

Journal of Issues in ***Intercollegiate Athletics***

Perceptions of NCAA Division I Athletes on Motivations Concerning the use of Specialized Academic Support Services in the Era of the Academic Progress Rate

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This paper examines the motivations of NCAA Division I athletes of the need and usefulness of specialized academic support services in the era of the Academic Progress Rate (APR). Specifically, an evaluation of the historical context of these services and how they came to be so prevalent and deemed as a necessity for academic success of NCAA Division I college athletes is discussed, along with many of the unintended consequences and potential affront to academic integrity due to the competitive nature of NCAA Division I athletics and the perceived pressure on academic centers to keep athletes eligible to compete. The purpose of this study is to examine the motivations of athletes to use these services, using the theoretical construct of Vroom's Expectancy Theory, (1964). The study attempts to determine through research based conclusions if the athletes believe these services are needed to enhance academic persistence and potential for graduation and the motivations for using or not using them. This is a mixed method study taken from a stratified proportional sample of athletics in a mid-major athletic conference during the development of the APR rules and regulations. Conclusions are mixed as to motivations of athletes toward the need and viability of these services even in the face of changing academic requirements. The results are also influenced by ethnicity, gender, sport played in college, current grade point average, and high school college preparatory course GPA. The contribution to the literature is that little empirical research exists on athlete motivational perceptions of the need and adequacy of these services considering the extra layer of academic requirements via the APR.

Introduction

The phenomenon of intercollegiate student athlete's academic success and probability of graduation has been a cause of concern and the subject of significant inquiry by university and intercollegiate athletic administrators for over 100 years (Adler & Adler, 1985; Briggs, 1997; Crowley; Falla; Gurney, Tan & Winters, 2010; Hanford, 1979; Pascarella, Bohr, Nora, & Terenzini, 1995; Ridpath, 2002; Splitt, 2003; 2004). During the early 1980s, in part because of many scandals in intercollegiate athletics, a great deal of controversy arose about the perceived lack of academic preparation and graduation from college of student athletes. Many including the media and the federal government began asking questions about the relationship of college sport and higher education more intently (Benson, 1994). Annual tracking and compiling of student

athlete graduation rates then evolved as a measure of student athlete success or failure for NCAA member institutions and as the best public indicator of student athlete academic success in college (McMillen, 1991; Snyder, 1996). Even with this renewed emphasis on asking questions and challenging the intercollegiate athletic enterprise by various groups the lure of winning and perceived positive exposure for an institution was and still is a powerful force to contend with when academic standards are enforced and changed.

“(Intercollegiate) athletics can be thought of as the front porch of a house. People will often see the university through the athletic program in a way that they might not otherwise see the university...if you drive by a house and you see a front porch that is not well-kept, with shingles falling off, you are likely to draw a conclusion that the rest of the house must also be in bad shape. Conversely if you have a well-kept front porch, the rest of the university will take on the same image. So when it is done right, athletics gives people all across the country the chance to draw very positive conclusions about the rest of the university” (Vedder, Villwock & Denhart, 2009, p 6).

This quote, by Tim Weiser, a former NCAA Division I Athletic Director and current Associate Commissioner of the Big 12 Athletic Conference, summarizes the conflict between higher education and intercollegiate athletics. Specifically, supporters and critics of intercollegiate athletics alike often tout that keeping the “front porch” pleasing and well kept attracts potential students, donors, increased marketing dollars, and alumni donations even though the empirical evidence supporting these claims is dearth and even in the best cases is short lived (Vedder, et al) Still this strong belief has arguably led numerous colleges and universities down the path of “win at all costs” chasing marginal return on investment rather than the educational benefits touted by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in its own bylaws and manual. The current 2009-10 NCAA Division I manual states in Bylaw 1.3.1:

“The competitive athletics programs of member institutions are designed to be a vital part of the educational system. A basic purpose of this Association is to maintain intercollegiate athletics as an integral part of the educational program and the athlete as an integral part of the student body and, by so doing, retain a clear line of demarcation between intercollegiate athletics and professional sports” (p.1).

While this purpose statement sounds noble, intercollegiate athletics has become a dichotomy. It can be good or bad for the participants; dependant primarily on the goals and motivation of the institution and that motivation is often winning and generating revenue to maintain a winning tradition while the university continually struggles to find the proper institutional balance between winning and academic performance (Covell & Barr 2001; Gurney et al; Thelin & Wiseman, 1989). The over emphasis of athletics success and revenue generation has led to an inevitable clash of academic integrity versus athletic motivations of the very athletes that compete, mostly at institutions of higher learning that sponsor Division I athletics. In simple terms, an NCAA Division I athlete must remain academically eligible in order to compete. If the athlete is not academically eligible and making satisfactory progress towards a

degree, as set by the institution, the athletic conference, and the NCAA, competition for that individual is prohibited (NCAA, 2009-2010).

Many people, whether students, boosters, academicians, alumni, or coaches have tried, and in many cases, have succeeded in beating this bedrock principle of the system because the rewards for athletic success versus the risks of academic ineligibility are deemed to be too valuable to abdicate (Falla, 1981; Isenberg, 2010; Ridpath, 2002; Splitt, 2004). The effort and business of superseding academic requirements to gain athletic success is almost as old as intercollegiate athletics itself. The abuse of academic requirements is not new and began almost immediately at the inception of the NCAA in the early 20th Century. College and university personnel began to influence the education, or lack thereof, of prospective student athletes by bending the rules primarily by falsifying transcripts and standardized admission test scores, to gain the admission of the prospect to the institution often at the behest of powerful coaches and rich alumni (Crowley, 2009; Falla). Hanford (1974) reaffirmed this predicament almost four decades ago when he stated that, “the problems of intercollegiate athletics will be solved only when its relationship to the education process is finally defined” (p. 336). Even though this statement was made in 1974, this issue still largely exists today as a recent study by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES) demonstrates. This study revealed that women were still graduating at a higher rate than men generally in the sport of basketball, but African American Females graduated at a much lower rate than Caucasian females (Lapchick, 2010). Men’s graduation rates in the sports of football and basketball are much lower than other sports and that is usually attributed to these sports being commercial revenue generators and the commercialization of college sports often overshadows the underlying goals of higher education and the individual motivations of the athletes to academically persist and graduate (Knight Commission, 1991, 1993) might be viewed as secondary and certainly the TIDES report suggests just that (Lapchick).

Graduation Rates

Even after a century worth of academic versus athletic arguments, never has one issue so challenged segments of the intercollegiate athletic community as much as the graduation rates of student athletes (Byers, 1995; Eckard, 2010; Funk, 1991; Knight Commission 1991, 1993; Lapchick, 1989; 2010; McMillen, 1991; Thelin & Wiseman, 1989). Initially when the Federal graduation rate reporting statute was mandated, each institution prepared for the NCAA and the public a graduation rate report that was calculated as the percentage of “first-time full time Freshman” who graduates within six years of their initial enrollment (Eckard). This act required all Division I and II universities to annually publish the graduation rates of all student athletes by sport, by gender, and by ethnic background. The difference in the Federal graduation report format from other one-shot graduation rate studies done in 1988 by the General Accounting Office and The Chronicle of Higher Education was that the data would be taken over a six-year period to better ascertain the institutions commitment to graduating student athletes, even after athletic eligibility had already expired (McMillen). Since 1991, the first year of the Student Athlete Right to Know Act, the NCAA has reported higher graduation rates for college athletes as compared to the student body every year since (Benson, 1994, 1997; Zimbalist, 1999), although recent research challenges these findings in that the current graduation rate comparison also includes part-time students and this sub population typically takes longer than six years to graduate, if at all (Eckard). Conversely, in the past two decades 42% of student athletes overall

still have not graduated from college (Benson 1994, 1997; Lapchick, 2010; Watt & Moore, 2001).

The new graduation rate requirements made it clear that professional academic advisors on staff would become the norm at almost every NCAA Division I school rather than the exception. In 1990-91, the NCAA also began to subsidize these services through a new Academic Enhancement Fund by providing stipends in the amount of \$25,000 to each NCAA Division I school to support academic programs specific to the college athlete. The money for the Academic Enhancement Fund is derived from proceeds of the NCAA Division I men's Basketball Tournament. In the first year of this fund the NCAA allocated 15.25 million dollars to distribute to individual schools for academic purposes (G. Gurney, personal communication). In the mid-nineties, the stipend grew to \$50,000 per school and now stands at \$58,000 per institution earmarked for specialized academic support services specific to the athlete and is currently called the Student Athlete Assistance Fund. Many schools used this money in hiring extra counselors, tutors, and/or purchasing needed equipment like such as computers, and academic support services for athletes grew exponentially and it continues today as the pressure to win, keep athletes eligible for competition.

In 2006, the NCAA moved to calculate an additional, comprehensive measurement of athlete graduation rates for athletes only, called the Graduation Success Rate (GSR) designed primarily to adjust the Federal rate for transfer athletes who actually penalize the school if they leave that institution and graduate from another (Eckard; NCAA, 2009-10). Many institutions had criticized the old method as unfair as they were held responsible for an athlete's graduation and did not get credit for an athlete graduating even though he or she may have transferred and graduated from another school.

Statistics on athletes who participate in college sports and who graduate or do not graduate can be useful because they help shape a picture of the athletic experience. It has evolved as the main measure of student athlete success or failure for NCAA member institutions (Watt & Moore). Many critics argue that on the surface this appears to be true but has led many institutions to cluster their athletes in allegedly more athlete friendly majors and programs of study and pressuring athletic academic services into more or maintaining eligibility rather than enabling athletes to blossom and pursue their own educational goals. While this might ultimately lead to graduation, the question remains whether the course of study was geared toward eligibility maintenance rather than a viable degree program (Ridpath, 2002, 2009; Salzwedel & Ericson, 2003; Splitt, 2004). Sub-standard graduation rates for student athletes that are below that of an institution's general student body can demonstrate the lack of academic commitment toward student athletes on part of a specific institution or the lack of academic preparation on part of the individual student athlete (McMillen).

Academic Progress Rate

The Academic Progress Rate (APR) is measurement that publically identifies schools for academic success or failure and includes specific punishments for non-compliance. While the NCAA calls this a "sea change" in college sports and its relationship to higher education, critics argue it has led to more academic clustering and pressure on athletic academic centers to keep athletes eligible rather than preparing and enabling them to pursue a legitimate education (Jenkins, 2005; Ridpath 2002, 2007, 2009; Splitt, 2003, 2004).

According to Vedder, Villwock, and Denhart and the current 2009-10 NCAA Manual, the Academic Progress Rate (APR) is measured on a scale of 1000 based on a real time view, according to the NCAA Committee on Academic Performance, of eligibility and retention of

each athlete on a specific team. Teams are given two points for each athlete that is retained at the institution and are eligible for competition. The institution will get only one point if only one of the categories is met and no points if none are met. In addition, satisfactory progress measures are very strict and require a Division I athlete to have 40% of their chosen degree program completed by the end of their second year, 60% by the end of the third year, and 80% by the end of the fourth year. This is typically a much faster requirement than their non-athletic counterparts' at most American universities. The key to the APR system is institutional sanctions for failure to maintain a team APR level or a certain graduation rate (GSR rate) for a team (Vedder, et. al.). Specifically there are two levels that can trigger penalties. When a team's academic performance falls below the 925 threshold, that team becomes subject to penalties if any athlete on that team is not retained and does not earn academic eligibility. This penalty, known as a "contemporaneous penalty," is a financial aid restriction that is meant to be a catalyst for change. When a team's academic performance, as measured by its APR, falls below 900 and the team fails to demonstrate improvement and a favorable review, it becomes subject to "historical penalties." Historical penalties are cumulative penalties intended for teams and departments that have a demonstrated history of academic underachievement. A 925 equates to a 35% fed grad rate. A 900 score is equal to a 25% grad rate. (G. Gurney, personal communication; "NCAA Division I Committee," September 14, 2009)

Typical sanctions include a public warning after the first year; restrictions on scholarships, recruiting, and practice time after the second year; a third year of poor performance will bring a post season ban in that sport; and four consecutive years of sub 925 performance can result in a "restricted" membership status for an institution (NCAA, 2009-10; "NCAA Division I Committee"). Though the penalties may seem stiff, there are several loopholes and waivers available to institutions to stave off penalties, at least temporarily. Moreover, schools that have been sanctioned thus far fall primarily to schools without the resources to provide large scale, personalized academic support services for their athlete population which theoretically assist the athletes academically and keep them in good standing ("NCAA Division I Committee")

As mentioned the stakes for institutions to have athletic success are high or at least perceived to be high for an institution to have a competitive athletics program that ostensibly generates revenue and exposure for the university. Meeting the APR requirement and graduating athletes has become a priority for NCAA Division I institutions as no school wants to be on this public list nor does it want to lose scholarships or post-season eligibility. This has also presented some unintended consequences, specifically the clustering of athletes into certain majors to enhance eligibility and the APR rather than a true chance at a chosen educational path (Salzwedel & Ericson; Vedder, et. al.). Not only are athletes faced with the prospect of being clustered into a major, or at best encouraged to enroll in specific academic programs to maintain eligibility, the importance and perceived need of academic support services specialized for just the athlete population have propagated and become very expensive, and usually reserved for the elite programs (Ridpath, 2002, 2009). Many athletic administrators argue that these services are needed because athletes are a special population that needs the extra assistance to succeed academically to balance the athletic demand with their studies and because they are asked to do so much with their time and athletic efforts (Ridpath, 2009).

Academic Support Services for College Athletes

The movement that propelled change in the initial and continuing eligibility

standards have placed the burden of academic decisions on individual universities. It is a university's "responsibility to admit students who have a reasonable chance of academic progress including graduating" (Carodine, et. al., 1999; Gurney, et. al.). Concern for the student athletes' academic viability begins with their admission to a university. This is because recruited athletes, in aggregate, have significantly lower SAT and ACT scores than other applicants to schools. Consequently, if it were not for their athletic talent, athletes would likely have appreciably lower admittance rates than applicants in general (Bowen & Levin, 2003; Gurney et al).

Studies done over the years conclude that athletes, primarily in the revenue producing sports of football and men's basketball, are often unprepared for and uninterested in academics and come to college primarily to advance their athletic careers rather than their future vocational careers; therefore, they have lower grade point averages, higher attrition rates, and lower chances of graduating than other students (Adler & Adler, 1985; Cross, 1973; Edwards, 1984; Gurney, et al; Nyquist, 1979; Purdy, Eitzen, & Hufnagel, 1982; Ridpath, 2002; Sack & Thiel, 1979).

Virtually all institutions participating in NCAA Division I athletics, provide some level of academic assistance many times including an array of advisors, tutors, and mentors to help athletes learn how to balance the demands of the classroom and the playing field (Briggs, 1997; Suggs, 1999a,b,c). Many researchers (Ervin, Saunders, Gillis, & Hogrebe, 1985; Petrie & Russell, 1995; Watt & Moore, 2001; Young & Sowa, 1992) have suggested that student athletes face a unique set of challenges that they are not ready to meet without assistance. Student athletes are a diverse special population because of their roles on campus, their atypical lifestyles, and their special needs (Ferrante, et al).

Many prospective student athletes, who meet NCAA standards for competitive eligibility, often still do not meet admission standards for a particular university. This sub-group may be admitted to a university under a special exception and typically may need assistive academic services available only to athletes. Most Division I universities offer admission exceptions to get athletes into school, even if the athlete is under prepared and not ready for the academic reality of college work. The sheer competitive nature of athletics and the desire to get the best athletes can persuade coaches to just look for the best athletes and not the academically oriented ones. Looking for loopholes in admission requirements to get even non-qualified athletes admitted goes on everyday at institutions of higher learning (Blum, 1994; Gurney, et al; Naughton, 1997; Sperber, 1990). Student athletes have almost twice the chance of being accepted to the college their dreams, although this dream may be based solely on athletic reputation and a persuasive coach (Greene & Greene. 2001) Several college admissions directors advocate the opportunity be given to all students in college and the risk that goes with admitting any student who does not meet the institutional requirements. They also weigh that opportunity with the risk and the reward of knowing not all will make it, but hope that most will take advantage of the opportunity (Blum, 1994). With the exception of true scholar athletes, academic averages and test scores of recruited athletes are well below those of students admitted for their academic performance, but the graduation rates are higher than the student body at large, which begs the question as to how this is happening and what are the motivations of the athlete to succeed academically (Greene & Greene).

Even with student athletes meeting initial academic standards and getting admitted, practice, competition, and the rigors of academic and athletic life in college can also present difficult challenges for even the academically successful college athlete (Gurney et al; Naughton, 1996). Athletes at the intercollegiate level must abide by an abundance of NCAA rules, be

treated as any other student, and, in general, receive the same benefits that are available to the institution's students or their relatives or friends (NCAA, 2009-10). The reality is that athletes are treated differently from the rest of the student body at most higher education institutions. Athletes at virtually all NCAA institutions receive special compensatory academic assistance above and beyond the general student body (Briggs, 1997).

Initially, isolated academic services for student athletes included only priority class scheduling, tutoring, and time management assistance from assistant coaches and other administrators (Broughton & Neyer, 2001; Shinberg & Brodzinski, 1984) unlike current dedicated academic centers or even palatial buildings solely used for academic assistance to the athletes. These centers provide, in addition to academic counseling, a counselor to student ratio at a much better ratio than the general student body, tutoring, advance scheduling, drug and alcohol counseling, study and academic skill sessions, and life skills classes (Naughton). Critics of these types of arrangements argue that the necessity of these support services suggest many athletes, especially those in football and men's basketball would not succeed academically, nor graduate, without an inordinate amount of help. Those who support special services for athletics say all college students in general need these programs and athletic academic assistance programs are available for other students throughout campus (Naughton). However, these services are more concentrated in athletics, with the main reason being because the athletes' time is so limited due to complex demands that result from participating in competitive sport (Broughton et al; Naughton). They question the use of the elaborate and costly machinery required for them to do something that is a matter of course for the rest of the student body (Naughton).

Increased academic assistance such as this has been cited as a reason, along with better pre-college preparation, for increased graduation rates for Division I athletes since 1991 (Benson, 1997). The overall increase in graduation rates, in surveys done by the NCAA since 1991 show that the increased initial eligibility standards instituted at the that time, combined with a long list of academic services for Division I athletes have contributed to the overall increase in the graduation rates of student athletes (Benson, 1997; Wieberg, 2009). The NCAA's official stance is that part of the increase is due to initial eligibility standards and student athletes being watched closely academically through their athletic academic services department during years of enrollment (Lederman, 1992)

Theoretical Basis for Study

There is a significant investment of time and money in recruiting NCAA Division I athletes, specifically in the revenue sports of football and men's basketball. Due to this there are expectations of competitive success and equity on the field of play. The athletes must remain academically eligible to compete and the team APR must be above the threshold so it does not get penalized. These pressures, along with academic goals and career aspirations can affect the academic motivation of the athlete to persist successfully or not. In addition, it can potentially motivate athletes to use support services that are available ostensibly to assist in academic persistence, graduation, career development, and athletic eligibility.

Victor Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation is a solid foundation to use in examining academic motivation of college athletes. The expectancy theory is applied to examine the relationship and motivation to athletic academic services and can identify the factors or predictors that influence or motivate a student athlete to graduate from college.

The expectancy theory is broken down into two parts of a cognitive model, which happens in three stages. The two parts are the concept of valence and the concept of force. The three-stage process of the theory of accomplishing or working toward accomplishing a goal consists of Expectancy (E), Instrumentality (I), and Valence (V). The concept of expectancy refers to the strength of a person's belief about whether or not a particular performance is attainable sometimes referred to as self-efficacy. In layman's terms, a person will be motivated to try a task, if he or she believes it can be done. The concept of instrumentality is a probability belief linking one outcome to another outcome. This can be applied as a high level of academic performance to graduation, better job prospects, and money; in a sense, a reward. In the concept of valence, it is assumed that that a person has preference among outcomes or states of nature. Preference is defined as a relationship between the strength of a person's desire for or attraction toward two outcomes. In other words, an outcome is positively valent when a person prefers attaining a goal to not attaining that goal. A zero valence is when the person is indifferent to attaining the goal, while it is negatively valent when he prefers not attaining the goal.

There is evidence in the research indicating that athletic participation is linked with satisfaction with the overall college experience and may also increase motivation to complete one's degree, persistence in college, and actual degree completion (Pascarella, et al, 1996). Using specialized academic support services may increase the expectancy to graduate if the programs available are viewed as helpful or as a necessity to graduate by the athlete. The literature indicates that revenue sports are primarily focused on winning, while non-revenue sports place more emphasis on academics and graduation than revenue sports. The academic atmosphere created by the sport played can influence the desire and ability of the student athlete to graduate within time frames established by the NCAA.

Several studies have also used Vroom's Expectancy Theory in explaining student motivation, motivational factors on work performance, and also predicting academic performance. Geiger and Cooper (1964) used Vroom's Expectancy Theory to assess student motivation and found that three issues; increased GPA, superior post-college job performance, and increased self-esteem, best influenced increased motivation of student academic performance. To that end, what motivates people in general and how that motivation can be channeled to certain events, like attaining graduation must be discussed. Expectancy theory assumes that behavior results from conscious choices among alternatives whose purpose it is to maximize pleasure and minimize pain (Ratzburg, 1997), can be applied to motivation to avoid being academically ineligible or avoidance of team penalties.

Vroom defines motivation as a process governing choices made by persons or lower organisms among alternative forms of voluntary activity. The Expectancy Theory provides the theoretical basis for this study in that it measures motivation, expectation, and outcome; primarily a goal and the process by which someone will choose a path to accomplish or to not accomplish that goal. The strength or tendency to act in a certain way (motivation) depends on the strength of an expectation that an act will be followed by a given outcome and on the attractiveness of that outcome or greatest of the reward to an individual. For example, it may be an arduous experience to complete the requirements for a baccalaureate degree while competing at a high level athletically, but the rewards and outcomes after successful completion may far outweigh any difficulty in accomplishing the goal and thus increases the motivation and desire to successfully complete both goals.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the motivational perception of the need and usefulness of specialized academic support services by NCAA Division I Athletes. The primary investigator has conducted previous studies that revealed six main indicators that positively or negatively affected academic persistence and graduation from college of NCAA Division I college athletes (Citations purposely deleted for blind review). The factors most influential and analyzed as independent variables, as determined by the researcher are:

1. Athlete's perception of college coaches emphasis on academics.
2. The extent and use of specialized academic support services.
3. Sport played in college.
4. Ethnicity
5. Gender
6. High School NCAA Core Course GPA.
7. SAT/ACT Score(s).

The contribution to the literature and body of knowledge from this study is to examine the specific motivational influences, positively or negatively, of the use specialized academic support services for the NCAA Division I college athlete.

Research Questions

According to the perceptions of the NCAA Division I athlete:

1. Are specialized, athlete only, academic support services necessary for intercollegiate athletes' academic persistence and potential for graduation?
2. Are these services needed to remain academically eligible for intercollegiate athletic competition?
3. What is the motivational perception of the athlete to use specialized academic support services?

Methods

A self-developed, juried survey instrument was used for this study. The purpose of the survey was to ascertain the impact of the dependant variables, (1) the need and (2) motivational perception of specialized academic support services for college athletes and (3) the effect of those services on athletes to academically persist and/or remain eligible. Independent variables analyzed include current college GPA, High School NCAA Clearinghouse Core Course Grade Point Average; sport(s) played, gender, ethnicity, and coaches emphasis on academics.

Population, Sample and Design of Study

Data was obtained from selected student athletes in a non-BCS (Bowl Championship Series) Division I Football Bowl Series (FBS) conference representing 27 male and female athletic teams. The data incorporates items from a survey instrument distributed to senior athletes

at the 13 schools. For the purposes of this study, only athletes in the last year of competitive eligibility were selected for the population. The study used a proportional stratified sample (n=358) of the total population (N=1430) to complete the survey instrument. This study is done in a descriptive design to provide an accurate picture of a situation or phenomenon by using research based conclusions (Kerlinger, 2000).

Validity and Data Analysis

The survey instrument was developed and by an extensive review of past and present literature, surveys and questionnaires, approved by a jury of experts, and pilot tested by a similar population sample. Data were analyzed using SPSS and applicable descriptive statistics.

Table I - *Cross-Tabulation Use of Academic Services by Ethnicity, All Sports*

Q) I could not graduate without use of these services

	Ethnicity					Total
Answer	African-American (Black)	Asian/Pacific Islander	Caucasian (White)	Hispanic	Other	
Agree	19	1	27	1	2	50
Neutral	12		37			49
Disagree	7		79	2	3	91
Total	38	1	143	3	5	190

Table II - *Cross-Tabulation by Ethnicity, All Sports*

Q) I do not need these services in order to graduate

Answer	Ethnicity					Total
	African-American (Black)	Asian/Pacific Islander	Caucasian (White)	Hispanic	Other	
Agree	7		67	2	2	78
Neutral	11		52		2	65
Disagree	21	1	24	1	1	48
Total	39	1	143	3	5	191

Table III - *Cross-Tabulation by Gender, All Sports*

Q) I could not graduate without having used these services

Answer		Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
Agree	Count	19	31	50
	% of Total	10.0%	16.3%	26.3%
Neutral	Count	24	25	49
	% of Total	12.6%	13.2%	25.8%
Disagree	Count	47	44	91
	% of Total	24.7%	23.2%	47.9%
Total	Count	90	100	190
	% of Total	47.4%	52.6%	100.0%

Table IV - *Cross-Tabulation by Gender, All Sports*

Q) I do not need these services to graduate

Answer		Female	Male	Total
Agree	Count	41	37	78
	% of Total	21.5%	19.4%	40.8%
Neutral	Count	29	36	65
	% of Total	15.2%	18.8%	34.0%
Disagree	Count	20	28	48
	% of Total	10.5%	14.7%	25.1%
Total	Count	90	101	191
	% of Total	47.1%	52.9%	100.0%

Analysis

Several questions on the survey instrument were used to ascertain the extent of use of academic support services for intercollegiate athletes and what the impetus to use the services was. In addition, the data can reveal if these services are needed to maintain or enhance the APR numbers of a given NCAA Division I athletic department because the students might feel they the motivation to use the services to assist in maintaining not only their individual eligibility, but the competitive eligibility of the team overall. It would appear that for certain segments of the surveyed population, specialized academic support services are viewed more as a necessity rather than a luxury in the APR era.

The questions covered whether or not an individual athlete felt they could graduate without having the ability to use these services and were they needed to successfully persist and remain athletically eligible. One question asked if the respondent uses the academic support services on a regular basis. In turn, one specific question on the survey was a multi-part question where the respondent could indicate what services they use, or do not use. The choices included advisement and registration, tutorial assistance, mentoring, computer lab, study hall, study skills, and learning disabled services. Advisement and registration, computer lab, and tutorial services made up the services most used by student athletes who responded. The data discussed on Tables I-IV represent the number of athletes who feel they must use these services to graduate and those who feel they do not need to use these services to graduate. The questions are essentially the same, just asked in a different way. A further breakdown by research question follows:

Research question 1: Are specialized, athlete only, academic support services necessary for intercollegiate athletes' academic persistence and potential for graduation?

Analysis of this question centered on which populations by sport, by gender, by ethnicity feel they need these services to persist successfully academically and to increase potential for and eventually graduate. Out of the 190 athletes analyzed in the study, 41 were African American, Hispanic, or Asian American. Overwhelmingly in this study, ethnic minorities perceive that these services are needed to persist while being a competitive athlete and to graduate which would tie into the motivational theory of valance as presented by Vroom (Tables I & II). These findings do correspond with the literature that finds these services are used at a much greater rate by minorities rather than their Caucasian counterparts. Male athletes regardless of ethnicity use these services as a greater rate than females, although the margin is not as great (Tables III & IV).

Research question 2: Are these services needed to remain academically eligible for intercollegiate athletic competition?

It would appear from the data that male minority athletes feel they need these services to remain eligible, but some qualitative statements do place the onus more on the individual to succeed academically. It can be inferred that if a certain athlete or segmented population of athletes feel these services are of importance to persist and graduate, it would also be of importance for athletic eligibility. Considering the importance to keep athletes on the field or court, athletic eligibility may sometimes trump staying on course for graduation, although the APR system has arguably made both scenarios a little more related as NCAA athletes must meet

certain satisfactory progress/percentage of degree completed and grade point average along with meeting minimum Federal GSR rates.

Research question 3: What is the perception of athlete only specialized academic support services?

This study shows a significant difference in use of specialized academic support services for college athletes between groups by sport, gender, and ethnicity. The data indicate that those athletes who participate in the sports of football, men's basketball, and to a lesser, but growing extent, women's basketball use the services more and state that they need these services to maintain eligibility and graduate. Male athletes use these services significantly more than female athletes. In turn, minority athletes use the services at a much higher rate than Caucasian athletes, regardless of gender.

Written qualitative comments by the respondents reinforce that the head coach and/or members of the coaching staff have the singular most influence on the academic success of a student athlete. Many praised the efforts of the athlete only academic assistance they were provided but also stated the role of parents/guardians and personal goals were just as or even more important. Additionally the qualitative comments reflected the quantitative data in the need and importance of the services for different subsets of the population. Findings in many of the qualitative comments focus on the importance of individual motivation and individual desire to succeed academically and athletically. Comments included:

Male, Football

"Being a student athlete has been a great challenge for me and is an experience that will prepare me for the rest of my life. I realized quickly that academics are of the utmost importance if I am to achieve the things I desire in life."

Female, Women's Basketball

"We take academic support services for granted. They do so much for us to help us and keep us on track. I am grateful for it, but it is still up to me to ultimately succeed academically."

Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research

This study reviews the perceived motivational impact, need, and motivational perception of specialized academic support services on the subgroups of gender, ethnicity, and sport played in college and how it impacts the perception of the athlete toward the importance of use of specialized academic support services in the APR era. The disturbing trend is many minorities who play in the revenue, heavily commercialized, sports of football and men's basketball feel they need these services not just to academically persist and graduate, but also just to maintain athletic eligibility—a crucial component of the APR measurement. This study suggests findings of previous research that academic support services specifically for college athletes can be conflicting primarily in the revenue sports, rather than being a support system for a true education and that is likely influenced by the pressure of maintaining an APR score so as to

avoid any contemporaneous and/or historical penalties which may include a loss of scholarships and/or postseason play opportunities.

Academic services for intercollegiate athletes are a significant reason that athletes are separated from the student body in general (Brady, 2007) and it is disconcerting that a disproportionate amount of male minorities feel the motivation that they must have these services to remain eligible, persist, and graduate. Further research is needed to examine the admission of many of these students to see if they met predictors for academic success in college and furthermore, could they be successful without these services and/or an inordinate amount of help not afforded to the rest of the campus population and does it negatively or positively affect the APR score of an institution. Arguably, specialized academic support services for athletes have become a mechanism, primarily in the revenue sports of Division I football and men's basketball, which often encourages eligibility maintenance, rather than true academic advisement. Staff members in athletic academic advisement positions are often told by administrators and coaches alike that the academic success of the athletes is the advisors' responsibility (G. Gurney, personal communication). Often knowing their job may be on the line, advisors, professors, and administrators will often bend or break the rules specifically for an athlete to remain eligible (Brady, 2007). Recent aforementioned examples demonstrate the lengths some universities will go to keep academically deficient athletes on the court and the field. It is important to examine why these services are catering to certain populations more than others as bringing in academically deficient students, potentially on special admission, can overtax the resources available within academic advisement for athletes (Gurney et. al.).

Another potential solution for this is to bring the academic support system for intercollegiate athletes under the same system for all students, or at the very least, have these services report to an academic entity as a way to reduce the eligibility pressures that might be advanced by athletic interests. If athletes are motivated to succeed primarily themselves, the location of the academic services for athletes should not be an issue. This is a proposal advocated by several reform minded groups such as *The Drake Group* and *The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics*, and goes further to protect academic integrity than just changing reporting lines. Arguably, true academic counseling cannot be maintained in the environment, it becomes more eligibility maintenance. This solution integrates the athletes back into the student body, alleviates the pressure on counselors to bend or break rules, and ensures that academic counseling is under the control of an academic entity that should be free of the external pressures of the athletic department, or at least drastically minimize it. In turn, athletes may then understand the individual responsibility and motivation needed even more to succeed in academics and academic services can be a support mechanism and not a crutch. This does not prepare well-educated, competent citizens, it may provide athletes, who in many cases have no education, zero professional sports opportunities and that reflects poorly on academia and the enterprise as a whole. In turn it might enable the APR system to be a much stronger and effective academic evaluation tool. Future research should focus on these issues and the feasibility of enacting these reforms as a way of improving the APR and academic issues for college athletics overall.

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