

RESULTS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION
PROGRAMS FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

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INTRODUCTION

The transition from high school to college is difficult for many college students. This transition for the student-athlete can be especially difficult. He is faced with increased academic demands and a tremendous increase in the amount of time and effort required to participate in a college varsity sport. This places the student-athlete in a box; he is torn between wanting to do well for both his course professors and his varsity sports coaches. He physically does not have time, in most cases, to give both academics and athletics his best. Something has to suffer and many times this is academics.

Historically, student-athletes at the University of Richmond (UR) have gotten off to a slow start academically, both in percent of degree requirements completed the first year and with low grade point averages. They often had to attend summer school to improve their grade point averages and maintain eligibility. At the end of the fall 1983 semester 52 percent of the freshmen football student-athletes at the University of Richmond were on academic probation (less than 1.5 GPA).

Is there a way to solve the student-athlete's dilemma of being torn between academics and athletics and get him off to a better academic start? At the University of Richmond new methods of instruction and sequencing of academics with athletics are being tested as possible solutions to this problem. In the overall approach to solve this problem, considerations were given to the strong academic nature of the University, a desire not to develop special courses and degrees just for student-athletes, and ways to improve the overall academic performance of the student-athlete.

Consideration also had to be given to the National Collegiate Athletic Association's new legislation [Bylaw 5-1(j)-(6)-(ii)] effective August 1, 1985. This legislation makes a student-athlete ineligible for practice or competition in intercollegiate

athletics unless he maintains a grade point average that places him in good academic standing as established by the institution for all students who are at an equivalent stage of progress toward a degree.

Therefore, student-athletes will not have several semesters to turn things around academically. They must make acceptable grades in a program leading to a degree in order to maintain intercollegiate athletic eligibility.

The University of Richmond offers no developmental or remediation courses and there will be none offered in the future. Students enrolling in the University, and this includes student-athletes, are expected to be prepared to do college level work.

All new students enroll in courses the day before classes start. There is no preregistration for student-athletes or other groups. This causes many conflicts between academic classes and athletic practice-competition times. These conflicts may be resolved during the two week add/drop period after classes start. However, in an effort to avoid these conflicts, some student athletes find themselves enrolled in courses they did not intend to take.

Given the academic nature of the University, the programs offered, the registration procedures followed, the academic history of freshmen student-athletes, and changes in NCAA legislation, an overall University academic support plan for student-athletes was developed. This plan received a strong endorsement from the university administration.

RECRUITMENT

The first step in the academic support plan was a University statement of policy regarding academic requirements to be used in the recruitment of student-athletes. These established requirements incorporated both the University's admission requirements and some of the NCAA's requirements to be effective August 1, 1986 (Appendix A). These established academic requirements were used in the recruitment of student-athletes who enrolled in the University of Richmond in August 1984.

GROUP TESTING

The second step in the academic support plan was group testing and assessment. The incoming freshman athletes were tested in August before the semester had officially started. The purposes of testing were (1) to screen for deficiencies and (2) to aid in placing the students in courses. SAT scores and high school grade

point averages were already on file with the academic advisor, but additional information was needed pertaining to the basic skills.

The areas tested were reading, spelling, written English expression, and mathematics. The Nelson Denny Reading Test was administered to test vocabulary level and comprehension. This test is a predictor of success in handling college level textual material. The results of this assessment indicated a wide range of ability. The percentiles ranged from 95 to 10. The median was 47 and the average was 52.

An informal spelling assessment was administered which consisted of a list of 50 words on the eighth grade level. This list included both phonetically regular and phonetically irregular words. The scores are reported as percentages. The range was from 36% to 98%. An error analysis of items missed was filed on each student for future reference. The Multiple Assessment Program and Services assessment battery (MAPS) was chosen to test written English expression and the mathematics areas. The section on testing written expression required the student to identify errors in tense, pronouns, punctuations and word usage. The scores ranged from the 18th percentile to the 95th percentile. The MAPS battery for testing mathematics was made up of two separate instruments. The first assessed basic computation as well as fractions, decimals and percentages. The second instrument assessed arithmetic skills involved with the operations of whole numbers, fractions, decimals and percent. The percentiles for arithmetic skills ranged from 70 to 98 and for computation, 40 to 98.

INTERPRETATION OF SCORES

The scores were profiled for each student and those students with the lowest scores from the fiftieth percentile were given first consideration for placement in courses with supplemental instruction. The scores were also examined to pinpoint discrepancies that were intraindividual. Patterns which indicated stronger abilities in either mathematics or language were noted. If the discrepancy indicated a very low area, the student was individually tested at a later date.

INDIVIDUAL TESTING

Those students that were individually tested were given the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery. The students who qualified for individual testing fell into several categories.

Those students who scored below the fiftieth percentile in reading, those who had a thirty point discrepancy between vocabulary levels and comprehension levels, and those who were lower on the verbal battery as opposed to the math assessment, were tested. The results of the testing were put into the student's individual file. If problems arose in class, the information would be disseminated to the instructor and adjustments would be made.

SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION

The third step in the support plan was the development of an educational model which would enable the student-athletes to build a solid foundation in basic academic courses from their first day of classes. Information received at the ACT National Center for the Advancement of Educational Practices Conferences, "How to Succeed with Academically Underprepared Students," Washington, D.C., February 7-8, 1984, and a book co-authored by Dr. D.C. Martin were used to form the foundation for the proposed University of Richmond Supplemental Instruction (SI) Model. Dr. Martin is the Director of the Student Learning Center at the University of Missouri at Kansas City (UMKC) and the developer of the SI Model.

The following description of Supplemental Instruction (SI) was extracted from pages 2 and 3 of Supplemental Instruction, A Model for Student Academic Support.

Supplemental Instruction is designed to assist students in mastering course concepts and, at the same time, to increase their competence in reading, reasoning, and study skills. Specialists (SI leaders) attend course lectures where they take notes and complete assigned readings. These leaders schedule and conduct three or four fifty-minute SI sessions each week at times convenient for the majority of students in the course. The course professor defines the leader's role in accordance with what the professor thinks is appropriate. This role varies somewhat according to the nature of the discipline and the professor's teaching style and priorities.

The leader is presented as a "student of the subject." As such, he/she presents an appropriate model of thinking and of using the concepts and language of the field. The leader's job is to demonstrate proficiency in the subject while providing instruction in the reading, writing, and thinking skills

necessary for content mastery.

Perhaps the most important aspect of SI is the leader's attention to reasoning and questioning skills. The leader makes a conscious effort to assess the quality of student questions and responses and to identify those students whose present levels of thinking appear to limit their mastery of a new concept. Recent research with a wide variety of high school populations indicates that substantial gains in the level of these skills can be achieved through appropriate strategies and techniques.

SI leaders use the materials of the subject discipline as the vehicle for skills instruction as they deal with specific problems. Student lecture and reading notes are reviewed as the SI leader observes and models appropriate note-taking techniques. Reviews of reading assignments allow the leader to introduce effective reading styles and procedures. Vocabulary development, mnemonics, and other techniques which promote storage and retrieval of information are also integrated into the content review. Additional specific test-taking assistance, i.e., careful reading and interpretation of essay and objective test questions and the construction of sample tests, are provided before exams and receive periodic emphasis throughout the semester. Particular attention is given to helping students design effective study schedules and to facilitating the formation of informal study groups. Finally, backup tutoring, either by the SI leader or through some other campus resource, is provided to students needing individual support. (Martin et al., 1983)

Over twenty higher education institutions have initiated SI. Each of these institutions had to make minor adjustments to accommodate the individual characteristics of its campus; however, these adjustments did not involve major changes in the SI Model's basic design (Martin et al., 1983 P. 5). The UR SI Model follows the UMKC SI Model's basic design with several modifications. First, student participation in the UMKC SI is voluntary. Participation in the UR SI is required of some designated students (all other students in the class may voluntarily participate in SI). Second, the UMKC SI Model is used with the entire student body and in courses ranging from freshman English to advance medical school classes. The UR SI Model initially concentrated on student-athletes and with lower level courses. The possibility of using SI in the future with other students will be evaluated on the basis of the pilot program. Third, mandatory class attendance

is not required in the UMKC SI. Students designated to participate in the UR SI are required to attend all classes and SI sessions unless they have approved excuses. (UR Intercollegiate Athletic Policies and Procedures Manual, 1984, pp. 3-6).

Supplemental Instruction was used in three subject areas: English, Speech, and Math, starting in the fall 1984 semester. These subject areas were selected for SI because research and observation show that content mastery in these areas allows the student to perform more effectively in other academic areas (Martin et al., 1983). Upperclass students were used as SI leaders in Speech and Math and an adjunct faculty member was used as the SI leader in English.

COURSE SELECTION AND SEQUENCING

The fourth step in the plan was the selection of courses and course professors, and sequencing of student-athletes in these courses. The course professor has to understand and support the SI concept. The courses selected for SI were English 101, Mathematics 102, and Speech 101. Student-athletes who were selected to participate in SI had university approval to be preregistered in designated courses. Care was taken to ensure that no more than one third of the members were preregistered SI participants.

FIRST SEMESTER SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION RESULTS

The comparison of the fall 1983 academic summary for freshman football student-athletes, (Table 1), with the fall 1984 academic summary for freshman football student-athletes, (Table 2), reveals the following:

1. Average grade point average increased from 1.512 to 2.264.
2. Average number of semester hours per student-athlete increased from 11.57 to 13.
3. Number of student-athletes suspended or on academic probation decreased from 52% to 10% (actually may be decreased to 5% if student number 19 converts incomplete English 101 course to passing grade).
4. No student-athlete dropped or failed an SI course.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In analyzing the program itself and the effects of the program, several points were noted. Generally, the evaluation of the first semester's program of Supplemental Instruction indicated that

continued use and further expansion of the program with UR students were warranted. The SI program has continued into the spring 1985 semester and has been recommended for continuation and expansion in the number of courses and student athletes for the 1985-86 school year. It also appeared that SI with student-athletes at UR works best when upperclass student SI leaders are used.

For next year, some adjustments in the testing situation will be considered. The testing in mathematics appeared to be on a lower level than college. At present, other types of testing mathematics are being considered. The testing in written expression was weakened by the fact that there was no sample of spontaneous writing. A sample of writing will be added to the battery.

Student concerns about the testing cannot be overlooked. It is important to thoroughly explain the testing and impart the understanding that all incoming athletes are being tested and all information is considered and used only for placement. The testing should be explained in the framework that the University will do everything possible to help student-athletes succeed and is fully committed to them.

Tables, Appendix, and References follow.

TABLE 1
FALL 1983 ACADEMIC SUMMARY
UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND FRESHMAN FOOTBALL STUDENT-ATHLETES

STUDENT	ACADEMIC	GRADE	ACADEMIC STATUS
	SEMESTER HOURS COMPLETED		
1	12	3.250	
2	12	3.270 ¹	
3	12	2.000	
4	9	2.000	
5	12	2.000	
6	12	2.000	
7	13	1.769	WARNING
8	13	1.692	WARNING
9	12	1.500	WARNING
10	9	1.500	WARNING

(Continued next page)

STUDENT	ACADEMIC	GRADE	ACADEMIC STATUS
	SEMESTER HOURS COMPLETED		
11	10(25) ²	1.308	PROBATION
12	9	1.250	PROBATION
13	9	1.250	PROBATION
14	12	1.250	PROBATION
15	12	1.250	PROBATION
16	13	1.231	PROBATION
17	10	1.231 ³	PROBATION
18	9	.923	PROBATION
19	9	.692 ³	PROBATION
20	6	.667 ⁴	PROBATION
21	3	.231	SUSPENSION

Average number of academic semester hours completed during semester 10.381

Average number of PE hours completed during semester 1.19

Average total numbers of semester hours completed during semester 11.57

Average grade point average 1.512

¹ Transferred at end of semester

² Second semester freshman had a total of 25 semester hours

³ Resigned from University during Spring 1984 semester

⁴ Academic Suspension - enrollment terminated at end of Fall 1983 semester

TABLE 2
FALL 1984 ACADEMIC SUMMARY
UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND FRESHMAN FOOTBALL STUDENT-ATHLETES

STUDENT #	ACADEMIC SEMESTER HOURS	ACADEMIC STATUS	GRADE POINT AVERAGE
*** 1	9 ¹		3.667
2	14		3.500
* 3	11		3.273
** 4	12		3.000
**** 5	13		2.923
* 6	11		2.818
7	13		2.462
** 8	11		2.455
* 9	11		2.455
* 10	11		2.182
* 11	11		2.182
* 12	11	WARNING	1.909
* 13	11	WARNING	1.909
* 14	11	WARNING	1.727
* 15	11	WARNING	1.636
* 16	11	WARNING	1.636
17	9	WARNING	1.500
18	12 ²	WARNING	1.500
19	8	PROBATION	1.286
** 20	9	PROBATION	1.250

Average number of academic semester hours completed 11.0
during semester

Average number of PE hours completed during semester 2

Average number of semester hours completed during 13
semester

Average grade point average 2.264

¹ Withdrew from one course due to medical reasons (knee surgery)

² Has incomplete in English 101 to convert to a letter grade

Note: All of these student-athletes received credit for two physical education courses, IA 021 (football) and PE 211 C (weight lifting)

(Continued next page)

* Supplemental Instruction in English 101, Math 102, and Speech 101

** Supplemental Instruction in English 101 and Speech 101

*** Supplemental Instruction in Math 102 - Selected Course in regular registration

**** Supplemental Instruction in Speech 101 - Selected Course in regular registration

17 Failed English 101

19 Failed History 105 D - Incomplete in English 101

20 Failed Math 251 N

Note: No student with Supplemental Instruction failed a Supplemental Instruction Course.

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