Division I Student Athletes' Perceptions: How Well Does the Athletic Department Promote Student Athlete Development in an Urban-Serving University?

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Abstract

The purpose of the research was to identify student athletes' perceptions of their athletic department regarding student development. Student athletes from a Division I athletic department were surveyed (n = 369) in order to monitor their development. Regression analyses, which included respondent's sport, gender, classification, reports of abuse, and student development programs, explained only 25 percent of the variance of student athletes' perceptions. Other factors explain student athletes' perceptions of developmental programs. Recommendations are provided.

Many colleges and universities realize the increased need and pressure for providing opportunities for student athletes to develop socially and individually (Carodine, Almod, and Gratto 2001, 19). For example, Richards (2011) reported how student athletes at an NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Conference) leadership forum spent hours making blankets for children supported by the Salvation Army. There were many activities and breakout sessions at the forum, which provided opportunities for networking, discussion, and understanding how leadership can transform their campus communities. This particular event is an example of student athlete development within the NCAA governance structure. These development efforts are not restricted to NCAA institutions. Keim and Strickland (2004), for example, studied the efforts and perceptions of services provided by community colleges for student athletes. Regardless of governance structure (NCAA, NAIA, NJCAA, etc.) or size of the athletic department (Division I, II, or III), social expectations are these athletic entities provide resources and opportunities for student athletes to grow and develop beyond the parameters of their sport participation.

There has been a large amount of scholarship devoted to understanding the factors influencing student athletes' perceptions of development, recruitment, and services provided by athletic departments. Indeed, many intercollegiate governance structures mandate or encourage specific programs aimed at student athlete development, such as career and/or life skills programs, in addition to already established athletic-based intervention programs. The purpose of the research is to examine student athletes' perceptions of their athletic department's efforts of student athlete development

initiatives by studying model factors associated with these perceptions. Specifically, the research will attempt to answer the following:

1. What are student athletes' perceptions of student athlete development programs provided by the athletic program, incidences of abuse within sport programs, and perception of the athletic departments' commitment to holistic growth of the student athlete?

2. What impact do student athlete development programs, gender, sport played, incidences of abuse, and classification of student have on student athletes' perceptions of their holistic development as supported by their athletic department?

The research is important because it not only identifies factors important to student athletes, but also examines student athletes' perceptions of how athletic department programs contribute to student athlete social, emotional, and physical growth. Understanding the athletic department's commitment to growth (socially, emotionally, and physically) from a student athlete's point of view is important for identifying the programs that positively impact student athletes' lives. A better understanding of holistic student athlete development aids in resource allocation within athletic departments struggling to understand how to situate productive student athlete development within a strained fiscal climate. Finally, urban-serving colleges and universities have unique characteristics as compared to other more traditional college or university settings. There has been, however, relatively little research done examining athletic departments (and student athletes) within these urban educational and athletic settings.

Background

Historical research detailed the unique relationship of physical education and mandatory public (primary) education in the United States during the early part of the twentieth century (Sage 1987, 256–258). It was during this time, the view espousing sport participation as a positive for both individual and social development was institutionalized. Hartmann (2008) reviewed the hypothesis that sport participation is associated with decreased deviance or delinquency, despite empirical research. As a result, many communities, educational leaders, and policy makers still hold on to the notion that sport participation serves as a deterrent to deviant behavior. Within education, specifically, Fejgin (1994, 211–215) summarized the differing viewpoints regarding sport's relationship with educationally defined deviant behavior and several other studies have examined relationships between lack of deviance or increased individual development and sport participation (Broh 2002; Donaldson and Ronan 2006; Erkut and Tracy 2002; Videon 2002). Since sport, for many people, can be viewed as a "moral laboratory" (McFee 2004), sport participation has been aligned with positive socialization patterns, which lead to integration, educational achievement, and the acquisition of norms and values (Hoffman 2006), such as building character.

While you can debate the merits of sport participation and its impact on behavior or that it teaches participants morality (Culbertson 2008), you cannot deny how engrained within not only society, but also within our educational system organized sport has become. With this institutionalization of athletics into education, including higher education, sport participation opportunities are associated with providing student athletes access to a wide array of educational and developmental programs. Recently, there has been a large amount of research devoted to understanding student athletes and their related perceptions regarding a variety of factors such as student services, college choice factors, or character development (e.g., Brandenburgh and Carr 2002; Camire and Trudel 2010; Kankey and Quarterman 2007; Trendafilova, Hardin, and Seungmo 2010; Vermillion 2010; Vermillion and Spears 2012; Watson 2006). Student athletes' perceptions of their experiences within the collegiate and/or intercollegiate athletic settings also have received attention (Adler and Adler 1991; Potuto and O'Hanlon 2006).

Regarding student athlete services within an athletic department, Ko, Durrant, and Mangiantini (2008) assessed for the first time the breadth of services provided—or made available—to Division I student athletes. Specifically, they stated, "It is very important to use their [student athletes'] perceptions as one in evaluating the quality of services offered by these programs" (Ko, Durrant, and Mangiantini 2008, 194). Finally, Hoffman (2006, 286–288) noted differences in behaviors while looking at high school extracurricular activities in relationship to socio-economic status, gender, and risk behaviors (such as alcohol consumption), thereby illustrating the impact of psychosocial identity concepts, which are posited to impact student athletes' perceptions of a variety of experiences or services. One important facet of a psychosocial examination of sport and student athlete development is the surrounding environment these exchanges take place within. Administrators should not overlook the uniqueness of not only the urban environment, but also the urban educational environment.

Urban-Serving Education and Athletics

Many colleges and universities attempt to provide moral or character development to their student populations, either directly or indirectly, through various programs or interventions (Jenney 2011, 61–66). In the early twentieth century, Dewey (1939) advocated for the integration of real-world experiences with classroom or academic content in order to better address morally-based issues in a learning environment. As college students mature, they begin to develop empathy, which is a foundational element of moral development, by balancing emotions and being involved with peer groups, faculty, or student-based organizations (Chickering and Reisser 1993). In order to build these positive traits, urban-serving colleges and universities promote student achievement by focusing on community initiatives, which provide students opportunities for development by funneling resources to address issues of health, workforce competency, and economic opportunities in these urban centers (Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities n.d., 1–2). There are innumerable opportunities for growth and development outside of the traditionally-defined classroom setting,

especially within urban centers which house almost 80 percent of the U.S. population (Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities n.d., 1).

There has been little research done, however, with regard to urban-serving institutions, which are quite different from more traditional "college town" colleges or universities. Furthermore, there are a number of parallels between urban public schools and these urban-serving universities. Urban-serving colleges and universities mirror the same inequality dimensions as urban public schools, including higher dropout rates and constrained financial resources (Jordan 2007). According to the Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities (n.d.), urban universities focus on not only educating the labor force, building stable communities, and examining the health of urban populations, but also by providing students opportunities for growth and development. These opportunities include a variety of programs, which focus on various student or community groups.

Even though resources may be scarce, many urban-serving colleges and universities fund a variety of athletic programs, which—generally speaking—are lauded for providing student athletes positive personal experiences (Potuto and O'Hanlon 2006). It could be hypothesized that athletic departments housed in urban-serving universities extend the commitment to health and development from the larger university environment to student athletes by focusing on this specific population.

The NAIA's (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics) Champions of Character program attempts to positively promote student athlete development based on ideas of individual growth and responsibility, giving back to communities, and representing positive societal morals and values. These program components are posited to better insulate student athletes from deviant behavior and help them become better members of society (Five Core Values n.d.; Vermillion, Messer, and Bridgman 2012). While not specifically designed for urban-serving colleges and universities, such a program highlights the role athletics is perceived to play in developing well-rounded individuals. Intercollegiate athletics can be one environment, based on student involvement, in which student athletes learn to grow and development moral maturity. The many classroom and community experiences, which are unique to an urban-serving institution, can help the student athlete mature. Resultantly, understanding the athletic department's commitment to growth (socially, emotionally, and physically) from a student athlete's point of view is important for identifying the programs that positively impact student athletes' lives, thus adhering to the urban-serving mission of student development.

Psychosocial Student Development
Over the past few decades student development research has increased as both scholastic and collegiate educators and administrators saw the need for better understanding student populations. Evans (2010) recommended that all educators

. . . consider the truth inherent in the statement that having more information would always seem to be more advantageous than having less. Use of student development theory in a generative fashion is a mutually shared responsibility. Higher education professionals who interact with students in the college environment must nourish this never-ending feedback loop to best serve all students (70).

Indeed, many athletic departments and governance structures (e.g., NCAA, NJCAA, NAIA, etc.) speak of the importance of educating student athletes, which is based on a structuralist view that sport can be an extension of the classroom and provides access to integrative ideologies and values (Coakley 2008, 37). As a result, then, research should be gathered in order to better understand what student athletes are saying about their development, which relates to the importance of "listening" in education (Evans 2010, 70). There are several larger paradigms relating to college student development. Psychosocial identity development, however, is the primary lens used in this research to examine student athlete development because of its focus on examining the situational characteristics unique to student athletes' lives. Additionally a psychosocial developmental approach recognizes issues important to student athletes' development occur throughout their lives resulting from many interactions, settings, and contexts. Evans (2010) stated a psychosocial approach ". . . can also provide guidance concerning topics for programs and workshops for particular groups of students" (73).

Psychosocial theories are useful for examining and thinking about problems, dynamics, or circumstances that arise throughout one's life (Evans 2010). Erikson ([1959]1980), one of the foremost psychosocial theories, examined the role of identity throughout one's life, with special attention being paid on the teenage years through adult years. Specifically, he noted the role the social environment played in influencing both personal development and the internal mechanisms we use to cope or sustain social life. These coping skills or mechanisms are embedded in the historical and social contexts of the individual. Identity, consequently, is the result of managing specific conflicts that arise, most notably, in adolescence, and then later in adult life. Table 1 summarizes the eight stages development.

Table 1: Summary of Erikson's ([1959] 1980) eight stages of development.

Stage	Name	Description	Point in life-span
1.	Trust vs. Mistrust	Involves infants learning reciprocity and trusting their caregivers.	Infancy
2.	Autonomy vs. Shame	Children develop exploratory skills, such as walking. Shame is based upon not adhering to expectations, and caregivers must provide much needed encouragement in order to develop autonomy.	Early Childhood

3	Initiative vs. Guilt	Children develop initiative through games and play, while role modeling others' behaviors. Imagination is important, and children begin dealing with the responsibility of making wrong choices.	Childhood
4.	Industry vs. Inferiority	Attempt to master skills and competency is maintained with adult appreciation. Non-family interactions take on greater importance.	Childhood
5.	Identity vs. Confusion	Key point in development; involves the transition from childhood to adulthood. Start developing their core self (values, beliefs, and goals) and align themselves with specific roles in order to distinguish between how society sees them and how they see themselves.	Adolescence
6.	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Fusion of their identity with other(s) by maintaining important relationships, or suffer emotional stress from isolation.	Early adulthood
7.	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Engage in giving back to society and focus on future generations and their legacy. If they are unable to do this, then the person withdraws and life activities become difficult.	Mid-adulthood
8.	Integrity vs. Despair	Reconciling that the body is wearing down and the inevitability of death becomes clear. Most individuals are either pleased with or regret their life events.	Late adulthood

Table summarizes information from: Erikson, Erik H. (1959) 1980. Identity and the Life Cycle. New York: Norton.

While identity development is a process that occurs throughout the entire life-course, stages five and six are extremely important when examining the role of intercollegiate athletics on student athletes' development. Specifically, stage five addresses the crucial time in one's life when roles and belonging take on increased importance in a student's life. Indeed Marcia (1993) noted this particular stage was crucial in the individual's development. The continuity of society's recognition of the individual and how the person sees their own self leads to a sense of drive, motivation, and purpose. Stage six further expands on how the individual develops and maintains social relationships. Therefore, the roles we play throughout a day help to concretize our expectations and sense of self. The identity that develops is maintained, as a result, by both societal and personal expectations. Using these particular stages, the role of 'student athlete' may take a leading role in the person's life. Indeed, it can be hypothesized easily that the

drive it takes to achieve Division I (NCAA) athletic opportunities may manifest itself in a greater sense of role homogeneity; that is, student athletes start to see themselves as primarily athletes in order to maximize their athletic achievements. Constant reaffirmation from peers, community members, media outlets, faculty, support staff, and other members of society of the athletic identity helps to guide both the person's development and how they view or maintain social relationships.

Research Questions

It has been noted that a developmental educational experience is one that integrates classroom and societal dynamics into one holistic learning process (Dewey 1939). Psychosocial developmental theorists point to many events, processes, and dynamics influencing not only personal development, but also identity formation (Erikson [1959] 1980; Marcia 1993). Indeed, Knelfelkamp, Widick, and Parker (1978) noted that developing a universal student development model or program was nearly impossible. Programs need to be developed and studied based upon their specific environments. Given the unique social milieu urban-serving universities may provide, the purpose of the research is to examine Division I student athletes' perceptions of their athletic department's commitment to student athlete development at an urban-serving institution. Specifically,

• What are student athletes' perceptions of student athlete development programs provided by the athletic program, incidences of abuse within sport programs, and perception of the athletic departments' commitment to holistic growth of the student athlete?

• What impact do student athlete development programs, gender, sport played, incidences of abuse, and classification of student have on student athletes' perceptions of their holistic development as supported by their athletic department?

Methods

Sample

Student athletes from a public, urban-serving university were surveyed over the last three academic years. The university is an NCAA Division I athletic department (i.e. no football program, formerly known as Division I-AAA); therefore, the student athlete population is smaller than other Division I FBS (Football Bowl Subdivision) or FCS (Football Championship Subdivision) athletic departments. Regardless, the sample includes responses and representatives from 100 percent of the programs supported by the athletic department. After data collection procedures, a total of 369 completed, validated surveys were analyzed ($n = 369$). The sample was composed of freshmen (35.2%), sophomores (21.1%), juniors (20.6%), seniors (15.2%), and fifth-year seniors (7.9%). There were more females than males in the sample (56.6% vs. 43.4%) with the majority of the sample represented by the following sports: men's outdoor track and field (22%), women's outdoor track and field (21.7%), men's indoor track (20.3%), women's indoor track (18.4%), volleyball (13.3%), baseball (10.6%),

and softball (7.9%). Men's and women's golf, men's and women's tennis, men's and women's basketball, and men's and women's cross country teams made up about 5 percent or less, each, of the sample. Student athletes were allowed to respond to only one sport regarding their athletic participation. Race and ethnicity, however, were not survey questions asked by the athletic department.

Measure

Questions were developed for internal data analysis purposes and included sections on demographics; student athletes' perceptions of various programs or services offered by the athletic department; questions asking about student athletes' social, physical, and emotional growth while at the university; incidences of physical, verbal, or mental abuse; and sport program where participation occurred. Student athlete development is operationalized as social, physical, and emotional growth, which were each binary variables. Scaled together the resulting dependent variable 'growth' ranges from zero (low) to three (high). The Cronbach's alpha level for the dependent variable is .75, which is above the traditional acceptance level within the social and behavioral sciences.

Procedure

Surveys were administered, electronically, by the athletic department for internally collected data management. Student athletes answered survey questions during open computer lab hours or study hall sessions. Athletic department personnel were not present during evaluations. Student athlete responses, once entered, were sent to an electronic spreadsheet, which was organized by survey questions, year the survey was taken, and the electronic identifier for each respondent. The resulting electronic pool of data constituted the database for the project. The electronic database was developed, imported, and analyzed in PASW (Predictive Analytics SoftWare; SPSS, v. 18).

Results

Descriptive statistical results indicate an overall favorable view of athletic department programs. Specifically, student athletes noted high levels of athletic departmental support for social, physical, and emotional growth, which resulted in a dependent variable with a mean of over 2.85 (SD = .45) out of a possible range of zero to three, and almost 89 percent of respondents reported the highest possible response on this variable. In relationship to the first research question (What are student athletes' perceptions of student athlete development programs provided by the athletic program, incidences of abuse within sport programs, and perception of the athletic departments' commitment to holistic growth of the student athlete?), student athletes reported their satisfaction levels for programs and whether they knew of abuse from coaches or athletic department personnel. Concerning abuse, 87.3 percent reported no physical abuse, while only 67.5 percent and 68.6 percent reported no verbal or mental abuse respectively. High marks were given for other athletic departmental programs. Fifty percent of programs had more than 90 percent of student athletes reporting they were *satisfied or extremely satisfied* with the program, and 75 percent of the program had 70 percent or more of student athletes reporting they were *satisfied or extremely*

satisfied with the program, which included team travel, academic advising, tutoring, academic success skill programs, study hall, new student athlete orientations (including freshmen and transfer student athletes), academic monitoring, learning assessments, mentoring, and post-eligibility programs. The two programs scoring the lowest satisfaction percentages included assistance with special needs (65 percent were *satisfied or extremely satisfied*) and assistance for at-risk student athletes (66.8 percent were *satisfied or extremely satisfied*). See Table 2.

Table 2: Percent (%) of satisfaction levels for student development programs offered by athletic department.

Variables	% little to no satisfaction	SD	% satisfied or extremely satisfied with program
Programs			
Academic advising	3.9	.194	96.1
Tutoring	8.4	.277	91.6
Success skills	6.9	.254	93.1
Study hall	3.9	.194	96.1
Freshman/transfer orientation	16.2	.369	83.8
Academic programs monitoring	5.1	.221	94.9
Assistance of special needs	35	.478	65
Learning assessments	27.1	.445	72.9
Mentoring	24.4	.430	75.6
Assistance with at-risk students	33.2	.472	66.8
Post eligibility programs	21.6	.412	78.4

Regarding the second research question (What impact do student athlete development programs, gender, sport played, incidences of abuse, and classification of student have on student athletes' perceptions of their holistic development as supported by their athletic department?), regression analyses, which included respondent's sport played, gender, student classification, reports of abuse (physical, mental, and verbal), and perceptions of the aforementioned student development programs, explained only 25 percent of the variance of student athletes' perceptions of the athletic department's efforts to promote student athlete growth or development. Concerning significant factors, it appears the programs of team travel, academic progress monitoring, and post-eligibility programs were statistically significant. It should be noted that the programs of learning assessments and mentoring, while not statistically significant, were approaching significance (significance levels = .061 for both programs), which could provide useful to athletic department administrators. Verbal abuse was the only statistically significant abuse variable, and none of the sports were statistically

significant. Several other factors appear to explain student athletes' perceptions of their athletic department's developmental programs. See Table 3.

Table 3: Factors associated with student athletes' perceptions of student athlete development.

Independent Variables	Unstandardized β	[1]Sig	Standardized β
Psychosocial			
Gender	.405	.290	.452
Student class	−.005	.789	−.015
Programs			
Team travel	.199	.039*	.118
Academic advising	.123	.337	.054
Tutoring	−.030	.780	−.019
Success skills	−.044	.704	−.026
Study hall	−.035	.792	−.015
Freshman/transfer orientation	−.063	.432	−.053
Academic programs monitoring	.490	.000***	.247
Assistance of special needs	−.011	.914	−.011
Learning assessments	.188	.061	.190
Mentoring	−.185	.061	−.181
Assistance with at-risk students	−.082	.464	−.088
Post eligibility programs	.171	.037*	.160
Abuse			
Physical	.163	.166	.078
Mental	−.158	.090	−.154
Verbal	−.218	.027*	−.216
Sport			
Volleyball	−.032	.905	−.025
Men's golf	.181	.538	.083
Women's golf	−.096	.734	−.048
Men's tennis	−.309	.303	.126
Women's tennis	−.012	.968	−.005

Men's basketball	.739	.132	.093
Women's basketball	.226	.440	.097
Men's cross country	.129	.313	.063
Men's indoor track & field	−0.80	.590	−.072
Men's outdoor track & field	.413	.100	.388
Women's cross country	.049	.708	.022
Women's indoor track & field	.092	.473	.082
Women's outdoor track & field	−.154	.566	−.146
Softball	−.048	.861	−.029
Baseball	.375	.179	.269

$R^2 = 0.253$,
df= 32, F=3.071, sig=.000
[1]Sig= *** p< 0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to identify student athletes' perceptions of their athletic department as related to the effectiveness of student athlete development. Specifically, two research questions were posed.

1. What are student athletes' perceptions of student athlete development programs provided by the athletic program, incidences of abuse within sport programs, and perception of the athletic departments' commitment to holistic growth of the student athlete?

2. What impact do student athlete development programs, gender, sport played, incidences of abuse, and classification of student have on student athletes' perceptions of their holistic development as supported by their athletic department?

Using psychosocial student development theories, especially the view proposed by Erikson ([1959]1980), this research attempts to understand student athletes' perceptions of how their athletic department is providing holistic student development opportunities. Additionally, since the sample is drawn from a student athlete population of an urban-serving university that emphasizes student development in many contexts, the results help to examine how athletic departments engage in holistically developing student athletes within urban centers.

As Table 2 illustrates, all the programs run by the athletic department to address facets of student athlete development received *satisfied or extremely satisfied* responses from at least 65 percent of the student athletes surveyed. All of these programs related to at least one aspect of holistic student athlete development, as reviewed by Carodine,

Almod, and Gratto (2001). However, almost one third of student athletes did identify some sort of verbal (32.5 percent) or mental (31.4 percent) abuse. This particular finding is important because verbal or mental abuse is often overlooked within the world of athletics with the assumption being that coaches have to be "disciplinarians" in order to get efficiency and winning results (Goldberg 2012). Indeed, many people believe that verbal abuse is not only common, but an acceptable—if not expected— form of motivation within college athletics (Lederman 2010). Furthermore, Schinnerer (2009) noted in a recent study that about 45 percent of school teachers admitted to bullying a student, emotionally, in the past and asserted it was safe to assume—based on similar roles and percentages—that 45-50 percent of coaches had engaged in similar bullying activities. Student athletes who are victims of mental or verbal abuse have decreased self-esteem with some students suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (Schinnerer 2009). Athletics, however, is an important arena for socialization (Coakley 2008, 91–121) in which student athletes learn not only important personal values, but also how to be an authority figure later in life.

Generally speaking, Erikson ([1959]1980) noted the importance of 'adolescence' in the person's life. Stages five and six (see Table 1) describe how the student athlete, during this time, is working on developing their core self, which is based on values, self-worth, and goals (stage five). The core self's development, then, impacts how the student athlete develops and maintains social relationships from this moment forward (stage six). Also of importance, during these stages, are non-family adult authority figures. Gervis and Dunn (2004) noted the importance of the coach in elite athletes' lives, and this adult authority figure plays a role in how the student athlete defines their self-worth. Indeed, coaching research has noted the coach's importance in interactions with student athletes (Ronglan 2011, 255–281). The emotional or mental cruelty, which can result from the coach-athlete interaction, severely hinders the student athlete's psychological well-being and leads to depression, humiliation, and fear (Gervis and Dunn 2004, 216–217). The resulting role homogeneity from student athlete training (i.e., seeing themselves as athletes only) is disproportionately impacted by the coach's abusive behaviors because the person reaffirming that athletic role and identity is also, simultaneously, the person confusing them with a lack of encouragement and increased levels of humiliation and beratement. Indeed, recent research indicated a great number of elite child athletes reported being victims of their coach's emotional abuse (Gervis and Dunn 2004, 221–223), which influences their lifelong development and association with authority figures.

With reference to the second research question, findings indicate about 75 percent of the variance regarding student athletes' perceptions of their athletic department's efforts in student athlete development are explained by factors other than the respondent's gender, sport, classification of student status, and current perceptions of abuse or already established programs. One explanation involves the coach's importance during collegiate athletics. Previous research (see Kankey and Quarterman 2007; Vermillion 2010; and Vermillion and Spears 2012, for example) has identified the importance of the coach or coaching staff in getting student athletes to attend a particular college or university. The personal relationship of the coach/coaches and the

student athlete is a powerful dynamic. It appears those relationships are more important than any other factor to attend a college or university for student athletes. As a result, other resources, such as academic resources, training for future careers, or athletic facilities do not score as highly. Josephson (2007, 3) also noted how coaches' behaviors influence athletes' behaviors, even outside of the sport. It easily could be posited that a student athlete's positive relationship and perception of their coach or coaching staff would greatly influence their perception of the athletic department as a whole entity. As a result, it would be extremely beneficial to athletic departments to prepare coaches for not only their professional responsibilities (e.g., coaching tactics, recruiting, etc.) but also the modeling responsibilities, such as how to communicate with players and serve as mentors, associated with being an intercollegiate athletics coach. Also, athletic departments would benefit from hearing what coaches have to say about student athletes and the programs/services available to student athletes (Carodine, Almod, and Gratto 2001).

Conclusion

As with any research project, there are some limitations that should be identified. First, the survey distributed to student athletes is lacking some important demographic questions. Specifically, there is no measure of race or ethnicity, which is particularly impactful for urban-serving universities. These college and universities tend to have higher minority and first-generation college student enrollments as compared to more traditional colleges and universities. Many of the athletes participating also could be quantified as fitting in one of these identified categories. Also, a measure of a student athlete's international status (i.e., international vs. domestic) would be helpful. Depending on the sport, some NCAA sports, in general, and some athletic departments, in particular, tend to recruit international student athletes. It would be interesting to see how this group of student athletes perceives student development efforts (see Trendafilova, Hardin, and Seungmo 2010), and would be extremely useful to other urban-serving universities, which have large international student populations. In order to address some of the aforementioned limitations, the athletic department could consider using a previously validated and reliable survey instrument for consistency of comparison, such as the Model for Assessment of Services in Intercollegiate Athletics (MASIA) (Ko, Durrant, and Mangiantini 2008). Using such an instrument would allow for consistent longitudinal data collection and analysis. Consistency, which allows for better comparisons over time, is also an important consideration in an industry (i.e., intercollegiate athletic administration) that has such a high turnover rate. Data collection, then, is not an artifact of current administrative personnel and can be built into the organizational protocols and decision-making processes.

Carodine, Almod, and Gratto (2001, 22–30), when reviewing the previous literature on successful student athlete development, noted the multiple services or program included to properly—and holistically—prepare student athletes for life after college and competition. Some of these services or programs included personal development, career development, academic advising, formalized evaluations of programs, and cooperative agreements between athletic departments and student affairs offices.

Additionally, they noted formalized assessment or evaluations beyond NCAA mandated exit interviews of student athletes should be instituted. These assessments also should include evaluations of coaches, not just student athletes' perceptions of programs and services.

If athletic departments are able to truly understand how student athletes perceive the services or programs they administer, consistently, then they will be able to better address the NCAA's mission of holistic student athlete development. Additionally, a better understanding of student athletes' perceptions or views allows for a streamlining of resource allocations in order to maximize increasingly difficult fiscal environments within intercollegiate athletics. Urban-serving institutions, as a result, can better identify the impactful programs that help produce well-rounded and civic minded graduates.

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