significant differences were found on three of ten comparisons relating to student-athletes' college life experiences. Black student-athletes reported feeling racial isolation more frequently ($t=22.49$) but reported feeling different from other students less frequently ($t=-3.48$) than white student-athletes. Black and white student-athletes did not differ in their perception of the importance of getting a college degree, their perception that their head coach knows and understands what college life is like, or in their satisfaction either with their coaches or with their lives in general.

Black and white student-athletes were similar in their perceptions of how their experiences as college athletes affect their personal growth and development. These groups did not differ in the difficulty they experienced with gaining opportunities or developing social skills. However, white student-athletes reported having more difficulty in being assertive ($t=9.56$).

Mental Health Status. Black and white student-athletes differed on two of the four self-description inventories. It is important to note that these mental health scores fall within the normal range and do not approach clinically significant levels. Black student-athletes had higher levels of depressive symptoms ($t=3.77$), were more likely to attribute their success to chance ($t=8.07$) or to powerful others ($t=3.37$), and were marginally less likely to attribute success to their own abilities ($t=-3.22$, $p=.0013$). Black and white student-athletes did not differ on measures of trait anxiety or self-esteem.

Social Support. Black and white student-athletes differed significantly in five of eleven comparisons of perceptions of available support (see Figure 2). White student-athletes were significantly more likely to report knowing people with whom they felt they could talk about their problems ($X^2=28.51$). White student-athletes were more likely to feel they could talk to teammates ($X^2=16.91$), other students who were not athletes ($X^2=17.11$), and other friends ($X^2=16.84$) but less likely to feel they could talk to academic advisors ($X^2=9.25$). Black and white student-athletes did not differ in their reports of feeling they could confide in other student-athletes, coaches at school, parents, siblings, spouses, or other people.

Comparisons of Black Student-Athletes and Non-Athletic Students

Demographic and Academic Background. Black student-athletes differed from black non-athletic students in their academic achievement and academic preparation for college (see Figure 3). Transcripts showed that student-athletes had significantly lower college grade point averages (approximately C average for student-athletes versus C/C+ for non-athletes, $t=-5.40$) and lower SAT scores (753.14 for student-athletes versus 877.88 for non-athletes, $t=-10.79$). Student-athletes also reported lower high school grade point averages than their non-athletic counterparts ($t=-9.91$).

Figure 2:
Chi-Square Comparisons of Black vs. White Student-Athletes

Variable	Black % "Yes"	White % "Yes"	X ² Statistic
Know people with whom to talk about problems	88.19	94.75	28.51*
<i>Can confide in:</i>			
Teammates	71.75	80.00	16.91*
Other student-athletes	37.75	40.18	1.10 ^{ns}
Other students (not athletes)	58.50	67.91	17.11*
Other friends	86.88	92.64	16.84*
Coaches at this school	48.46	42.55	6.29 ^{ns}
Acad. advisors at this school	31.06	24.64	9.25*
Parents	91.30	89.64	1.40 ^{ns}
Brothers/Sisters	78.71	81.00	1.46 ^{ns}
Spouse[n = 31(blk); 28 (wh)]	83.87	92.86	1.14 ^{ns}
Other People	79.25	78.27	0.25 ^{ns}

N(Black) = 847; N(White) = 1161 (sample sizes vary due to missing data)

*Significant at $p < .01$

^{ns}Not Significant

Black student-athletes also come from different social backgrounds than their fellow black students. Their families have lower socioeconomic status ($t=-5.46$), and their fathers and mothers have lower educational levels ($t=-3.60$). As noted above, the parents of the average black student-athlete have no training beyond high school; in comparison, both parents of the average black non-athletic student have some (non-college) training beyond high school.

College Life Experiences. Black student-athletes differed from other black students on six of eight variables relating to college life experiences. Black student-athletes reported feeling racial isolation less frequently than non-athletes

Figure 3:**Comparisons of Black Student-Athletes vs. Non-Athletic Students¹**

Variable	Athletes Mean	(SD)	Non-Athletes Mean	(SD)	T-Statistic
<i>Demographic and Academic Background:</i>					
Socio-Economic Status	44.69	(7.46)	47.06	(7.89)	-5.46*
Mother's Education	3.01	(1.56)	3.41	(1.69)	-3.60*
Father's Education	2.88	(1.59)	3.27	(1.80)	-3.09*
High School GPA	4.21	(1.69)	5.17	(1.71)	-9.91*
SAT Score	753.14	(157.39)	877.88	(231.02)	-10.79*
College GPA	2.14	(0.43)	2.31	(0.62)	-5.40*
<i>College Life</i>					
Feel Racial Isolation	2.21	(1.08)	2.41	(1.08)	-3.32*
Feel Different	2.90	(1.03)	2.88	(1.05)	0.43 ^{ns}
Impt. of getting degree	3.83	(0.43)	3.78	(0.47)	2.08 ^{ns}
Satis. with life in general	3.22	(0.61)	3.07	(0.59)	4.31*
Harder to be Assertive	-0.20	(0.81)	0.79	(0.58)	-26.21*
Harder to gain Opportunities	-0.10	(0.71)	0.91	(0.60)	-28.36*
Harder to gain Social Skills	0.02	(0.69)	0.71	(0.50)	-21.36*
<i>Mental Health:</i>					
Trait Anxiety	37.93	(9.17)	38.31	(10.37)	-0.67 ^{ns}
Self Esteem	25.10	(4.64)	24.87	(4.65)	0.90 ^{ns}
Depression (CESD)	13.84	(8.54)	14.74	(9.74)	-1.73 ^{ns}
Locus of Control:					
Chance	20.45	(8.68)	18.05	(9.03)	4.82*
Internal	37.69	(5.86)	37.10	(6.75)	1.62 ^{ns}
Powerful Others	21.96	(10.68)	19.31	(10.89)	4.36*

¹N(Athlete) = 847; N(Non-athlete) = 511 (sample sizes vary slightly due to missing data)

*Significant at p .001

^{ns}Not Significant

($t=-3.32$) and were generally more satisfied with their lives ($t=4.31$). In terms of personal growth and development, athletes reported less difficulty in being assertive ($t=-27.90$), developing social skills ($t=-21.36$), and gaining opportunities ($t=-28.36$) than non-athletic students. Black student-athletes and non-athletes did not differ in the extent to which they felt different from other students or in the importance they ascribed to earning a college degree.

Mental Health Status. The analysis of mental health status found few differences between black student-athletes and black students. Black student-athletes and non-athletes did not differ in levels of trait anxiety, self-esteem, or depressive symptoms. While student-athletes and non-athletes were similar in the extent to which they ascribed their success to internal characteristics, student-athletes were more likely to attribute success to chance ($t=4.82$) and to powerful others ($t=4.36$).

Social Support. Black student-athletes differed from black students on five of eight indicators of perceived social support (see Figure 4). Whereas student-athletes and non-athletic students did not differ in their overall perception of knowing people with whom they felt they could talk, they did differ in the specific groups of people with whom they felt they could confide. Student-athletes were more likely to confide in academic advisors ($X^2=15.61$), parents ($X^2=43.34$), and siblings ($X^2=29.98$). In contrast, non-athletic students were more likely to confide in other students ($X^2=13.17$) and other friends ($X^2=7.38$).

Figure 4:**Chi-Square Comparisons of Black Student-Athletes vs. Black Non-Athletic Students**

Variable	Athlete % "Yes"	Non-Athlete % "Yes"	X ² Statistic
Know people with whom to talk about problems	88.19	90.02	1.08 ^{ns}
<i>Can confide in:</i>			
Other students (non athletes)	58.50	68.91	13.17*
Other friends	86.88	91.96	7.38*
Acad. advisors at this school	31.06	20.65	15.61*
Parents	91.30	77.83	43.34*
Brothers/Sisters	78.71	64.35	29.98*
Spouse [n = 31(ath); 42 (n-a)]	83.87	83.33	0.00 ^{ns}
Other People	79.25	77.17	0.73 ^{ns}

N(Athlete) = 847; N(Non-athlete) = 511 (sample sizes vary due to missing data)

*Significant at p < .01

^{ns}Not Significant

DISCUSSION

The present results suggest that black student-athletes enter the university with very different educational and socio-cultural backgrounds than both white student-athletes and other black students. Black student-athletes have significantly lower family incomes and less educated parents. Many are first generation college students and are less prepared academically for college. Once enrolled, black student-athletes perform more poorly than their counterparts (Ervin et al., 1985; Kiger & Lorentzen, 1986; Purdy et al., 1982; Sellers, in press; Shapiro, 1984). On average, black student-athletes hover perilously close to the NCAA minimum requirements for eligibility both prior to admission (their average SAT score is 753 while a score of 700 is necessary for eligibility) and after entering college (their average GPA is 2.14 while a GPA of 2.00 is necessary for eligibility).

Greater differences are found when comparing black student-athletes with other black students than with white student-athletes. Black and white student-athletes do not differ in the importance they ascribe to earning a degree, their satisfaction in their relationships with coaches, and their overall satisfaction with life. For the most part, black and white student-athletes perceive the same levels of difficulty with achieving personal growth as a result of athletics, except that black student-athletes feel it is easier to become more assertive. Black student-athletes are more likely to experience racial isolation than white student-athletes. This finding is not surprising given the reported increase in overt racism on campuses and the demographic landscape of most universities. But it is interesting to note that black student-athletes feel less different as a result of being athletes than did their white counterparts. Black student-athletes may attribute their feelings of being different more to the fact that they are black and less to the fact that they are athletes.

The differences between black student-athletes and black students is interesting. While both groups are highly motivated to obtain a degree, black student-athletes perceive greater personal growth from being an athlete than black students perceive from being students. Overall, black student-athletes seem to feel that their college experience is more worthwhile and satisfying than do other black students. This finding may be as much an indicator of the social difficulties that many black students experience at predominantly white colleges as it is an indicator of the quality of the black student-athlete's college experiences (Allen, 1988). Black student-athletes also report feeling less racial isolation than other black students, perhaps because their enhanced status as athletes provides them with opportunities to socialize with people that other black students do not know.

Black student-athletes also differ in regard to their mental health from both white student-athletes and other black students. Our findings corroborate those of previous research, which found that blacks in general tend to score higher than whites on measures of external locus of control, resulting from

historical experiences with powerful others and cultural influences (Gurin et al., 1978). Black student-athletes are also more likely to attribute the locus of control to external factors such as luck and powerful others than did either comparison group. The tendency of black student-athletes to report an even greater external locus of control than other black students may be due to the fact that student-athletes in revenue-producing sports spend an average of 30 hours a week on sports during season (Center for the Study of Athletics, 1988a). Similarly, black student-athletes reported more depressive symptoms than white student-athletes. This difference between black and white student-athletes does not mean that the average black student-athlete is clinically depressed. It does, however, suggest that something about being black may lead to greater depressive symptoms for student-athletes.

Black student-athletes are less likely than white student-athletes to report that they have someone to talk to about their problems, and they differ in the groups of people with whom they are most likely to discuss their problems. Black student-athletes are also less likely to discuss their problems with peers (teammates, other students, and other friends) and are more likely to talk with an academic advisor. The relative emotional distance that black student-athletes report from their teammates and other students on campus may be a function of socio-cultural background differences. The greater utilization of and contact with the academic advisor for emotional support may be a byproduct of their poor academic performance.

While black student-athletes and other black students are similar in their perceptions of overall emotional support, the structure of that support does differ. Black student-athletes are less likely than other black students to talk to peers (other students and friends) and are more likely than other black students to receive support from loved ones who are not on campus (parents and siblings). One exception is the black student-athletes' closer relationship with academic advisors, which probably results from the fact that student-athletes are more likely to be assigned academic advisors than other non-athletic students.

Black student-athletes' reliance on off-campus support may interact with their socioeconomic background to place them at greater risk. Because black student-athletes come from poorer families and because their support systems are more likely to be located away from campus, it is more difficult for them to access their support systems personally. This problem is exacerbated by the NCAA's financial restraints which forbid student-athletes to work during the school year and yet do not provide them with any money beyond tuition, room, and board. Although black student-athletes' support networks may be very effective in providing emotional support, black student-athletes may have more difficulty receiving the instrumental support which often can only be provided by a person who has had some college experience. Because black student-athletes on average have parents who have never attended college and because they are more likely to seek support from parents, they are more limited in the type of support that their networks are able to provide.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Average black student-athletes probably would not have been admitted to the colleges they attend if they were not athletes. Some reformists have argued that it is athletes with academic backgrounds like the average black student-athlete who do not belong in institutions of higher education (Telander, 1989). They maintain that the presence of these student-athletes constitutes an injustice to the student-athletes and erodes the integrity of the university. This argument is invalid and misdirected. First, if these student-athletes do not belong in institutions of higher education, then where do they belong? With the technological advances in the work force, a college degree does not mean the same as it did fifteen years ago. A college degree is no longer an advantage in today's labor market; it is a prerequisite. In addition, there is an ever-increasing decline in the number of viable, legal opportunities for individuals without at least some college experience to earn a living that will support a family. While the current graduation rates for black student-athletes in revenue-producing sports are deplorable, it is clear that many black student-athletes do graduate. With less than ten percent of all black Americans receiving bachelor's degrees, the exclusion from school of any black student-athlete who would have graduated is unacceptable.

Second, educating those student-athletes who come from disadvantaged backgrounds enhances rather than erodes academic integrity. Since most public universities are obligated to provide community service, an important part of their mission is to provide access to educational opportunities for those who have been historically denied access. They are responsible for educating citizens to help them become productive members of society. Because it is also the mission of all institutions of higher education to pursue understanding and knowledge, it is necessary to include students from diverse backgrounds who can contribute valuable new perspectives to the quest for knowledge. Thus, the emphasis in reform should not be to eliminate those individuals who "do not belong" in college, but instead to provide those same individuals with the best opportunity to succeed.

Three recommendations are proposed to meet this goal and enhance both the educational opportunities and college experiences of black student-athletes. These include institutional changes, provision of more minority role models, and more effective academic support. Because the black student-athlete is a hybrid of both student-athletes and black students, these reforms can have the serendipitous effect of benefitting the three groups of students investigated in this study.

First, institutions must provide black student-athletes with a greater opportunity to interact with other students. The NCAA has taken a step in this direction by passing legislation that limits the amount of time student-athletes can be required to participate in any activity related to their sports. However, there should be little doubt that the pressures to win will force many coaches to test the limits of this new rule. It will be up to the NCAA to enforce this

legislation and to athletic directors to discourage such searches for loopholes. Other policy changes must also be enacted to provide black student-athletes with real opportunities to intermingle with the rest of the student body. For example, athletic dorms and athlete-only eating facilities should be abolished.

The second recommendation is that universities must hire more black coaches and athletic administrators. These people (particularly former black student-athletes) are more likely to understand the unique experiences of black student-athletes and thus are more qualified to design programs that will enhance their life chances. Black coaches and athletic administrators also provide important role models for both black and white student-athletes. Currently, there are only two black head football coaches and only one black athletic director in NCAA Division I. Universities must move beyond employing a token black running back coach or a black recruiter on the basketball team and move toward hiring blacks to fill decision-making positions.

Finally, universities must provide more appropriate and effective academic support systems for student-athletes. Because many black student-athletes come from deficient educational backgrounds, academic support systems must be sensitive to these deficits and provide skill building opportunities along with tutorial services. Such programs must shift the focus from the short-term goal of eligibility to the long-term development of the black student-athlete.

This philosophy can best be accomplished through at least two broad policy changes. The first involves providing academic advising services with a measure of autonomy from the eligibility pressures of the athletic department. The academic well-being of student-athletes is not best served by academic advisors who must answer to coaches or athletic directors whose livelihood is dependent upon the winning percentage of athletic teams.

The second policy change involves mandating the use of trained professionals in teaching programs. It does not make much educational sense for a second-year graduate student to tutor a student-athlete in writing an American history paper if the student-athlete has problems with sentence structure or has a learning disability. Rather than serving the intended purpose of providing the student-athlete with a learning experience, the project is likely to become a struggle with the rules of grammar; the graduate student should not be blamed for this sort of problem because of a lack of training. It is up to the university to provide a structure that values the long-term development of black student-athletes and provides them with an atmosphere conducive to learning. Once this is accomplished, student-athletes will have the responsibility for attaining the highest quality of education offered at their institution.

CONCLUSIONS

Black student-athletes in revenue-producing sports are strangers in a strange land. They are the product of two marginal groups on most of our

campuses (black students and student-athletes), yet they are very different from both of these groups. Black student-athletes come from very different socio-cultural and educational backgrounds, have different college experiences, have different perceptions of control, and have their own distinct patterns of social support. Some institutions have placed their own integrity at stake by concentrating their efforts on maintaining eligible athletes instead of producing literate student-athletes. Universities would best serve their educational missions, their students, and society by taking steps to improve college life and foster an intellectual atmosphere for all the diverse groups of students on campus.

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