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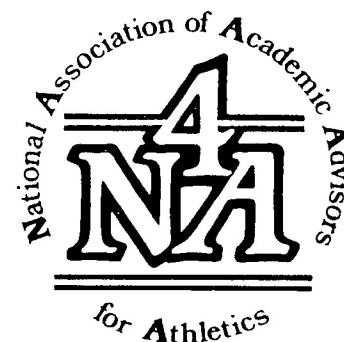
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From The Editor, or, A View From Myopia:

With this issue the Journal concludes the fourth year of its current format. Past editors, members and both member and non-member contributors to the Journal have provided an arena in which issues pertinent to the student-athlete are discussed.

This issue presents research which predicts academic success among student-athletes, discusses the impact of Proposition 42 in "at risk" middle school students, provides a model for the measurement of achievement of student-athletes, and presents a peak performance plan for student-athletes.

These are times of profound change in intercollegiate athletics. The student athlete has been previewed, reviewed, idolized, scrutinized and eulogized. The state of intercollegiate athletics has been examined, chastised, pontificated upon and paid homage to. Organizations from within and without the hallowed halls have expressed views on its current state. Commissions have been formed, legislation proposed, rules changed and interpretations re-interpreted. And there is no indication that the dissection will slow, let alone cease in the near future.

This publication is provided for and directed toward the front-line practitioners who deal with the student-athlete on a daily, nay, hourly basis. It is the hope of the editor that those who would read this publication will encourage colleagues, campus associates, librarians and others interested in, or who have a stake in the well-being of the college-athlete, to take part in, subscribe to, and contribute works of pertinent research to the Journal.

Editor,
Andrew R. Nixon, Ed.D.
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PREDICTING ACADEMIC SUCCESS AMONG STUDENT-ATHLETES

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines various measures that may be useful in predicting graduation among student-athletes. Rather than simply focus on the most commonly used measures (SAT scores and high school grade point average) four groups of variables were utilized: demographics, high school preparation, university-related variables, and athletic participation. Both bivariate and multivariate measures indicated that demographic and high school preparation variables were the most beneficial in predicting success among student-athletes. Perhaps the most significant finding was that when included in the regression analysis with other high school preparation variables, SAT scores were not significantly related to graduation. The most significant variables were high school grade point average and the number of college preparatory math classes taken.

Predicting Success of College Athletes

The role of the student-athlete has received considerable attention, both in the academic literature and the popular press. This is in large part due to the fact that although the presence and success of the student-

athletes' athletic pursuits are often central to the public image of the university, their success as students is often marginal at best. This paradox has come to light as the result of lawsuits, scandals and now congressional intervention. As a result, universities are now being held accountable for the graduation rates of their student-athletes.

Differences in academic success have been noted in a variety of studies. Females, for instance, are more successful in college regardless of the academic measure utilized, as are non-minority student athletes (Mayo, 1986; McLaughlin, 1986). In fact, one of the most consistent findings is that the group of student-athletes whose academic performance is the weakest are black males in revenue producing sports (Brigham, 1982; Purdy, Eitzen, and Hufnagel, 1982; Spivey and Jones, 1975). These findings are not surprising given that research has indicated that minority athletes tend to enter the university less prepared than their white counterparts, especially minority students who participate in revenue-producing sports (Kiger and Lorenzten, 1986).

One argument that has been made for the lack of success in this group of student-athletes is:

Lack of information or ignorance regarding the role of the college student (how to act or behave like a college student) and how the academic demands of college are different from those in high school also are contributing factors. Because of their ignorance about college, not because of their intellect, many athletes act inappropriately in the classroom and hold on to erroneous assumptions and/or expectations about college work . . . in other words, because of their special star status in high school, many athletes never learn the student role and often have a distorted notion of what it means to be a college student (Wilbur and Wilbur, 1986; 31).

Notwithstanding arguments such as this, much of the work in this area has focused on the grades and test scores of minority student-athletes.

A variety of studies have attempted to predict success in college of student-athletes by use of graduation rates. Because of the emphasis the NCAA has placed on the standardized tests (SAT and ACT) some research has examined these variables to predict this success (Brigham, 1982); while other researchers have focused on different factors. For instance, Lang, Durham, and Alpert (1988) found that high school grade point average, repetition of a year of high school, discipline actions by head coach, "feeling like I'm majoring in eligibility," mother's level of education, and graduating from a private high school all affect the success of college football players. This study indicates support for the position of Cook and Motley (1984: 18) who argue, "It is inappropriate to conclude that any one of the predictive variables would singularly lead to academic success."

This paper attempts to identify the factors which best predict graduation rates of student-athletes. Four groups of variables were examined: demographics, high school preparation, university-related variables, and athletic participation.

THE SAMPLE

Data pertaining to high school preparation, university academic performance and demographics were requested from Admissions and Records on 108 recruited student-athletes who entered the university during the 1983-84 and 1984-85 academic years. Records were returned on 105 of the student-athletes. All the student-athletes whose records were requested participating in one of the eight priority sports: men's basketball, football, baseball, men's gymnastics, women's gymnastics, women's basketball, softball, women's volleyball. The final sample was made up of 75% men and 25% women. Sixty-one percent were white; the remaining 39 percent were ethnic minority.

Fifty-one percent of the sample entered the university as first time freshmen, 39% were community college transfers, and the remaining 10% were transfers from other four-year universities. Of those who were community college transfers, 28% had obtained their Associate of Arts degree. Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores were available for 88% of the sample.

Twenty-four percent of the sample utilized a "redshirt" year. Eleven percent started all four years, while 42% of the sample never started. Thirty percent of the student athletes traveled with the team for three or more years. Data concerning athletic participation were obtained from the coaches of the 105 student athletes. Coaches assessed the athletic ability of the sample in the following manner: 38% were rated above average, 31% average, and 31% below average. Only half of the student-athletes completed their final year of eligibility.

FINDINGS

An analysis of the bivariate relationships indicated that the demographic variables, ethnicity and gender, were both highly correlated with the graduation. The graduation rate for females was 68%, while for males it was 20%. In a sport-by-sport comparison, this difference becomes even more apparent; the graduation rate of the men's team with the highest rate equals the women's team with the lowest rate of graduation (42%).

Consistent with much prior research ethnicity is also highly correlated with graduation. White student-athletes are more likely to graduate (44%)

than their minority counterparts (11%). White females had the highest rate of graduation, while minority males were the lowest. Also consistent with prior research, revenue producing sports had the fewest graduates.

Many high school preparation variables examined, but high school GPA, the number of F's received in high school, and the number of college preparatory English and mathematics courses had the greatest effect on graduation. SAT scores, while significant, were barely so. Graduation rates were not affected by whether the student athlete entered the university as a freshman or a transfer student. Students who had obtained an Associate of Arts degree were no more likely to graduate than were those who transferred without completing the degree.

University-related variables had the least effect of the four types of variables included in the analysis. Only two variables (number of semesters on academic probation and whether the student had been disqualified) were related to graduation. Having been a discipline problem to the team or the university did not have an effect on graduation.

Athletic participation variables did affect the rate of graduation among the student-athletes. As previously mentioned, graduation rates differed significantly by sport, with revenue-producing sports having the lowest rates. Other variables in this category that made a difference in graduation rates were skill level (specifically, students rated by the coach as having an above average level of skill were less likely to graduate), those traveling for more than two years with the team had lower rates of graduation, and those who failed to complete their last year of eligibility were less likely to graduate. Having "redshirted" their freshman year, the amount of financial aid, and the amount of time on the bench were not related to graduation rates.

In order to assess which of the four factors best predicted graduation rates of student-athletes, regression analysis was utilized (see Table 1). Variables that were both significantly related to graduation and theoretically relevant were chosen for inclusion in the series of regression equations. Because university variables were either not significant or theoretically redundant, those variables were not included in the analysis.

Table 1 indicates that high school preparation variables explain the most variance (36%) in graduation rates. It is important to note that when these variables were entered into the regression equation, SAT scores failed to attain significance. Since the NCAA has placed such importance on the student-athletes' test scores, a separate regression analysis which included SAT scores only was done. Although the inter-item correlations did not show a high degree of multicollinearity, when SAT scores alone were allowed to predict graduation rates, 11% of the variance was explained. As is demonstrated from these analyses, high school grade point average and the number of high school math classes accounted for the majority of the explained variance.

The two demographic variables (gender and ethnicity) explained 20% of the variance in graduation rates, with gender accounting for the majority of the explained variance. Although ethnicity was significant in the bivariate analyses, it fell out of the equation at the multivariate level. This is due to the interaction of these two variables as previously mentioned (black males are least likely to graduate while white females are the most likely to receive their degrees).

Athletic participation variables accounted for 14% of the variation in graduation rates. Only two of the four variables remained in the equation in the multivariate analysis. Only using the final year of eligibility and the number of years on the traveling squad remained significant in the regression equation. While significant at the bivariate level, the variables of starting and athletic ability failed to enter the equation in the regression analysis. Obviously there is a degree of shared variance among these variables which affects these results.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings presented in the preceding pages have a great deal of significance in the academic advising community at both the university and the high school level. In these times of tight budgets and significant repercussions associated with low graduation rates, the ability to identify potential student-athletes who are likely to succeed in the classroom will be especially important. Knowing which student-athletes will benefit most from intensive academic services will also be useful.

It is especially important to note that the SAT score variable, which has been one of the most commonly used predictors of academic success and the most controversial aspect of Proposition 48, was washed out by other more significant variables. High school grade point average, although influential, was only one of the variables that was important in predicting graduation. Limiting the screening of potential student-athletes to these two commonly used variables is much too restrictive a model.

One of the more surprising aspects of this analysis was the emergence of the number of college preparatory math classes taken in high school as a highly predictive variable. As previously mentioned, high school math classes appear to be a better predictor of graduation than almost any other variable, with the exception of high school grade point average, at both the bivariate and multivariate levels of analysis.

It is often assumed that college preparatory English classes are of greater importance; however, our analysis showed otherwise. This may be due to two different but related factors, academic advising in the high school and student motivation. One could argue that only the most motivated students would venture into the more advanced math classes;

thus, the importance of this variable overpowers that of English classes since most students are required to take more English than math. It is also possible that high school advisors are likely to encourage only those student-athletes whom they view as motivated to take the more challenging and beneficial high school courses.

The consistency with which demographic variables such as gender and ethnicity appear to be highly predictive (c.f. Brigham, 1981; Mayo, 1986; Purdy, et. al., 1982; Spivey and Jones, 1975) should be interpreted with extreme caution. While these variables should never be used to deny access to the university for the obvious reasons of discrimination, the cultural backgrounds of these youth should be used in the construction of academic programs as well as the early identification of student-athletes who may benefit from more intensive academic support. Furthermore, it is important to urge high school advisors to encourage this group of student-athletes to take appropriate courses which better prepare these students for their university experience.

An interaction effect may exist between the athletic ability of the student-athlete and the encouragement he or she receives at the high school level to take the more appropriate college preparatory classes. It may be that the most successful athletes receive the least encouragement in the academic arena. Since it is often this group which requires the most monitoring at the university level to ensure continued eligibility as well as academic success, it is important to identify these student-athletes early in their collegiate career so that they may benefit from increased academic services.

It is also the most athletically talented group which travels with the team for the longest period of time. Data suggests that student-athletes who consistently travel for three or more years are the least likely to graduate. Thus, it may be necessary for university officials to try to limit the amount of class time missed for travel and provide those on the traveling squad with the greatest amount of academic services.

This analysis indicates that a number of variables are important in the prediction of academic success. Preparation in high school and the motivation to succeed in both athletic and academic endeavors may be the keys to successful completion of a college degree. It is especially important that this information be filtered down to high school advisors and coaches to ensure that student-athletes receive the necessary encouragement prior to enrolling at the university level. It is possible to work with the marginally motivate student-athlete to develop a greater interest in academic success, but those who enter the university with poor motivation are difficult to change.

Thus, as Lang, et. al., 1988 and Cook and Mottley, 1984 have also indicated, when identifying student-athletes it is important to look at much more than high school grades and SAT scores. Classes taken, especially

math, and the degree of academic motivation may be more important predictors of academic success than the use of standardized test scores. It is also important that the academic motivation of student-athletes in revenue-producing sports be closely scrutinized, since ethnic minorities who participate in these sports have consistently been the least likely to graduate.

Student-athletes who fit the profile should be given the most intensive academic support available. It will be especially necessary to bring an understanding of the cultural backgrounds of the student-athletes into these programs.

Table 1
Regression Equation Results for Selected Variables

<u>Variable</u>	<u>beta</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Significant</u>	<u>r²</u>
Demographics				.20
Sex	-.41	13.72	.00	
Ethnicity	.10	.837	NS	
High School Preparation				
H.S. GPA	-.81	18.02	.00	
College prep Math	-.39	6.93	.01	
College prep English	-.03	.04	NS	
SAT Score	.03	.060	NS	
SAT Score	.36	9.36	.00	.11
Sports Participation				.14
Finish Eligibility	.30	4.12	.05	
Traveling Team	.19	2.95	.07	
Years Starting	.11	.298	NS	
Skill Level	-.04	.52	NS	

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MIDDLE SCHOOL 'AT-RISK' STUDENT-ATHLETES AND PROPOSITION 42

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Sports have been an integral part of our nation's school system and are considered as American as apple pie. Sports have been encouraged by parents and school systems for competitiveness, cooperation, team spirit and discipline. In the childhood memories of many adults in this society, a coach is next to paterfamilias. Recently, however, many are starting to question the importance of sports in the educational system. The hyphenated term "Student-athlete" is considered inherently contradictory by many people. They are concerned that the athlete part of the "student-athlete" outweighs the student part. The public concern is raised by the dominance of undereducated and/or black athletes in revenue generating rate after four years in college/university. These critics complain that big time intercollegiate athletics are plagued with major problems and argue that fundamental reforms are needed to correct them. Unless serious measures are taken, the credibility of all colleges and universities will be in question.

This paper will discuss the two propositions by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) which are supposed to resolve the problems of recruiting undereducated and poor athletes who do not meet the academic requirements for college and university admission and fail to graduate after four years: first, Proposition 48 (P48), enacted in 1986, and second, Proposition 42 (P42), which will go into effect in August 1990. It

will describe the issues raised by these propositions, which mostly concern the black, poor, and minority group-athletes in Division I institutions only. Furthermore, it will discuss the reasons why reaching the middle school "at-risk" student-athlete could be the solution to the problems posed by P48 and P42, and suggest some ways of helping this group.

TWO PROPOSITIONS: PROPOSITION 48 and 42

Proposition 48. At the 1983 winter meeting of NCAA, an initial step was taken to reform the state of collegiate athletics by passing P48. It created two requirements for athletic scholarship eligibility: (1) the student must have maintained a 2.0 grade point average in 11 "core" college preparatory courses including 3 English, 2 mathematics, 2 social science, and 2 natural or physical sciences courses, with 1 lab section, and (2) the student must have scored a minimum of 700 points on the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) or 15 points on the ACT (American College Test). P48 allows incoming first-year freshmen who did not meet either the grade point or the standardized test score requirement to enroll in the university of their choice if accepted on "partial eligibility". These student-athletes are ineligible for athletics in their first year and will have three years of eligibility remaining, provided their academic progress is satisfactory during their year of ineligibility. P48, now known as NCAA's Bylaw 5-1-(j) became effective in August 1986 for the nation's 277 Division I colleges and universities.

Proposition 42. Some felt that the "partial eligibility" clause provided a loophole of sorts and wanted the high school student-athletes to take their studies seriously. Hence the NCAA passed Proposition 42 (P42) effective August 1990. It will eliminate the partial qualifier loophole. When P42 is implemented, the Division I colleges and universities may offer athletic scholarships or any kind of financial aid only to the incoming freshmen who meet all the requirements for P48, which means that s/he must have a 2.00 GPA or above and at least minimum scores in standardized tests.

PROBLEM: CAUSES FOR APPREHENSION.

Many of the student-athletes, especially African American football and basketball players come from impoverished neighborhoods and from single parent homes in urban areas. Herbert L. Foster in *Ribbin', Jivin' and Playin' the Dozens: the Persistent Dilemma in Our Schools*¹ writes about how the public schools in the urban ghettos and barrios frequently encounter problems such as overcrowded classes, disruptive students and white teachers who feel uncomfortable working in inner city schools, cannot/do not relate well to ethnic culture, and are confused about both the standards and the goals of education in these schools. As a result, many of the minority and poor student-athletes who come from inner city public

schools are underprepared for academic success. It is no wonder that these propositions raise numerous concerns among the parents in these communities, minority political leaders and activists, and coaches.

A. Exclusion of black athletes from higher education. The first cause for concern is that many blacks and poor view these propositions as discriminatory and elitist. Joseph B. Johnson, President of Grambling State University, argued that the 1987 NCAA survey proved that P48 is a racist rule and that it was instituted by racist people intent on denying black students as education.² This survey showed that out of the 424 "partial qualifiers", 104 were white, 299 were black (70%). For the second consecutive year (1989-1990) there was an increase in the enrollment of partial qualifiers at Division I institutions. This increase represents 6.5 percent of the total number of athletes grants-in-aid given to the freshmen in 1989. 5.1 percent of all the scholarships went to partial qualifiers in 1988 and 4.5% in 1987. The racial break down again was heavily tilted toward black student-athletes. In 1989, 66 percent of all partial qualifiers reported in Division I were black, similar to the numbers collected in previous years.³ Many critics say that both P48 and P42 rules affect black students disproportionately.

The NCAA's third annual study of the requirements from 1987 to 1988 showed that black athletes made up about two thirds (66%) of the "partial qualifiers" in both years, and that virtually all of the ineligible men's basketball players were black. Another survey released by the Associated Press found that 91 percent of the ineligible men's basketball players at the 293 Division I institutions in 1989 were black. Some think that these statistics reflect a discriminatory policy.⁴

Even though football and basketball players have been predominantly black (86%) and account for the 1,800 athletes who have lost a year's eligibility to P48 to date, there was only one black university president among the 37 university presidents who framed the legislation.⁵ Says LSU basketball coach Dale Brown, "Many of the people who voted for this proposal would have to look up the word ghetto in a dictionary, because they've never been there." Black educators and leaders were unhappy about the minimal level of black representation when this ruling, which would affect the future of a high percentage of the black student-athletes, was passed.

The passage of Proposition 42 has angered many who accused P48 of being racially discriminatory.⁶ They argue that P42 closes the door of opportunity for university education to many minority and poor student-athletes. Nonqualifiers will have to meet their educational expenses as freshmen or attend junior colleges. One may argue that P42 does not really close the door to education since the student-athletes with low grade point averages and standardized test scores can join junior and community colleges. But an academic degree from Big Ten enhances the future career possibilities. During the Congressional hearings in May 1989, the NCAA faced heavy

criticism from coaches and, in response, it has reconsidered the rule changes in January 1990. Even if NCAA is willing to modify the implementation of P42, educators are aware that now is the time to start assisting the "at risk" student-athletes.

B. Use of standardized tests to deny future opportunities. The second cause of concern is how the C average and standardized tests are used to stop the black, poor and disadvantaged minority athletes at the threshold of post-secondary education, without chances to redeem their future or correct past mistakes. The test scores deny the financial aid package crucial for the college education of the underprivileged student-athletes. Standardized tests and/or competency tests are nothing new to the American education system. Howard Taylor, professor of sociology at Princeton University, says that standardization through reliance on tests, which is often a poor predictor of academic performance, minimizes diversity and encourages ethnocentrism while discouraging ethnic pluralism.⁷ Coupled with the already high dropout rate of black students—12 percent, compared to 10.3 percent for the whites, according to the 1986 U.S. Bureau of Census findings—those students failing competency-based tests would only decrease the number of black students who would be able to pursue post-secondary education. Harry Edwards, a sociologist and black educator, strongly argues that class-specific values and perspectives can be learned, and that test standards should be set as post-enrollment goals and not as pre-enrollment obstacles.⁸

C. Neoconservative political environment unfavorable to blacks and the poor. The third cause of concern is the hostile national mood which forecasts no "kinder and gentler" attitude toward the underclass in this society. Propositions 48 and 42 come at a time when blacks are already feeling that they are losing ground. The Reagan years crystallized two important forces in current political thinking among blacks. First is their profound frustration, especially among the new black middle class, at the problems black still face in mainstream white America.⁹ The second is the increasing emphasis of black leaders themselves on self-help solutions to problems that have proven to be untractable such as drug abuse, the increasing poverty of the underclass and the breakdown of the black family.¹⁰ Even though the black leaders emphasize self-help solutions, the problems such as drug abuse and mother-only family structure takes time, leadership, and finances to solve. Some of these resources are not at the disposal of this community.

The national mood has been changing in the United States since 1980. The country seems to have reduced its strong commitment to promote equity for blacks, minorities, and the poor. Kenneth S. Tollet of the Institute for the Study of Educational Policy states that the changing mood of the nation is seen in claims that socio-economic problems are intractable and subject to haphazard forces such that government could accomplish more by doing less.

President Bush's administration shows little difference from Reagan's administration in its policies in the treatment of the underclass. More recent Supreme Court decisions seem to weaken protection from employees' civil rights. Whatever was gained 25 years ago when the Civil Rights Act passed in 1964 seems to be losing ground, and these Supreme Court decisions create a climate of anxiety, uncertainty and caution about all aspects of continued affirmative action. The societal attitude at the macrocosm level is reflected at microcosm level on campuses across the nation toward black and minority student-athletes.

Faustine C. Jones, Senior Fellow, (1974-1977) of the Institute for the Study of Educational Policy has noted a changing mood, one of increasing conservatism, which is "more negative than positive" with regard to its attitudes toward blacks, other minorities and the poor. The three socio-economic factors which helped to explain this mood of conservatism expounded by Jones in the 1970's also hold true today:¹¹

1. an increased indifference and antipathy, at times hostility, toward societal and governmental programs on behalf of blacks, other minorities and the poor;
2. a general preoccupation among many Americans with individual concerns and interests; and,
3. a growing fear of economic uncertainty.

86 percent of the student-athletes are African Americans in football and basketball, and these athletes suffer from the hostile attitude of the majority on the college campuses across the nation. The societal resentment against the underclass is often reflected by the racist attitude exhibited in the various racial and sexual incidents reported about the misbehavior of African American student-athletes.

D. Student-athletes' concern about study time and money. The fourth cause of concern is the uncertainty that the black "partial-qualifiers" must face about their future in the universities; since coaches are hired and fired on the basis of the number of wins at all cost, very few coaches have been concerned about the student-athletes' academic progress or graduation rate.

In the universities and colleges in which black student-athletes are enrolled, the neoconservative mood of the nation is reflected in the new resolution of the administration and faculty not to treat the student-athletes as favorite children, demanding that they perform equally well in the classrooms without an undergirding support system to correct the academic deficiencies they came with. At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, there are three academic advisors for 900 student athletes.¹² Many tend to forget that the student-athletes were primarily admitted not for academic excellence but for their athletic ability. Moreover, these student-athletes spend

disproportionate amounts of time in practice and tournaments while the rest of the students are spending it in libraries. Football and basketball players spend about 30 hours a week on sports during the season, while dedicating about 25 hours a week to attending and preparing for classes. Freshman athletes who come to big campuses, undereducated and unprepared from urban ghettos and rural schools need time to get used to the campus environment and study skills needed to compete with the top 40 percent of the high schools. Instead of spending time to adjust and study, the freshman athletes are forced to spend time practicing or watching others practice. Freshman athletes spend nearly as much time on sports as do other athletes and "red shirted" freshmen.¹³

These long hours of practice and game schedule do not allow the student athletes to study as well as the other students to maintain their eligibility and to graduate. Ex-athlete Thomas (Satch) Sanders says that colleges and universities literally use the bodies of the student-athletes and later discard them, unprepared, unqualified for successful life in the society. One fourth of the football and basketball players complained that they felt pressured to ignore their injuries, and nearly half said they had been subjected to at least one incident of physical or mental abuse at their institutions. Fifty-four football players at Prairie View, A & M University at Texas filed charges against the team's coach Haney Catchings, refusing to play and charging that their coach disbanded their "study table" to prevent distractions from football, that they had failed to get their books until more than midway through last fall semester, that some financial-aid money had been withheld to encourage their on-the-field play, and that Mr. Catchings also forced them to practice more than five hours a day.¹⁴ All these complaints prove that winning is the top priority of some coaches and student-athletes lose out on leaving the university with a degree in hand.

As mentioned before, many black and poor students athletes come from single parent families. Most often, the single parents are poorly educated mothers, whom Jesse Jackson referred to as "babies giving birth to babies", struggling hard to get the athlete and his/her siblings out of the ghetto and poverty cycle. Expectations from their families put the student-athletes in pressured situations. In addition, many athletes, especially football and basketball players, have considerably less spending money for basic necessities, though they receive significantly more financial aid toward the tuition and housing fees. These athletes also experience isolation from other students on their campuses, psychological and physical distress, difficulty in avoiding drugs or alcohol and low academic self esteem due to the popularly believed dumb-jock image.¹⁵

SOLUTION: START REACHING OUT TO THE "AT-RISK" STUDENT-ATHLETES EARLY

Middle School "At-Risk" Student-Athletes. John Chaney, Temple University basketball coach, says, "When a freshman in college can't read or

write, it isn't because he suddenly became unable. Hell, he could not read or write in first grade. Who has been guilty for 12 years?"¹⁶ His emphatic statement makes it clear that it is essential to reach the "at-risk" student-athletes with proper guidance and help early on so that they come into high school well-prepared to meet the requirements of the propositions. Even though it is best to reach out at the pre-school level with programs such as Head Start and at the elementary school level, the federal government and other agencies have not allocated enough funding for programs to do this now. Although a good long-range objective will produce expected results in 12 years, it will not solve the problem within the next five years or so. Moreover, trying to help at high school level is too late. Too much attention is focused on elementary and high school to the detriment of the middle school years, ignoring the concerns and developmental processes of young adolescents. So, here the middle school is chosen as the target group.

These middle school "at-risk" students are any post-elementary school students who run the risk of not acquiring the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to become successful adults. An 'at-risk' student-athlete is defined as a student in school with potential for being successful in sports activity, especially in football and basketball, who will not make it to college due to P42. These students exhibit many behavior patterns such as not engaging in classroom and school activities, experiencing frequent substance abuse, committing disruptive and delinquent acts, attempting suicide, becoming pregnant, and dropping out. These behavior patterns do not enable them to graduate from school and become successful adults. Larry Cuban, professor of education at Stanford University, deals extensively with the history of the "at-risk" label and explains what produces "at-risk" school children and how many of these labeled school children are programmed by grade schools to be failures.¹⁷ The national data show a high percentage of that "at-risk" students are frequently from poor families (1 in 4), from single parent families (1 in 5) and from minority families (1 in 3)¹⁸. It seems that the above mentioned factors contribute toward "at risk" status for whites and ethnic minority high school students. The national dropout rate is between 14 percent and 28 percent, as reported by different agencies, and a disproportionate percentage is from low socioeconomic families and racial/ethnic minority groups. The dropout rate for the nation is 14 percent for blacks and 10 percent for whites, according to National Center for Education Statistics.

Dropouts

Since "dropouts" result in the high attrition rate of the middle school 'at-risk' students-athletes, one needs to address causes to prevent dropping out from schools. One study found that one-third of dropouts choose the following reasons for dropping out: "did not like school" and "received poor grades." Perhaps these dropouts can be more accurately described as

"pull outs," "push outs," and "fade outs."¹⁹ Andre Hahn of Brandeis University reports from his survey that disadvantaged and poor students from larger cities drop out at a greater rate than students in other circumstances.²⁰

Middle and junior high school students are spotlighted in the report entitled "Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for 21st Century" by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which calls for sweeping middle school overhaul aimed especially at helping "those at risk of being left behind."²¹ The report recommends, among other things, creating smaller communities for learning. By restructuring schools into "houses" or "schools within schools," grouping teachers and students together in teams, assigning an advisor to each student, so that every child is well known by at least one adult, and promoting positive values and good citizenship. The curriculum would include health instruction and community service activities. This recommendation will work well with the "at risk" student-athlete group, though some educators, worry that the recommendations add up to a middle school that is part classroom and part social welfare agency. Samuel Sava, executive director of the National Elementary School Principals states in the article titled "Help for at-risk-kids": "Middle School administrators have got their hands full just trying to educate kids, let alone creating warm, caring environments."^{20a} But Carnegie warns that the real choice is whether to fund health clinics, counseling, and teacher training today, or to pay the far higher cost of drop-outs, an ill-prepared work force, and swelling welfare and prison rolls tomorrow, concluding that the nation cannot afford to continue neglecting these youth. Some educators may disagree with the new job description for teachers, but it seems that this is the job description of the future.

Schools Can Make a Difference: Research Findings.²² According to the study by the Department of Education, Pennsylvania, titled Achieving Success with More Student: Addressing the problem of student at risk, K-12, educational research reports that schools do make a difference toward the success and failure of the "at-risk" student. The first line of research reports that schools and various aspects of school programs, teachers, and staff have positive effects on the "at risk" students' attitudes, social behavior and achievement. The second line of research, from longitudinal studies on the effects of early schooling on children, such as Head Start, from families of low socioeconomic status suggest that these students can do well in school if they: (1) acquire, through a high quality pre-school program, the task orientation, self confidence, social skills and school relevant knowledge needed to succeed in elementary school, (2) continue to develop and experience success with their elementary teachers, and (3) throughout these years, receive support from their family, support that has been encouraged and structured by school/parent/family involvement programs.

The educators of "effective school" systems believe that "all children can learn" and can overcome cultural deficits. These middle school "at-risk" student-athletes, in fact, should be seen as children of value because they form a desirable pool for minority recruitment by colleges and universities vying for basketball and football players.

The third line of research, examining the effects of alternative education programs for "at risk" students, reports that alternative programs help students to modify their behavior and develop positive social bonds to school staff, activities, goals and norms. To foster the development of such bonds, these programs are small in size, have a staff that is willing to play an extended role, deliberately gain support of the peer group, use a variety of individualized and cooperative learning strategies, and structure the curriculum, at least part of the time, around real world problems and activities.

The last line of research suggests that schools can improve their effectiveness with students "at risk" with significant support from district leadership. This must be grounded in a shared belief that schools can make a difference and must be led by school-based person(s) who can communicate and develop staff commitment to a vision of what would be more effective practices. This research also showed that to produce significant changes in student attitudes, behavior and must be achievement, it is necessary to consider the ways that students and teachers interact and work together inside and outside the classroom. Obviously, there is no easy way to implement solutions to help the students "at risk," but many educators have started to work on programs to solve these problems.

Development of Positive Self-Image. One of the approaches to achieve success with students "at risk" is to target specific groups. In this case, middle school "at risk" students with athletic potential are selected. Based on many studies of students "at risk", the assumption is that the problem mainly resides in the target group's environment such as home, school and community/neighborhood, and that an environment-oriented intervention must be selected which will directly affect both the individual and his/her environment. The objectives of this approach are as follows to improve: 1) the middle school "at risk" student-athletes perception of themselves, their instructors/staff and the school, 2) student commitment to conventional social goals, roles, norms and activities, 3) student behavior, and 4) student achievement. The domains for action include instructor/staff expectations reflected in their attitudes toward their target group and the role played in developing self esteem of these youngsters incentives, peer culture, family support, and special services for students. The outside resources that can be tapped are university outreach programs, community/neighborhood service agencies, youth groups, business and business related groups, and churches.²³

Teacher-Athlete Role Models. Perhaps one step that could be made is to increase the number of teachers who will be able to relate easily to the "at

risk" student-athletes. Martin Haberman, a professor of curriculum and instruction at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, suggests that universities use their support of athletes as a model for supporting minorities in teacher education programs to fill the need for minority teachers²⁴. He proposes that every Division I university that admits students under Proposition 42 should admit an equal number of minority students who would like to become teachers. These universities must provide the same degree of tutoring, financial aid, medical care, paid employment, and guidance in the preparation of these future teachers as they provide for the athletes. A variation of this interesting idea is to recruit half or as many as possible athletes with the understanding they will take teacher-education majors, because these ex-athlete-teachers will be best role models for the "at-risk" student-athletes. These teacher-athletes will be able to relate to the many faceted problems of the "at-risk" student-athletes and counsel/guide them to do well in their studies as well as in sports.

How colleges and universities can help the "at risk" student-athletes under Proposition 48 and Proposition 42. The previous section discussed how difficult it is for the blacks, poor and other ethnic minorities to stay in school till graduation, as well as how difficult it is for the "at-risk" student-athletes to meet the criteria of P48 and P42 to attend colleges and universities on athletic scholarships. It also highlighted how educational research showed that schools can make a difference and help these "at-risk" students to graduate.

This section will discuss how colleges and universities can also help this student group by planning intervention programs in the early phase of these students' schooling. Alerting the student-athletes about Proposition 42 requirements during their junior year in high school is already too late. Middle school years are the right time to present consciousness-raising awareness programs to this group. Those who aspire to play revenue-generating sports have to know now that times have changed and that playing well is no longer a valid ticket to participate in collegiate sports. Even the "partial qualifier" gate may be shut in 1990. Since these student-athletes are young, it becomes the responsibility of the educators, parents, and the community to make these youngsters aware of what they have to do to realize their dreams and that nobody else can do it for them.

Bridge Programs Linking "At-Risk" Student-Athletes and Universities. Current proposals for changes from the NCAA may encourage college and university presidents to play a major role in the reform of intercollegiate athletics.²⁵ Colleges and universities can initiate a number of programs to help "at risk" student-athletes. For example, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Summer Collegiate Experience Program brings prospective minority students from inner city schools, mostly from Illinois, Wisconsin and Michigan, to the Madison campus. This is a three-week program helping the "at risk" students to sharpen their writing, mathematics, library use, and test-taking skills and to get a taste of what it is to be on a big

campus. Some of the "at-risk" student-athletes who are in this program register to attend the university after this program. Currently, there is also a Middle School College Access Program through the School of Education bring minority middle school children for a week to encourage these students to consider college education as a goal. All these programs are carried out under the sponsorship of new programs called the Madison Plan,²⁶ by Chancellor Donna Shalala, a member of Knight Commission, and Design for Diversity²⁷ by the University of Wisconsin System President Kenneth Shaw. For P48 student athletes, a successful library research module has been established for football and basketball players.²⁸

Institutions of higher education need to address the need to develop the human talent and intellectual ability of all people, regardless of color, class or gender. Leonard A. Valverde, Vice President of Academic Affairs, University of Texas at San Antonio, says:

"To be effective for minority and all students, education must adopt the concept of 'value added', not just admitting and graduating successful students but adding to the individuals development and talent through education. Rather than giving special admissions to underrepresented students, the university environment should be reconstructed on the assumption that target minority students are intellectually healthy, just undernourished or underprepared. And rather than endorsing the Darwinian 'survival of the fittest,' the faculty must take part in the creation of the fittest, through the education they can control."²⁹

Pre-college education which limits minority children's pursuit of higher educational opportunities must be worked on both from the pre-college public school system and the university. Both sides must develop and expand "bridge programs" which are designed to create links between middle school, high school, and college. One such example may be to invite middle school "at risk" student-athletes to the organized football and basketball summer camps for high school and university students as spectators and fans. The "Bridge programs" service many rewarding purposes. These link students, staff and faculty at all levels, including educational institutions, and help establish and strengthen networks to expand the information base of the middle school minority student-athletes. Such programs expose this target group to campus culture and environment. It gives the youngsters a chance to have positive role models among student-athletes from high school and universities. It also places the responsibility of being role models on the shoulders of the older student-athletes.

Universities can arrange one-day workshops involving physical education teachers, school counselors and university coaches, with a well-known black educator or coach as the chief speaker, to explain why it is crucial to do well early in school. Ten middle school "at risk" student-athletes from

each middle/junior high school with high minority enrollment could be selected to attend. Then, the workshop participants can be given a tour of the stadium and electronic libraries and provided a lunch/dinner at a university dormitory and cafeteria to provide the experience of campus culture. Many universities now have outreach grants to provide funds to similar awareness programs.

Mentoring. As mentioned before, many of the "at risk" student-athletes come from single-parent families and need role models and mentors. School and university staff such as counselors, coaches, teachers, and faculty will also play an important role as mentors. Mentoring is defined as the process by which a person of superior rank, special achievements, and prestige instructs, counsels, guides, and facilitates the intellectual and/or career development of a person identified as a protege. Mentors and proteges both have responsibilities. Mentors establish trust, build the protege's confidence in his/her abilities, along with the mind set for work and consistent effort at learning. Proteges have to demonstrate positive attitudes, diligence, flexibility and appreciation³⁰. At times, this may also provide opportunities for a "Big Brother, Big Sister" relationship which may fill the void in the youngster's family life.

Town and Gown Partnership to Provide Funding and Support for Bridge Programs. For the development of "bridge programs" linking middle school and universities promoting awareness of educational aspiration, there needs to be financial commitment. In many cities, the state government offices will replace the business community involvement. For example, in Madison, Wisconsin, the university, along with the state, employs more people than the largest local business, the Oscar Meyer meat packing plant. In this case, the "town and gown" relationship plays a very important role. Universities can no longer afford the "fortress mentality." They need to reach out to the local community through local associations and departments of public instruction. Campus officials should be encouraged to improve their images by improving their campuses and informing the public about what they do. Jerold Roschwalb, director of governmental relations for the Land-Grant-Colleges Association, states "universities must recognize that they are dependent on federal and state governments for funding and if they fail to tell their story well, they are going to run into problems."³¹ John A. DiBiaggio, president of Michigan State University, says that he firmly believes in former House Speaker Tip O'Neill's statement that all politics is local. Furthermore, he strongly recommends that colleges and universities tell the public what they are doing with the public's tax money.

The Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Report reflects similar concern about its major finding that there is a serious and growing polarization of views between on-campus and off-campus constituencies concerning the role and performance of higher education and

the challenges facing it. CASE calls these major issues "public interest questions."³² The institutions and people in higher education need to understand what the citizens want and expect of higher education, and what the colleges and universities can do and are doing to meet those expectations.

One of the ways to meet the expectation of the minorities in the community is to identify programs in higher education institutions that seek to help and retain students who may have been underprepared or poorly prepared for college work in an effort to ensure positive educational outcomes. This will provide a chance for the minorities to be gainfully employed, which is essential for a nation that is seeking increased productivity and well-being.³³ This makes the establishment of partnerships with elementary and secondary schools essential to address the question of access, or with corporations to address workplace/economic development issues. Equally critical is the communication to the internal and external audiences about how these partnerships are working. Otherwise, these partnerships will not be successful.

Involvement of Local Business: Local and business community involvement is another critical element in any successful undertaking of educational reform, as reflected in the Rochester Experiment³⁴ with Eastman Kodak Company. Kodak, with 47,000 employees in Rochester, is the dominant economic force and the one which will be most adversely affected by an unskilled work force. Kodak loaned its executives to the school district and became the driving force behind the Rochester Brain Power Program, a business and schools partnership that includes an ad campaign and career counselors working in all of the city's 50 schools. To provide more ideas, the National Center on Education and Economy, a non-profit think tank, has moved to Rochester, and its president Marc Tucker has made important contributions toward getting a \$200,000 grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and involving Louis Harris of Harris Poll in the think tank. Reach the community, particularly the parents of students, is a fundamental objective of the reform effort; however, the race factor is creating difficulties in Rochester where the teaching force is 75 percent white and three-fourths of the district's 32,000 students are poor and either black or Hispanic. The Rochester Experiment reflects the Carnegie Report which replaced junior high schools with middle schools as a way to target the special needs of students in grade 6 to 8. Even though all the participants are optimistic overall, Rochester's dropout rate still exceeds 25 percent. Tucker says that the experiment has touched the lives of perhaps 3 percent of the people involved, and the Eastman Kodak President has made the sobering remark, "Be prepared to work very hard for a long time." All the same, a beginning has been made and time is needed for growth and expansion.

Involvement of the Community and Neighborhood: The concept of "family" can be and should be a unifying rather than divisive principle. Today, nearly six of 10 black children are born out of wedlock, and these children are raised by single mother³⁵. The so-called "deviant" mother-only

family, a product of "feminization of poverty," should not be allowed to stand in the way of family and community support for an educational outreach program for "at risk" student-athletes. Since self esteem plays an important role in the educational process and improvement of "at-risk" students, the neighborhoods and society at large need to accept and respect mother-only families as part of the current social institution. The society needs to be encouraged to accept and respect alternate family styles in the 21st century. This will help in building of better self image of the children from these homes.

Self-help and Extended Family Support: The self-help tradition of the blacks is reflected in the mass self-help movement, namely the civil rights movement of 1950s and 1960s. This tradition is also espoused by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League. These organizations have the underpinnings of the traditional extended family and a strong sense of kinship. This kinship, shown by calling one another brother, sister, mother, uncle and aunt, preserves their sense of self-worth and identity in the black culture as people. These positive attributes of community nurturing of children and respect for older people must be taken into account in creating a network by involving community/neighborhood centers, churches, and church-related groups. These groups must be allowed to recommend ways to improve the study habits, supervise the school work, and link the school and family of the middle school student-athletes to work on intervention at the earliest sign of academic trouble.

In the 1960's, New York Democratic Party Senator Patrick Moynihan was criticized for highlighting the black family breakup. Recently, the nationwide figures for single-parent families in 1986 was 61 percent for blacks and 16 percent for whites. It is not a wonder then that many black politicians, educators, and community activist are taking leadership roles to correct the inequalities and to assist future generations in taking the road to success. These leaders want the society either to provide ways for the single parent families to succeed and/or ways to keep the males of the community to be educated and gainfully employed as heads of households, with self esteem. Following the current self-help resolutions among blacks, political figures such as Jesse Jackson openly appeal to the black underclass to change attitudes and work on community problems that they see in black America every day, without waiting for the government to act. For example, John Thompson, Hoya's black basketball coach from Georgetown University, called the attention of the sports fan and universities to the need of correct/amend P42 when he walked off the playing field and boycotted the tournament before the start of the game against Boston University. John Chaney, Temple's black basketball coach, suggests that the NCAA work with high schools to ensure that athletes receive proper guidance in their studies since many schools in economically deprived communities do not have guidance counselors. The NCAA can help to steer the "at risk"

student-athletes into courses which meet the NCAA standards. He also states that energies and resources must be focused to correct the situation at an early age.³⁶

Julia and Nathan Hare,³⁷ social scientists and pioneers in the black studies movement, state that there is nothing wrong with being a black female single parent who makes the most out of any situation in which she finds herself. Black females raised the family single-handedly in the days of slavery. But there is something wrong with the short supply of black males due to imprisonment, unemployment, underemployment, or military service. William Raspberry, Washington Post columnist, raises the question of what to do with the children of deteriorating and never-formed families. He answers, "we cannot rescue American families unless we make up our minds to save the boys."³⁸

Phon Hudkins, ethnologist, has two recommendations to solve the problem of "familylessness" in his letter to the President. The first step is to provide education, mentoring, role modeling, job training, and help toward self-sufficiency. The second is to devise policies to restore families, which is the genetic base and rearing device for our species. If families are to be formed and survive, young males must be prepared for skilled jobs to support these families. In order to do this, we must require our government and our compensatory education to provide training programs for disadvantaged young males³⁹. They should be discouraged from drug trafficking as a source of income and success in life. One of the many gates through which black males enter the middle class is through higher education and athletic skills. Young black males need to consider Arsenio Hall, Spike Lee, Bill Cosby, and similar highly visible black personalities who are college educated as role models to get out of the ghettos and have legitimized high incomes. Since sports is a highly advertised medium through which academically unprepared black males move up from the underclass to middle class, it has significant impact on black youngsters.

None of these university and school programs and windows of opportunities will work if they are seen as intrusions by outsiders, be they universities or the "white people." It will be considered a public program thought up by people removed from the problem and will not work since people who know the problem did not have any say in resolving the problem or recommending solutions. The community at large, businesses, and the neighborhoods must be involved. Organizations such as the Urban Leagues, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Clubs and similar community leadership organizations, churches and neighborhood center leaders could be the starting point. Business can provide the funding needed to organize, recognize and reward participants and other neighborhood organizers involved in outreach activities. School staff and neighborhood leaders may recommend middle school "at-risk" student-athletes to attend Big Ten/University games, which are beyond the means of many underrepresented student-athletes and families, awarding free tickets for continued effort on the part

of the student to get and maintain good grades and behavior with money donated for this special purpose by local business and organizations. Providing such recommendations will involve the interaction between school and community leaders. The parents may also be recognized, giving free tickets to them and thus providing a chance to attend the games with their children. This reward system focuses the attention of the neighborhood and encourage others to supervise the study habits of their children closely and encourage trouble-making "at risk" student-athletes to work hard at their studies and athletic skills.

NCAA Helps the Student-Athletes. James E. Delany, commissioner of the Big Ten and the chairman of the NCAA, a realist, says that society's interest in college sports as entertainment, pageantry and a source of revenue is not likely to abate enough to permit colleges to stop granting special admissions to athletes, or to stop recruiting on a national basis. Significant changes are being made or recommended with comprehensive packages of alterations that seek to reduce the "corridor of pressure" that builds in young football and basketball players in the January 1990 NCAA meeting at Dallas and The Knight Commission. These alterations should encourage them to emphasize special attention on their campuses or outweigh academic programs. Delany wanted attention to be paid to three basic areas: eligibility, recruitment and financial aid⁴⁰. He believed that by changing two aspects of the NCAA rules in these areas, colleges can send a message to athletes and to the public that education comes first.

In the NCAA's 84th Annual Convention held on January 7-10, 1990 in Dallas, many significant changes were passed. For the first time, the student-athlete problems were addressed to relieve their burdens. First, it reduced the basketball season of Division I to 25 games and a November 1st starting date. It restricted the time period allowed for Spring football.⁴¹ Under the "new model" the student-athlete environment is also made better by summer school aid, reduction in practice time, scholarships for walk-ons, broken-time payments and transportation between terms, among other benefits.⁴² In addition, the privately funded 21-member Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics is also exploring changes to reform college sports.⁴³ The membership modified the controversial P42 and permits need based nonathletes aid which encourages freshman athletes to become students first before they begin their collegiate athletics career and allows them to receive much needed financial aid.

Through the popular and professional media, the educated public is made well aware of the dire consequences which will befall higher education, the nation, and our way of life if we neglect the talent and intellectual ability of our people, especially if we ignore problems that limit the opportunities of minority children in their pursuit of higher education. Currently 20 percent of the nation's workers read at no better than an eighth grade level, according to the Business Council for Effective Literacy. Workplace literacy is critical when women, minorities, and immigrants, historically less

skilled groups, will constitute 80 percent of the new entrants into the workforce in the year 2000.⁴⁴ Though it may be true that African Americans, American Indians and Hispanics are underrepresented on campuses across the nation today, this may not be true for long. Between now and the year 2000, a stunning 57 percent of all labor force growth will be black, Hispanic, or other minorities, who generally receive less schooling⁴⁵. Shunted aside by teachers and schools, this "forgotten half," who did not attend college may well be the half on which the nation's economic security will depend; however, they won't have the proper skills to do the jobs of the 21st century. Today, the government and majority may not want to play the role of brother's keeper for the minority groups, but in the next decade, the nation may have to pay dearly for this benign neglect in terms of the world social, political, and economic order. This threat may be the incentive to encourage the strategic planning of remedial steps to correct the situation and devise programs of uplift.

END NOTES

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³⁷Nathan and Julia Hare, The Endangered Black Family (San Francisco: Black Think Tank), 1984.

³⁸William Raspberry, "Blacks need family, father for survival," Wisconsin State Journal, July 18, 1989. p. 7A.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Douglas Lederman, "New Commissioner of Big Ten Defies the Stereotypes as He Criticizes and Defends Intercollegiate Sports," Chronicle of Higher Education, vol. 35, no. 42, June 28, 1989, pp. A25-26.

⁴¹Larry Henze, "It's Encouraging to See Student-Athlete Win One for Change," NCAA News, January 31, 1990 p. 5.

⁴²Timothy J. Lilley, "Convention Seen as Beginning of Era of Reform," NCAA News, January 17, 1990 pp. 1, 18.

⁴³"Select Committee Laid Base for Sports Reform Movement," NCAA News, January 24, 1990 pp. 1, 3. Douglas Lederman, "Coaches Tell Knight Commission They Want a Role in the Movement to Reform College Athletes," Chronicle of Higher Education, Vol. 36, no. 36, May 23, 1990 pp. A23-24.

⁴⁴Workplace Literacy: Targeting the Future: A Report on the First National Conference on Small Business and Workplace Literacy, October 3-4, 1988 hosted by the Office of Advocacy, U.S. Small Business Administration. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Small Business Administration, 1988. p. [1]-[9]

⁴⁵David Whitman, et al., "The Forgotten Half," U.S. News & World Report, June 26, 1989, p. 47.

A MODEL FOR MEASURING THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF STUDENT ATHLETES

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ABSTRACT

Colleges and universities that actively recruit and accept young men and women as athletes have responsibilities to these young people. One responsibility is to provide these young people with comparable academic achievement data regarding both the student-athlete and the general student population. To assist in meeting the challenge of this responsibility a method, or model, for measuring academic achievement is proposed for national acceptance.

A Model for Measuring the Academic Achievements of Student Athletes

The intellectual image of college athletes that has been created over the years is that athletes are physical education majors who take "basket-weaving" and "clay-molding" courses and never graduate (Creamer, 1983;

Kirshebaum, 1984; Ross, 1983; Sanoff, 1983; Witherspoon, 1983). College athletes, according to Zingg (1982), have suffered long enough from the "dumb-jock" stereotype and deserve to be thought of as intelligent human beings.

Prudy, Eitzen, and Hufnagel (1982) reported the graduation rate of athletes at a major university from the fall of 1970 through the spring of 1980. At another major university, the academic achievements of student-athletes from the fall of 1974 through the fall of 1981 were reported by Whitner (1987). In general, research reports such as these which focus on college athletes' academic performances are rare or are not made public.

The question, "What are the academic achievements of student-athletes at your university?" elicits a host of prepared responses by various university authorities. In a report to the members of a university community, the president of one institution said that "... varsity athletes continue to graduate at a higher percentage than the student population in general" (Advancing toward . . . , 1988, p. 7). In a publication for the alumni and other friends at another institution, a public information specialist said, "The graduation rate of student-athletes over the last 10 years is 25 percent higher than that of the general student body" (Parker, 1987, p. 22; 1988, p. 2.). However, neither of these authorities provides data or documentation to support his statements.

Information that has been made available to the public regarding the student-athletes' academic achievements is usually extracted from prepared statements which are generally vague and nebulous. By providing such information, respondents reduce the risk of being embarrassed or having to defend university policies, written and unwritten, which may reflect on their student-athletes' academic achievements (Bogan, 1986a, 1986b; Hayes, 1984; McCallum, 1984, Whitner & Myers, 1986). For example, a former Athletic Academic Counselor at the University of Nebraska contended that 92 percent of Nebraska's football players had graduated (Counseling the . . . , 1985). However, the university reported in a survey regarding football redshirts that of 21 seniors in 1983, not one had graduated in four years and only 13 would graduate in five years (Englehart, 1984). Also, the Nebraska football team had a total of 233 players, of which 65 players, or the entire freshman football class, were redshirts. The ambiguity between the former Athletic Academic Counselor's contention and the survey raises two questions that need to be answered: 1) What happens to cause the drastic decrease in the number of football players between their freshman and senior years, and 2) Are the dropouts included in the athletes' graduation rates?

Another example of a statement that lacks clarity regarding student-athletes' academic achievements was provided by Georgetown University's head basketball coach. The head coach said that only two of the 44 basketball players that played four years for him at Georgetown had failed to

graduate (Leary, 1985). Again, there are two questions that need to be addressed: 1) What happened to the players who played fewer than four years? and 2) Are they included in the graduate rate? Most colleges and universities have special academic support programs and services to assist their athletes. Nevertheless, the statements that are generally made regarding the academic achievements of their student-athletes are most often convoluted and confounded.

Congressional intervention

In an effort to create a balance between academics and athletics, three members of congress have proposed legislation to address the questions of the academic achievements of student-athletes and the percentage of student-athletes who have graduated. (Landis, 1988). The bill, entitled "Students' Right to Know," is sponsored by Senator Bill Bradley (Democrat, New Jersey), Representatives Tom McMillen (Democrat, Maryland), and Ed Towns (Democrat, New York). The proposed legislation would require universities to release student-athletes' academic achievement information. The bill is currently awaiting approval from the Senate's Labor and Human Resources Committee. If passed, the bill would mandate educational institutions that receive federal assistance to report separately the academic achievements of scholarship student-athletes and the general student population. According to the congressmen, this information would be beneficial for incoming freshman athletes. Freshman athletes would be able to review academic descriptions of both the student-athlete and the general student population and then make a decision regarding which universities are more committed to academics (Wakelee-Lynch, 1990).

To maximize the benefits of the congressmen's proposed legislation, a method or model that allows academic achievement variables to be uniformly compared is needed. A nationally approved model which can be fully developed and implemented must have parameters that are clear, simple, and easy to apply.

A PROPOSED MODEL

Imperative for an accurate and consistent description of the academic performances of student-athletes is the general assumption that a comprehensive model for measuring academic achievements is needed. In a quest to answer numerous research questions, Whitner's (1987) initial quasi-comprehensive model included three investigator-constructed data-gathering instruments. The instruments were developed in order to collect the academic information that was generated from broad parameters and complex definitions. After the instruments were implemented the researcher

was quick to realize that: a) the amount of data the model generated for each individual was enormous; b) large amounts of data were not necessary; c) parts of the data overlapped or were redundant; and d) some data were not readily available or missing (e.g., high school academic records and national test scores). With this information, the model was reexamined, adjusted, and modified as basic research procedures were reviewed.

To meet the purpose and challenge which research investigations pose, the basic research question, "What do you want to know about what population?" must be addressed. The purpose of the congressmen's legislation is to accurately and uniformly describe the academic achievements of student-athletes in a manner that allows consistent comparisons of academic performance to be made among different student populations. To assist in meeting this challenge, Whitner's model (see appendices) is proposed as a base or a foundation from which to begin. The rationale is that the model has been successfully implemented (tested) and the model possesses the universality to be adapted to various student populations. Therefore, the basic guidelines that directed the model's original use will be presented.

Parameters and Definitions

To be classified as a student-athlete, an individual's initial entry for post-secondary education or for participation in intercollegiate athletics must be at the same institution where his or her academic and/or athletic career(s) began. The rationale for initial entry is that a previous higher educational experience by a student-athlete could vary from a few credit hours earned during one term to many credit hours earned during a longer educational experience. Initial entry also focuses on the student-athlete whom coaches have actively recruited.

Individuals who meet the initial entry criteria to be classified as a student-athlete but who withdraw from the institution are included in that institution's statistics as a non-graduate. Some student-athletes who withdraw continue their education at other institutions and earn degrees. Tracking this sub-group, however, is not feasible because of the resources that would be required to follow such a sub-group over an extended period of time.

Student-athletes who have a previous college experience, either at a two-year or four-year institution, and enroll at a second, third, or fourth institution are not included in the latter institution's statistics as an initial entry student-athlete. These student-athletes are classified as transfer student-athletes and their academic records are kept separate from the initial entry group. The academic achievement statistics reported by an institution of an initial entry or a transfer student-athlete will reflect only the data generated by the individual while attending that specific institution.

Definitions that describe the populations are as follows:

Student: An individual who enrolls for post-secondary course-work at a four-year institution of higher education.

Athlete: An individual who:

- a. participates in at least one of the inter-collegiate sports sponsored by the institution and receives an athletic scholarship (either partial or full) as approved by the institution's athletic department; and
- b. enrolls for a minimum of 12 credit hours each term at a four-year institution of higher education.

Student-athlete: An individual who meets the definitions of both student and athlete as stated above.

Athletic scholarship: Financial assistance in the form of room, board, tuition, fees, and books which is approved and granted by the institution's athletic department. The assistance granted may be the total allowable amount (full) or any part thereof (partial).

Walk-on: Student not recruited by the institution to participate in inter-collegiate athletics but who does so voluntarily without financial assistance from the institution's athletic department. If this student's athletic abilities have been misjudged, he/she can earn an athletic scholarship by "proving" themselves athletically.

Redshirt: A one-year extension of eligibility that is granted to a student-athlete once during his/her intercollegiate athletic career.

Graduate: Initial entry for post-secondary education at a four-year institution of higher education and the completion and awarding of a degree from a four-year program as recognized by that institution.

Non-Graduate: Initial entry for post-secondary education at a four-year institution of higher education and no four-year degree earned.

Transfer student: After initial entry for post-secondary education at a two- or four-year institution of higher education, an individual transfers or enrolls at another institution of higher education (either two- or four-year). This process may be repeated any number of times.

Transfer-Graduate: A transfer student who enrolls at a four-year institution of higher education and earns a degree from a four-year program as recognized as that institution.

Research Questions

Once the population has been defined, the first part of the basic research question, "What do you want to know . . .," needs to be addressed. To accomplish this task, specific research questions relevant to the scholarly behavior of student-athletes need to be asked:

1. How many terms does the student-athlete attend during his/her academic career?
2. How many summer terms does the student-athlete attend during his/her academic career?
3. How many credit hours does the student-athlete earn during his/her academic career?
4. What is the student-athlete's cumulative grade point average?
5. What percent of student-athletes graduate?
6. How many calendar years does it take the student-athlete to graduate?
7. From what colleges within the university structure (Arts and Sciences, Education, Business, etc.) do student-athletes graduate?
8. Within each college, in what programs or major areas of study are the student-athletes enrolled?
9. What, if any, are the academic achievement differences between sexes of student-athletes or among races of student-athletes?
10. What, if any, are the academic achievement differences among student-athletes who participate in different intercollegiate sports?

Residuum

Potential college freshman athletes will not be the only individuals who will benefit from the academic descriptions of college athletes. The descriptions will also benefit educational institutions as follows:

1. Each university will have an accurate description of the academic performance of a specific university population (i.e., athletes);
2. University investigators will have a comparative image to use when examining the academic achievements of other student populations at their institutions;

3. Investigators at different universities will have a comparison group available for use when researching the academic behavior of their own student-athletes or other student populations;
4. The investigation by an institution into its student-athletes' academic achievements could identify specific educational needs that may be relevant for other student populations at its own institution; and
5. Pertinent information regarding the phenomenon of academics and athletes will be contributed to the professional literature.

Limitations

The proposed model is not comprehensive and is restricted in the number of academic achievement variables to be collected. The major limitations of the model are:

1. Student-athletes that withdraw or transfer from an institution are categorized in that institution's statistics as non-graduates. Some of these student-athletes have successful academic experiences and earn undergraduate degrees at other institutions. Tracking such a sub-group is not feasible for individual institutions because of the resources that are necessary to follow and collect data regarding such a sub-group. Also, members of this sub-group who enroll at another institution will be included in that institution's data as a transfer student.
2. Student-athletes who have had a previous university experience and transfer or enroll at another institution are categorized as transfer students, regardless of the length of their previous educational experience. However, categorizing avoids the confounding of data which increases the amount and the usefulness of the information generated.
3. The model is not comprehensive and does not include special interest variables (i.e., how many changes in the major area of study, number of classes dropped, etc.) which may be pertinent for some individuals or institutions.
4. The generalizations that may be made will apply only to that sample of an institution's student-athlete population because data will not be collected on the institution's total student-athlete population (i.e., student-athlete from past years — 1940, 1918, 1892). However, the generalizations reported by an institution may be considered to be an indicator of the academic performance of similar segments of the institution's student-athlete population.

CONCLUSION

In general, the academic achievements of scholarship student-athletes have not been uniformly reported or made public. For example, the Ohio State University needs to be congratulated for making public some very impressive figures regarding the academic achievements of its student-athlete population (Associated Press, 1988). However, the data has little meaning for most institutions because many institutions lack the comparative data or will not replicate the Ohio State study. In addition, research studies tend to reflect an institution's uniqueness with the consequences being that comparisons are not always valid.

To make uniform academic achievement comparisons of different student populations among colleges and universities, a nationally approved model is needed. A comprehensive model is ideal, but the resources necessary to nationally implement and maintain such a model prohibit its utilization. Therefore, a practical model is needed that addresses the needs of potential student-athletes and is nationally approved and recognized as the academic performance measuring instrument for all colleges and universities. The practical model proposed by Whitner meets the criteria for national acceptance. The model may be viewed as an intra- and inter-university tool for collecting and measuring educational variables regarding college students' academic performance. The information obtained from such a model will allow comparative research, free from qualifiers, to be conducted by investigators regarding the academic achievements of any university population, including student-athletes.

APPENDIX A

STUDENT-ATHLETE'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE SHEET

Code _____

Sport _____

Date Enrolled _____

College _____

Program _____

Status
(O-T)

Race _____

Graduated: Yes _____ No _____

Date _____

Degree _____

Last trm att _____ yr _____

1st trm att _____ yr _____

Total trms att _____ yrs _____

Total sum trms att _____

Yr-Term Hrs Ern GPA

1-1

1-2

1-2

1-4

2-1

2-2

2-3

2-4

3-1

3-2

3-3

3-4

4-1

4-2

4-3

4-4

5-1

5-2

5-3

5-4

6-1

6-2

6-3

6-4

Cumulative

CODE

Yr — Year

Trm — Term

Sum — Summer

Hrs Ern — Hours earned

GPA — Grade Point Average

Att — Attended

O — Original or initial entry

T — Transfer

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE TABLES FOR CATEGORIZING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

A selected sample of tables that may be used to categorize the academic achievement variables of student populations is included in this Appendix. The few numbers which appear in some tables are inserted for the purpose of clarification only.

Table X: Selected academic achievement variables of the student-athlete according to status.

STATUS	N	AVG QTR ATTN	AVG SUM QTR ATTN	AVG CR HRS ERND	AVG CUM GPA	% THAT ERND DEGRS
NON-GRAD	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
GRAD	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
THE STUDENT- ATHLETE	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX

TABLE X: Selected academic achievement variable of the student-athlete by year.

YEAR	N	AVG QTR ATTN	AVG SUM QTR ATTN	AVG CR HRS ERND	AVG CUM GPA	% THAT ERND DEGRS
1977	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
1978	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
1979	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
1980	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
1981	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX

Table X: College enrolled and the major area of study of the student-athlete

COLLEGE (Number enrolled) Major	Non-Graduate (n) — (%)		Graduates (N) — (%)	
ARTS & SCIENCES (80)	40	50	40	50
Art	3		15	
Biology	10		5	
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (50)	20	40	30	60
Accounting	10		12	
Computer Services	2		10	
EDUCATION & ALLIED PROFESSIONS (60)	30	50	30	50
Business Education	10		15	
Community Medical Health ..	12		10	

Table X: The number of calendar years for student-athletes to earn a degree.

years to earn a degree	number of graduates	percent
4	xx	xx
5	xx	xx
6 or more	xx	xx
total	xx	100.0

Table X: Comparison of academic variable between the student-athlete and the regular university student.

STATUS	N	AVG QTR ATTN	AVG SUM QTR ATTN	AVG CR HRS ERND	AVG CUM GPA	% THAT ERND DEGRS
NON-GRADUATES						
STUDENT ATHLETES	100	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
REGULAR STUDENTS	200	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
GRADUATES						
STUDENT— ATHLETES	250	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
REGULAR STUDENTS	350	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
THE STUDENT						
THE STUDENT	900	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX

n = number

avg qtr attn = average quarters attended

avg sum qtr atten = average summer quarters attended

avg cr hrs ernd = average credit hours earned

avg cum GPA = average cumulative grade point average

% that ernd degrs = percent that earned degrees

non-grad = non graduate

grad = graduate

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PEAK PERFORMANCE FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES

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Recently much attention has been directed toward the development of support programs for student-athletes (Lanning, 1982; Nelson, 1982; Sowa & Gressard, 1983; Whittemore, 1985). The legitimacy of the programs is readily substantiated in terms of the view of the student-athletes as a special population, a need for integration of student-athletes into the mainstream of university life, transitional concerns for freshmen, and descriptions of model courses ranging from testing to interventions. In essence, academic support programs have become a vital component of athletic departments, especially at NCAA Division I institutions.

Based on divergent concerns, the scope and role of counseling has become, by necessity, asystematic. Thus, when initiating developmental programs for student-athletes, it seems prudent to follow the advice of Remer, Tongate, and Watson (1978) who suggested that academic support programs must first meet academic- and performance-related needs before attempting long-range developmental goals.

Using the subtle admonition as a guide, the academic support system of the Athletic Department at the University of North Texas proposed an exploratory project to complement its existing counseling, study-hall, and tutorial services. A course was designed for freshman student-athletes which focused primarily on performance-enhancement techniques that could be employed for peak performance in both athletics and academics.

THE GAME PLAN

The academic advisors, working with a sport psychologist, selected freshman football players as the target group for their first attempt at reinforcing the use of psycho-educational techniques across the athletic and academic dimensions. Subsequently, the football coaching staff was asked to identify three major psychological constructs they believed would lead to optimal performance in football for the forthcoming season. Based on the coaches' rankings of the perceived importance of specific constructs for athletic success, the prioritized list included goal-setting, stress management, and visualization (imagery), respectively. These constructs were then used as the focal points for a 15-week class designed to demonstrate similarities between concepts used during football practices and games and academic situation. Samples of comparable patterns were game/test, practice/homework, pregame jitters/pretest anxiety, work as a team/study in groups, and review plays in your mind/mentally rehearse important points to remember. It was hoped that academic appeal and enthusiasm could be generated for student-athletes by relying on their high motivation toward athletics.

Fifteen freshman football players participated in the project. The group met four days a week for 30 minutes per day prior to a designated study-hall period. Athletic and academic pre-posttest measures were obtained using goal-setting contracts, competitive stress inventories (Sports Competition Anxiety Test—SCAT; Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 with cognitive, somatic, and confidence subscales—CSAI-2), confidence questionnaires (Trait-State Confidence Inventory—TSCI), and self-reports of vividness and controllability during visualization (Vealey, 1986). The same sports tests were used to evaluate academic traits by substituting academic words and phrases for the sport-related terminology. Additionally, grade point averages for fall and spring semesters were obtained.

Sessions included lecture and discussion, interaction, role-playing and guest speakers. Additionally, student-athletes participated in applied laboratory experiences such as progressive relaxation techniques or imagery of the successful execution of a football play. Each concept was introduced first from the athletic perspective followed by a transition to the academic environment. Interspersed among the psycho-educational techniques were topics about personal health, career opportunities, and lifestyle patterns of college students. A general semester plan is outlined below:

Weeks 1-5	Introduction, Pretests, Goal-setting Strategies
Weeks 6-10	Personal Health Issues, Stress Management
Weeks 11-15	Visualization, Career Opportunities, Posttests, Personal Athletic-Academic Plans for Peak Performance

GAME PERFORMANCE

Data from the anxiety and confidence measures were analyzed using t-tests. Although the results indicated a general lowering of trait anxiety for the group from pretests to posttests, the differences were nonsignificant. However, when the group was divided into HI GPA (greater than 2.0) and LO GPA (less than 2.0), a number of findings was noted.

Table 1

Comparison of High and Low GPA Athletes On Academic Measures of Confidence and Anxiety

1.	Pretest			Posttest		
	M	SD	TSCI	M	SD	t
Hi GPA	6.2	1.11		6.9	.44	-.169
Lo GPA	6.8	.82		6.6	1.10	.34
2.	Pretest			Posttest		
	M	SD	SCAT	M	SD	t
Hi GPA	19.6	3.32		18.3	5.78	.11
Lo GPA	22.5	3.72		18.3	2.42	3.14*
CSCI-2						
3.	Pretest			Posttest		
	M	SD		M	SD	t
Hi GPA	Cog.	16.8	5.74	20.3	8.73	-1.11
	Som.	14.0	3.74	17.8	8.00	-1.06
	Conf.	26.8	4.00	26.8	6.28	.00
Lo GPA	Cog.	22.6	5.67	17.8	4.89	3.45*
	Som.	16.3	3.83	17.8	7.52	-.72
	Conf.	25.1	4.71	22.0	7.37	1.19

*p. < .05

The LO GPA group had significantly less trait anxiety ($p = < .05$) from and cognitive state anxiety ($p = < .05$) from pre- to posttests on the academic measures. Intuitively, it seems that lowering the anxiety level of athletes is a desirable outcome of the project. However, it is possible that such a reduction in academic arousal related to assignments and tests resulted in a lack of appropriate motivation needed to enhance academic performance.

Table 2 depicts data on the athletic measures.

Table 2
Comparison of High and Low GPA Athletes
On Athletic Measures of Confidence and Anxiety

1.		Pretest		TSCI	Posttest		<u>t</u>
		M	SD		M	SD	
Hi GPA		7.0	.56		6.9	1.10	.52
Lo GPA		6.7	.98		7.7	.81	3.22*
2.		Pretest		SCAT	Posttest		<u>t</u>
		M	SD		M	SD	
Hi GPA		23.3	3.01		20.3	3.07	5.20*
Lo GPA		22.1	4.71		20.6	3.50	.70
CSCI-2							
3.		Pretest			Posttest		<u>t</u>
		M	SD		M	SD	
Hi GPA	Cog.	17.5	5.24		19.1	6.62	-1.75
	Som.	20.0	5.10		27.0	3.90	-.94
	Conf.	24.8	4.10		27.0	3.90	-.94
Lo GPA	Cog.	18.5	3.10		16.5	2.84	1.01
	Som.	17.6	7.76		19.0	3.80	-.70
	Conf.	27.0	4.20		22.6	3.50	2.19

* $p < .05$

The HI GPA group demonstrated a lower trait anxiety ($p = < .05$) on the posttest. Perhaps student-athletes learned to utilize and apply performance enhancement techniques developed in the counseling performance

enhancement techniques developed in the counseling program to control athletic as well as academic stress. Additionally, it is interesting to note that although the LO GPA group reported significantly greater trait confidence ($p = < .05$) from pre- to posttests, state confidence scores decreased. These fluctuations may be due to the athletes registering unrealistic assessments of their athletic abilities during their redshirt fall season and spring practice. Further, HI GPA athletes possessed average-to-high original scores on the confidence measure.

In sum, it is important to recognize that overall trait anxiety levels were reduced, and when viewed in terms of GPA, the reduction was significant. The results, however, cannot be attributed only to the casual effects of the program & orientation activities; assignments, information, and stress management). It is probable that many other factors such as adjustment to college life, gaining new friends, or successful experiences on and off the field accounted for the lowered anxiety.

To better understand the impact of the psycho-educational program, student-athletes were asked to rank-order from high to low the importance of activities specific to the program. Feedback from the student-athlete group revealed that the following topics were perceived as the most beneficial to them: presentation by other student-athletes about academic or personal priorities, drug and alcohol tapes and discussions, nutrition facts, sexuality and date-rape information, and minority issues on campus, respectively. The psychological constructs of goal setting, stress management, and visualization that were used as the main points for developing peak performance in football and academics were rated as moderately informative and helpful.

After conducting this year-long exploratory program, two conclusions were reached. First, a reduction of anxiety in sport and academic settings occurred for freshman football athletes at the end of two semesters, and secondly, student-athletes preferred personal-social topics over performance-enhancement topics.

GAME EVALUATION

Based upon the conclusions, it seems that coaches concerned with positive athletic and academic experiences for freshman student-athletes must understand that a period of time for general orientation and adjustment to college life is needed prior to concentration on specialized performance enhancement techniques, even though these same techniques mediate both athletic and academic performances. For example, it is possible that most freshman players fail to make the starting line-up not because they lack experience or skill but because there is an "overload" of personal and university demands that reduces peak physical performance. Further, academic counselors and advisors who work with athletes should be sen-

sitive to the personal, social and emotional needs of student-athletes, as well as the obvious academic concerns. By designing proactive programs that also address unique psycho-social issues, a more holistic strategy can be employed by academic support systems. A sample of a progressive developmental program tailored to academic classification might be—

- A. Freshmen: Personal, Social, & Emotional Plans
- B. Sophomores: Athletic/Academic Performance Techniques
- C. Juniors: Career Development Training
- D. Seniors: Support Groups & Social Networks for "Life After Sports"

To accomplish this task, communication between counselors and coaches must be open and clear, and take place on a daily basis.

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