

NON-COGNITIVE FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENT ATHLETE  
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

THESIS

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### Abstract

Student athletes face a unique set of challenges when pursuing both academic and athletic goals simultaneously (Ting, 2009; Simons, 2000; Potuto 2007). These challenges are aggregated from a variety of sources, both external and internal (Dudley, 1997; Ryska 2002). Many of the issues facing student athletes are cognitive factors, however, the author chose to target a less researched area and looked at the non-cognitive factors affecting student athlete academic performance. The research was conducted at a Midwestern university, which competed with a Division II affiliation. The institution was selected due to its unique combination of highly competitive athletics and high academic standards (Nygaard, 2012; Reitan, 2012). The research aimed to discover if there was a presence of negative stereotypes and an awareness of non-cognitive factors influencing student athletes' academic experience.

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## CHAPTER ONE

*Introduction*

Student athletes are confronted with a magnitude of challenges when dealing with the difficulties of balancing an academic goal and an athletic career. The “dumb jock” stereotype remains prevalent with faculty and college students not viewing student athletes as serious students (Ting, 2009; Simons, 2000). A growing body of research exists that supports the suggestion that student athletes face heightened college adjustment demands (Simons, 2000; Potuto 2007). Numerous non-cognitive factors have an influence on a student athlete’s performance, both in the classroom and in a competitive environment (Ting, 2009).

As the competitiveness of U.S. athletic programs intensifies, so do the psychological and social problems of student athletes (Dudley, 1997). Given the potential significant impact of sport involvement on the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of student athletes, surprisingly little empirical information exists regarding how the nature of athletic experience may impact global competence perceptions among its participants (Ryska, 2002). “Many colleges and universities continue to focus only on maintaining academic eligibility and graduation rates rather than on enhancing the academic, personal, and athletic development of the student athlete (Broughton, 2001).” Student athletes may feel uncomfortable seeking help outside of the athletic department from professionals who may not comprehend the special concerns, needs, and pressures faced by student athletes (Watson, 2005; Miller, 2002).

*Purpose of the Study*

Student athletes have unique pressures to perform academically and athletically, and often these pressures can be aggregated from a variety of sources both internally and externally (Ting, 2009). A lack of value is placed on them as a student, due to faculty having lower expectations for student athlete's academic performance (Simmons, 2000; Ting, 2009). Such presumptions on a student athlete's ability in the classroom can adversely affect the student athlete's self worth, leading to psychological and social issues. Ten to fifteen percent of student athletes have experienced distress to levels that required clinical attention (Ting, 2009; Watson, 2005). Are there outlets for student athletes to seek help for these unique variables affecting their academic performance? Are athletic departments, coaches, and athletic support staff accessible for their student athletes when they intend to seek help regarding these issues?

*Background*

Few studies can be found regarding the levels of influence non-cognitive factors have on academic performance among student athletes (Ting, 2009). Athletic institutions have put a lot of effort into keeping athletes eligible and attempting to improve graduation rates, but often there is a gap regarding the support system in place for a student athlete's social, mental, or emotional health. Research suggests these factors can have a large impact on the academic experience of a student athlete. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) led an initiative for trying to improve student-athletes academic performance, graduation rate, and personal success. The NCAA started a program



called Challenging Athletes' Minds for Personal Success (CHAMPS) with its main objective aimed at improving the quality of student-athletes' academic experience (Batista 2003). This initiative helped stem numerous departmental programs that looked to aid student-athlete experiences. More specifically, universities were trying to improve the relationship and day-to-day correspondence between athletic personnel and academic faculty. A researcher analyzed hybrid-identities with athletic departments coexisting with the university academic environment, and stated "athletics play a vital role despite faculty perception (Buer, 2006)." Washington State University (WSU) had administrators looking at ways to harness student-athlete's value and create opportunities specific to their success. WSU created the PROWL program, which stands for Providing Responsible Options With Lifeskills (Batista 2003). Their main objective was to generate a better understanding for faculty and student-athlete's relationships (Batista 2003). Programs like PROWL, which stemmed from the NCAA's effort to improve the quality of student athletes' academic experience, have continued to grow in numbers across the country.

Standardized test scores and other cognitive variables have been widely researched attempting to predict academic performance of both athletes and non-athletes. However, when non-cognitive variables were used in conjunction with standardized test scores and earlier grades, correlations with student athletes' college grades and persistence were significantly higher than when the standardized test scores were used alone (Ting, 2009; Ferris, 2004). Researchers have reported that non-cognitive variables including the availability of a strong

support person, participation in community service, and a positive self-concept correlated with higher first-semester grades (Sedlacek, 1992; Simons 2000).

When student athletes do not receive the required support from their coaches, faculty, or from fellow students, research has shown they will detach themselves from their academic role and completely immerse themselves in their athletic role (Watson, 2005).

### *Setting*

The population for the study used student athletes from a public university in the Midwest with an enrollment in the range of 10,000-13,500 students. The university has a Division II athletic affiliation. The sample population for the research consisted of male and female athletes working towards undergraduate degrees ranging in age from 18 to 23 years old. The institution where the research took place participates in the following varsity sports; men's and women's hockey, football, men's and women's basketball, baseball, softball, men's and women's track & field and cross country, women's tennis, women's soccer, and women's volleyball.

### *Assumptions and Limitations*

Readers should be aware the researcher at the time of this study was a former Division II student athlete and worked as a full-time collegiate coach. The previously mentioned affiliations should be acknowledged as potential bias by the researcher. The quantity of responses from the sample population did not affect the validity of the research. The reported grade point averages will not be verifiable and the researcher would suggest not making broad presumptions solely

based off the reported GPA related data. With no incentives being offered for completion, participation weighed heavily on positive involvement and support from the sport head coaches and the athletic administration.

### *Definitions*

**Construct of self-identity**—The compilation of self-referent cognitions, emotions, and attitudes expressed within various aspects of life.

**Help-seeking behavior**— is seen as an adaptive mode of coping with personal concerns or problems (Watson, 2007).

**Non-cognitive**— Variables relating to adjustment, motivation, and perceptions, along with self-concept, educational goals, mental health, and academic motivation (Simons, 2000; Ting, 2009; Woodruff, 2008).

**Nontraditional students**—Individuals facing challenges that are different from the challenges faced by the traditional and majority student population, such as systemic or group biases (Sedlacek, 1992).

**Self-perception theories**— People developing attitudes by observing behaviors and determining attitudes based off those views.

**Social support**— The existence and availability of people on whom one can rely for aid.

**Student athletes**— Students competing in a varsity sport at a college or university regardless of whether the person is receiving financial aid in the form of athletic scholarship.

*Summary*

Student athletes face a unique set of challenges when pursuing both an athletic and academic career. The presence of stereotypes and negative presumptions adversely affects student athletes, and coupled with other difficulties, can have a negative affect to the point where a student athlete's mental, emotion, and social health becomes distressed (Carodine, 2001; Aries 2004). Research shows typical support systems for college athletes is predominantly delineated around maintaining grade point averages (GPA). Vacancies for social support and emotional and mental health can be improved within support systems for student athletes. The previously mentioned non-cognitive variables can have a positive impact on student athletes' academic experiences (Simons, 2000; Potuto, 2007).

## CHAPTER TWO

*Literature Review*

Pursuing an undergraduate degree at most universities presents numerous challenges related to time management, financial constraints, course work, and stress induced anxiety. Lipka (2006) writes the “stresses of student-athletes’ having to balance sports and their academics only scratches the surface of issues surrounding collegiate athletics.” Evidence suggests student athletes could be viewed as nontraditional students due to the unique circumstances of their academic and athletic roles. Like most nontraditional groups, student athletes face prejudice and discrimination in similar fashion to minority groups (Aries, 2004).

*Perception of Student Athletes*

Throughout the entirety student athlete’s tenure in college, their coaches are attempting to mold them into self-reliant individuals. Ironically, social pressures from student athlete peers and coaches, emphasizing self-reliance, may interfere with students’ decisions regarding appropriate help-seeking behavior (Ting, 2009). On many occasions this help-seeking behavior was lacking by student athletes not adapting well in a collegiate setting. Student athletes are often considered nontraditional students because they seem to have a culture and a set of life experiences that differentiate them from other student populations (Ting, 2009; Miller 2002). Adding to the difficulty, negative stereotypes of athletes may help further to separate athletes from the rest of the student body (Aries, 2004). Due to these unique parameters of being a nontraditional student, student athletes are considered part of a minority group (Ting, 2009; Hill, 2001). Student athletes

encounter greater academic challenges, and like members of other minority groups, face prejudice and discrimination (Aries, 2004). Athletic programs can provide opportunities for building communal bonds among students, faculty and alumni despite differences in race/ethnicity, social class and geographical background (Aries, 2004).

Many competitors believe that competition fosters success; therefore, good students must outdo their classmates. Competitors equate success with victory, failure with defeat. Although this attitude is suitable for the playing field, academic and social success usually has little to do with besting others (Dudley, 1997; Hill, 2001; Maloney, 1993). Competitiveness is inappropriate and even counterproductive in courses where evaluation is based on specific criteria. Student athletes tend to spend a great deal of time together and often have common goals and values generated by their experiences as athletes (Carodine, 2001). Being a successful athlete has put many athletes in highly visible and difficult circumstances. Successes and failures can be magnified, and are more apt to be noticed by many individuals (Sedlacek, 1992).

The term “student athlete” originated to help alleviate negative perceptions surrounding athletes, but may be doing harm to the very students it intended to help. Evidence suggests that student athletes look more like other nontraditional students and may suffer from many of the problems and frustrations of a minority group. The term “student athlete” has been heavily stereotyped with negative connotations (Sedlacek, 1992). Given the potential significant impact of sport involvement on the perceptions, attitudes, and

behaviors of student athletes, surprisingly little empirical information exists regarding how the nature of athletic experience may impact perceptions of its participants (Ryska, 2002; Harrison, 2009).

### *Dual Identity*

The formulation of the dual identity for student athletes can be problematic and produce a strain on the student's psychological state of being, hindering academic performance (Ting, 2009). According to a study quoted by Simons (2009), athletes will tend to detach themselves from their academic commitment when they do not receive adequate support. The deficiency of support has stemmed from the beginning of a student athlete's admission into college. At times, the recruitment of student athletes has garnered preferential treatment during the admission process, and has placed certain students with lower academic ability at a disadvantage (Aries, 2004; Potuto, 2007). In addition, the time demands of athletic programs force student athletes to sacrifice attention to academics and put a greater commitment to the athletic role and less to academics.

Some evidence suggests that athletes form a separate subculture that contributes to academic underperformance (Aries, 2004). The degree to which an adolescent identifies with the athletic role may contribute to the development of competence perceptions in other achievement domains. Although no direct, empirical evidence currently exists to support this contention, several sport studies have linked athletic identity to positive self-perceptions such as stable self-concept, increased extroversion, greater global self-esteem, and enhanced

self-confidence and social interaction (Ryska, 2002; Gaston-Gayles, 2004).

Contrary, results from studies exist indicating the athletic role contributes to negative self-perceptions concerning vocational aspirations, academic achievement, social relations, and sport career termination (Ryska, 2002).

Throughout a student athlete's collegiate experience, individuals will often immerse themselves almost entirely in their athletic role while simultaneously detaching from their academics (Simons, 2000). Researchers suggest four ideal types of students based on the relative degree of commitment to each role. The scholar athlete will exude a high degree of athletic and academic commitment. A pure athlete is nearly immersed in their athletic role with little attention to an academic role. Conversely, the pure scholar fully commits themselves to their academic endeavors. Lastly, the non-scholar/non-athlete lacks a commitment to either an academic or athletic role (Simons, 2000).

#### *Non-cognitive Factors*

Research suggests college student athletes who were highly motivated to succeed academically displayed higher self-worth, exhibited better meta-cognitive study strategies, demonstrated higher academic performance, and had fewer reading and study problems than did the student athletes who were less highly motivated (Ting, 2009). As the competitiveness of U.S. athletic programs intensifies, so do the psychological and social problems of student athletes (Dudley, 1997). Surprisingly, student athletes report greater difficulty than other students in taking leadership roles, learning from their mistakes, discussing their personal problems, and articulating their thoughts (Dudley, 1997). The previously



mentioned issues are compounded as student athletes tend to underuse college and university counseling services (Ting, 2009). Self-reliant behaviors reinforced by peers, parents, and coaches of student athletes tend to hinder the student athletes' ability to seek out the needed support from professional services outside of their athletic departments. Research confirms the positive affect social support has on enhancing productivity and achievement, physical and psychological health, and the ability to cope constructively with stress (Dudley, 1997). Ideal academic support programs would provide both academic support and personal support (Dudley, 1997). Academic programs should be used to reinforce academic ability and self-esteem.

Goal perspective theory states that task-involved individuals characteristically define personal competence in terms of self-referenced standards such as task effort, skill improvement, and learning, whereas ego-involved individuals assess their own competence on the basis of norm-referenced criteria such as outperforming others and demonstrating superior ability with nominal effort (Ryska, 2002). Some student athletes' participation in college athletics leads to issues of maladjustment, emotional illness, and psychological distress (Watson, 2005). Assumptions related to the underutilization of services suggest that student athletes are hesitant to seek help because they have skeptical views of counseling and are apprehensive of being stigmatized by coaches, teammates, student peers, and fans (Watson, 2005). Student athletes may feel uncomfortable seeking help outside of the athletic department from service

providers who may not understand special concerns, needs, and pressures face by student athletes (Watson, 2005).

Many colleges and universities have focused only on maintaining academic eligibility and graduation rates rather than on enhancing the academic, personal, and athletic development of the student athlete (Broughton & Neyer, 2001). Controversy surrounding the National Collegiate Athletic Association's initial eligibility standards for college athletes has created criticism over standardized tests and increased attention toward non-cognitive variables used as predictors of academic performance (Simons, 2000).

### *Conclusion*

Research has addressed the unique set of challenges faced by student athletes. These challenges can be reinforced in a negative fashion by the perpetuation of negative stereotypes from faculty and peers. The "dumb jock" stigma polarizes student athletes who are already in a nontraditional student population and solidifies the added pressures stemming from being in a minority group (Ting, 2009). Non-cognitive variables have been shown to have positive affects on academic experience when receiving the appropriate support and attention. Athletic departments tend to focus the majority of their attention on good academic standing regarding GPAs and may not give the non-cognitive variables affecting a student athlete's academic experience enough attention.

## CHAPTER THREE

*Methodology*

Student athletes face a unique set of pressures to perform academically and athletically. Faculty and fellow students have been shown to discredit a student athlete's academic ability (Simmons 2000, Ting 2009). The aforementioned presumptions of a student athlete's commitment in the classroom can adversely affect the student athlete's self-worth, leading to psychological and social issues. This study questions if non-cognitive variables and perceptions surrounding student athletes' academia are contingent with previous research and student athletes' awareness to their prevalence.

*Setting and Participants*

The principle researcher administered the survey through emails sent to all participants for ease of access and for electronic completion prior to printing as well (Appendix A). Head coaches were alerted of the researcher's involvement with their team and the timeline of the surveys being distributed and collected. Consent forms were sent to both the student athletes and head coaches (Appendix B and C). A sample survey was provided to the student athletes (Appendix D). The survey consisted of typed questions answered on a Likert Scale with pen or pencil fill-in responses by the participants. The surveys were returned by mail or handed into the athletic offices on campus. Potential problems included obtaining the responses from the student athletes in a timely fashion. The survey was dispersed near the end of the student athletes' winter break in hopes of a higher return rate with no classes conflicting with their time. Research surveys were sent

to the fall varsity Division II sports teams. Four varsity teams were included in the sample population, men and women's basketball, women's volleyball, and men's football. Potential barriers posed around coaches' willingness to participate as well as athlete participation.

### *Procedures*

Permission from the athletic director was obtained, along with verbal permission from the respective head coaches of the varsity sports in participation. Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training (Appendix E) was completed prior to distributing survey materials and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) authorization form (Appendix F) for Social and Behavioral Sciences (Student as Principal Investigator) was approved to initiate research.

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

The sample survey was provided to the student athletes and aimed to analyze the student athletes' self-perception, the perception of student athletes' through their peers and professors vantage point, experiences the student athletes' have personally encounter, and the awareness of non-cognitive factors surrounding their academic and athletic experience. The surveys were returned by mail or handed into the athletic offices on campus. The data was coded and Microsoft Excel was used to input the data in order to utilize descriptive statistics to formulate the results.

### *Ethics*

Certification of the author's completion of required CITI documentation was included. The research was not funded by any internal or external agencies;

the primary investigator covered any costs incurred during research. Participants were not compensated for completion of the survey. Participants' identity was kept exclusively confidential with no direct identifiers, names, addresses, or telephone numbers to link them to the responses. There was minimal risk for individuals participating in survey, which granted the research expedited review status in category 7. The researcher received consent from the athletic director, head coaches, and included a consent form for each survey that was sent. Within the email addressed to the student athletes, the author indicated the voluntary nature of the survey and submission of the survey inferred consent. The survey results were analyzed through descriptive statistics and through content analysis.

#### *Summary*

Previous research exists suggesting that student athletes face heightened college adjustment demands (Simons, 2000). Literature has shown negative presumptions about athletes' academic ability adversely affects their academic performance adding to the heightened demands of being a collegiate student athlete (Ryska, 2002; Ting, 2009). The presence of non-cognitive factors has left a gap in research in which this study aimed to fill by surveying student athletes on their perceptions, experiences, and awareness of said factors.

## CHAPTER FOUR

*Results*

A paper and pencil survey was distributed via email to ninety-five student athletes from a Midwest, Division II University who were full-time students in good academic standing and had completed at least one season of competition with a varsity sport. The student athletes included in the email request to participate in the survey were male football and basketball players, as well as female volleyball and basketball players. Of the requested student athletes, forty-eight individuals completed and returned the survey.

The survey examined the academic performance of the sample population by establishing a Grade Point Average (GPA) range. The survey also identified factors influencing student athletes' academic performance in three areas: perception of a student athlete, both self-perception and the perception of student athletes through the lens of faculty and other students, the personal experiences of being a student athlete and how it shaped their academic experience, and level at which non-cognitive factors were prevalent in their academic experience and to what level student athletes were aware of resources available to them. The results provided information to the perceptions and factors that are shaping the academic experience of student athletes at an institution with high success rates both academically and athletically.

*Data*

**Grade Point Average.** The sample population was asked to select the appropriate range for their most recent cumulative GPA. Of the forty-eight

student athletes to respond, 67% reportedly had a cumulative GPA of greater than 3.00 (see Table 1). Only 1 of the respondents had a GPA ranging between 2.50-2.01. Overall, roughly 98% of the sample reported having a cumulative GPA of greater than 2.50 which correlates to a C+ or better according to the academic grade point scale utilized at the said university where the study took place.

Table 1: Grade Point Average

Grade Point Average					
Range	4.00-3.51	3.50-3.01	3.00-2.51	2.50-2.01	<2.00
Results	13 (27%)	19 (40%)	15 (31%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)

\*Results of 48 respondents

**Perceptions of student athletes from faculty, peers, and the student athlete.** Several questions in the survey examined the level at which student athletes rated their academic ability and how they perceived themselves as a student and as an athlete. The intent of these questions was to discover the prevalence of stereotypes against student athletes undermining their abilities as a student.

When the student athletes were asked if “Professors see me as having a high academic ability,” results varied among the respondents with 33.33% agreeing, 31.25% disagreeing, and 22.92% of the respondents were neutral on the question (Table 2). Comparatively, the second self-analytical question asked the student athlete if they had “high academic ability,” just over 62% of the respondents agreed with the statement while 6.25% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Over 87% of the respondents indicated they were a strong leader. The participants in the survey had differing perceptions when asked about the standards student athletes were held to in the classroom compared to the

general student body. The responses in agreement to the statement, “I feel I am held to the same standard as my classmate” were only 37.50% with just under 15% responding in disagreement with the statement, and the majority of the respondents (47.92%) indicated a neutral feeling. When conversely asked if “My classmates feel I am held to the same academic standard as others in my class,” the majority of the responses were in agreement with 58.33% answering “agree” or “strongly agree.” Over 35% of the individuals surveyed indicated they disagreed with the statement. Two statements were presented regarding the general student body’s perception of student athletes, and in both cases the

Table 2: Perceptions

Perceptions					
Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Professors see me as having a high academic ability.	4 (8.33%)	16 (33.33%)	11 (22.92%)	15 (31.25%)	2 (4.17%)
I feel that I have a high academic ability.	9 (18.75%)	21 (43.75%)	15 (31.25%)	3 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
I feel that I am a strong leader.	11 (22.92%)	21 (43.75%)	10 (20.83%)	6 (12.50%)	0 (0.00%)
I feel I am held to the same academic standards as my classmates.	6 (12.50%)	12 (25.00%)	23 (47.92%)	7 (14.58%)	0 (0.00%)
My classmates feel I am held to the same academic standards as others in my classes.	18 (37.50%)	10 (20.83%)	3 (6.25%)	17 (35.42%)	0 (0.00%)
I feel other students think less of me because I participate in athletics.	1 (2.08%)	1 (2.08%)	7 (14.58%)	18 (37.50%)	21 (43.75%)
I believe students have a positive perception of me as a student athlete.	27 (56.25%)	12 (25.00%)	6 (12.50%)	3 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
I am a confident person.	17 (35.42%)	22 (45.83%)	8 (16.67%)	1 (2.08%)	0 (0.00%)
I am confident about my abilities as a student.	16 (33.33%)	17 (35.42%)	14 (29.17%)	1 (2.08%)	0 (0.00%)
I believe my classmates respect me as a student.	15 (31.25%)	13 (27.08%)	15 (31.25%)	2 (4.17%)	3 (6.25%)

\*Results of 48 respondents



respondents indicated they agreed students had a positive perception by over 80%. Similarly, 58.33% of the respondents agreed their classmates respect them as a student, however, 31.25% of the respondents did indicate a feeling of neutrality on the statement. Two statements were given in the survey involving the participants to rate the confidence they had in themselves both as an individual and as a student. When respondents replied to the statement “I am a confident person,” 81.25% of the respondents were in agreement with the statement and 16.67% were neutral on the topic. When respondents replied to the statement “I am confident in my abilities as a student,” 68.75% were in agreement compared to the previous statement of over 80%.

**Academic experiences of a student athlete.** Several questions within the survey targeted the student athletes’ experiences while being enrolled as a student and competing in a varsity sport. A few of the questions aimed to examine the image they felt their “student athlete” carried and their comfort level with the connotations that went along with their images.

The majority (77.09%) of the respondents indicated they often took a leadership role on group projects in school with only 10.42% of the response disagreeing with the statement (see Table 3). When asked to rate the following statement, “I feel that my academic experience has been affected positively because of my involvement in athletics,” 58.33% of the respondents agreed with the statement while 37.50% of the respondents disagreed with the statement and 4.17% of the respondents were neutral. When asked to rate a similar statement phrased “I feel that my academic experience has been affected negatively because

of my involvement in athletics,” 70.83% of the respondents were in disagreement with the statement while 10.42% were in agreement and 18.75% were indifferent. A pair of questions gauged the student athletes’ comfort level of making fellow students or professors aware of their athlete status. 64.58% of the respondents were in agreement with the following statement, “I am comfortable making my classmates aware I participate in intercollegiate varsity athletics,” while 10.41% disagreed with the statement. When given the same statement, except pertaining to their professors instead of classmates, only 54.17% agreed to the statement while 20.84% disagreed and 25.00% neutral. Similarly, a three part statement was directly phrased about the positive image of a student athlete on campus. 81.25% of the respondents agreed they had a positive image of student athletes on campus and only 6.25% disagreed. When asked to rate how professors view the image of student athletes, only 4.16% agreed to professors having a positive image, 18.75% were neutral, and 77.09% disagreed with the statement. 58.33% of the respondents agreed with “My classmates have a positive image of student athletes on campus,” while 29.16% disagreed. Two statements were rated by the participants pertaining to where they saw their values as a student and as an athlete. When asked to rate the following statement, “I place more value on myself as an athlete than I do as a student,” 47.92% of the respondents agreed, but when asked to rate the statement, “I place more value on myself as a student than I do as an athlete,” 50.00% of the respondents agreed.

Table 3: Experiences

Statement	Experiences				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am the leader on group projects for school.	14 (29.17%)	23 (47.92%)	6 (12.50%)	0 (0.00%)	5 (10.42%)
I feel that my academic experience has been affected positively because of my involvement in athletics.	13 (27.08%)	15 (31.25%)	2 (4.17%)	6 (12.50%)	12 (25.00%)
I feel that my academic experience has been affected negatively because of my involvement in athletics.	0 (0.00%)	5 (10.42%)	9 (18.75%)	15 (31.25%)	19 (39.58%)
I am comfortable making my classmates aware I participate in intercollegiate varsity athletics.	15 (31.25%)	16 (33.33%)	12 (25.00%)	4 (8.33%)	1 (2.08%)
I am comfortable making my professors aware I participate in intercollegiate varsity athletics.	9 (18.75%)	17 (35.42%)	12 (25.00%)	8 (16.67%)	2 (4.17%)
I have a positive image of student athletes on campus.	20 (41.67%)	19 (39.58%)	6 (12.50%)	3 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
My professors have a positive image of student athletes on campus.	1 (2.08%)	1 (2.08%)	9 (18.75%)	23 (47.92%)	14 (29.17%)
My classmates have a positive image of student athletes on campus.	13 (27.08%)	15 (31.25%)	6 (12.50%)	7 (14.58%)	7 (14.58%)
I place more value on myself as an athlete than I do as a student.	6 (12.50%)	17 (35.42%)	1 (2.08%)	9 (18.75%)	15 (31.25%)
I place more value on myself as a student than I do as an athlete.	16 (33.33%)	8 (16.67%)	1 (2.08%)	17 (35.42%)	6 (12.50%)

\*Results of 48 respondents

**Awareness of influencing factors.** A series of statements were included in the survey to analyze some of the non-cognitive factors that may have an influence on student athletes and their awareness of said factors along with their knowledge base of how to cope with said influencing factors.

When the student athlete participants responded to the statement “I believe there is added stress from competing as a student athlete,” 97.92% of the

respondents agreed with the statement (see Table 4). However, when asked to rate the following statement, “I feel I have been given tools to cope with stress from athletic competition,” only 31.25% agreed while 20.83% disagreed and 47.92% were neutral. 70.83% of the respondents disagreed with the following statement, “I am aware of resources available for me to seek help with stress management,” while 22.92% agreed. Two questions targeted the student athletes willingness to reach out to their varsity coach as an outlet to some the factor influence them as a

Table 4: Awareness of Factors

Awareness of Factors					
Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I believe there is added stress from competing as a student athlete.	29 (60.42%)	18 (37.50%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (2.08%)	0 (0.00%)
I feel I have been given tools to cope with stress from athletic competition.	6 (12.50%)	9 (18.75%)	23 (47.92%)	3 (6.25%)	7 (14.58%)
I am aware of resources available for me to seek help with stress management.	6 (12.50%)	5 (10.42%)	3 (6.25%)	16 (33.33%)	18 (37.50%)
I feel I can talk with my coach about personal matters.	3 (6.25%)	10 (20.83%)	12 (25.00%)	17 (35.42%)	6 (12.50%)
I feel I can talk with my coach about the stresses of college.	7 (14.58%)	19 (39.58%)	21 (43.75%)	1 (2.08%)	0 (0.00%)
I know where I can go on campus for help regarding personal matters.	12 (25.00%)	15 (31.25%)	9 (18.75%)	11 (22.92%)	1 (2.08%)
I know where I can go on campus for help regarding stress.	5 (10.42%)	8 (16.67%)	14 (29.17%)	19 (39.58%)	2 (4.17%)
I have good time management skills.	11 (22.92%)	15 (31.25%)	17 (35.42%)	3 (6.25%)	2 (4.17%)
I feel confident in handling my own stress.	9 (18.75%)	18 (37.50%)	19 (39.58%)	1 (2.08%)	1 (2.08%)

\*Results of 48 respondents

student athlete. Only 27.08% of respondents agreed to the following statement, “I feel I can talk with my coach about personal matters,” and 47.92% disagreed with

the statement. Whereas 54.16% of the respondents agreed to the statement, “I feel I can talk with my coach about the stresses of college,” and only 2.08% disagreed. When statements were presented regarding the student athletes’ awareness of campus resources for personal and stress related matters, 56.25% of respondents agreed they knew where to seek help with personal matters, while 27.09% agreed they knew where to seek help for matters regarding stress. The participants rated 54.17% in agreement of having good time management skills while only 10.42% disagreed. The last statement was directly at the student athletes’ confidence in handling their own stress. 56.25% agreed they were confident handling their own stress while 39.58% were neutral on the matter and 4.16% disagreed.

#### *Summary*

Overall, the data indicated a positive self-image for student athletes, but the perception by faculty was congruent with studies by Ting (2009). The experiences of the student athletes’ survey were positive and advantageously affected with overall experience as a student. Non-cognitive factors were relevant issues for the student athletes; however, many were unaware of the resources available to them and have confidence in outlets to seek help with these issues. Examination of these topics will be discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

*Discussion*

Research has shown that student athletes face heightened college adjustment demands due to their participation in college athletics (Simons, 2000; Aries, 2004; Ryska, 2002; Ting, 2009). The presence of prejudicial attitudes towards student athletes' academic ability had a negative effect on the self-perception of student athletes (Baucom, 2001; Ting 2009). Aside from the cognitive factors that are present for student athletes, there is a presence of non-cognitive factors facing student athletes that have an influence upon their academic experience (Ting, 2009). Previous research has shown little empirical evidence surrounding the non-cognitive issues facing student athletes (Ryska, 2002).

The author selected to examine a research gap involving the said non-cognitive factors affecting student athletes on a campus where there has been a proven record of academic success (Reitan, 2012). The author aimed to discover if there was a presence of negative stereotypes and an awareness of non-cognitive factors at an institution that has high academic standards.

*Findings*

A sample of forty-eight student athletes who were in good academic standing and had completed at least one year of varsity competition in men's or women's basketball, volleyball, or football were administered an anonymous pen or pencil paper survey during the Spring of 2013. The study examined how perceptions, experiences, and non-cognitive factors were affecting student

athletes' academic experience. The research findings showed a congruent resemblance of previous research regarding student athlete perception on a college campus; however, the research highlighted a lack of awareness for student athletes to seek help with the other factors facing them in their academic endeavors (Ting, 2009; Simmons 2000).

### *Recaps of statistics*

The research results were congruent with previous studies with the majority of respondents indicating they felt there was a negative perception of student athletes present on campus (Baucom, 2001; Ting, 2009). The perception showed to be more prevalent amongst faculty on campus according to the responses of the surveyed student athletes. The student athletes maintained having "high academic ability" as over 62% of the respondents agreed to the phrase, but when asked how the student athletes felt their professors viewed their academic ability, just over 33% of the respondents agreed their professors saw the student athletes as having a high academic ability. However, the student athletes surveyed were in resounding agreement to the statement "I am a confident person." Similarly, the student athlete respondents were in a majority when over 77% of them agreed they were often in leadership roles in group projects.

When reviewing the statistics regarding the statements aimed at examining the awareness and presence of non-cognitive factors influencing student athletes' academic experience, it was apparent student athletes are not in tune to the non-cognitive issues around them. Only one out of the forty-eight respondents disagreed with the idea that there is added stress from competing as a student

athlete, however, 97.92% of the respondents were in agreement with the statement. Over 70% of the student athletes responding to the survey agreed they were aware of resources available to them to help manage the said stresses. Similarly, roughly half of the student athletes surveyed felt they could talk with their coach regarding personal matters or stresses of college.

### *Implications*

The realization of the demands placed on student athletes to not only excel athletically, but equally as a student, has produced countless research articles in collegiate athletics (Ting, 2009; Aries, 2004; Hill, 2001; Simons, 2000). The focus of previous research has left a void regarding the non-cognitive factors that also impact student athletes' academic experience with it being positioned around tangible academic performances and experiences. Non-cognitive issues are prevalent and require similar resources and services for student athletes to cope with the additional demands placed on them as a student athlete (Ting, 2009; Watson, 2007)

Student athletes have shown through their responses in this study that both their perception and experiences have correlated to previous research, and a resounding number of the respondents were not aware of resources available to help them cope with the non-cognitive factors affecting their academics and overall collegiate experience.

### *Recommendations for future research*

Research has been in excess when analyzing the graduation rates of students and the interaction of collegiate athletes as students. The NCAA has



conducted research regarding the pre-enrollment predictors for academic and athletic success (Ferris, 2004; Aries, 2004). Much of past research is directed towards the cognitive and tangible aspects of a student athletes' academic experience, but little empirical evidence is available looking at the non-cognitive factors impacting students and how to remedy those challenges. It is recommended that further research take a longitudinal form and the researcher examine past programs and initiatives aimed at non-cognitive factors influencing student athletes and how resources have been reallocated to aid student athletes in need.

### *Conclusion*

Student athletes face a unique set of demands, pressures, stresses, and circumstances as part of the athletic and academic experience. In order to truly realize the academic potential and the full benefits athletic competition can bring to the academic experience of student athletes, an educational environment meeting the demands facing student athletes must be obtained. First, a better understanding of the non-cognitive factors affecting students must be thoroughly understood and then universities and their athletic departments need to take the proper measures to offer assistance to their athletes in order for them to maximize their potential as a student athlete.

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## Appendix A

**RECRUITMENT EMAIL TO STUDENT ATHLETES**

To Whom It May Concern:

You are invited to participate in a research study of non-cognitive factors affecting your academic experience, being conducted by Tyler Yelk, a graduate student in the Department of Education at the University of Minnesota Duluth. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a member of an intercollegiate sport team with a high Academic Success Rate (ASR), and have completed at least one year of varsity competition.

If you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to read through the consent form in its entirety and complete the attached survey in a truthful manner. Upon completion of the survey, you will be asked to return your responses in the self-addressed envelope via campus mail or hand delivery to the Athletic Office. Participation in this study is voluntary. There will be no compensation in exchange for your participation. Your individual responses for the study will be kept anonymous.

Consent will be inferred through the act of returning the survey to the researcher via campus mail. By returning this survey, you affirm that you are fully informed of the voluntary nature of your participation, your individual rights as a participant, and that you are giving the researcher consent to include your responses in the research study. Please read through the attached consent form and fill out and return the survey.

If you have any questions you may contact the Primary Investigator, Tyler Yelk at [tyelk@d.umn.edu](mailto:tyelk@d.umn.edu) or at 218-726-6834. Thank you for your participation in this research.

## Appendix B

**STUDENT ATHLETE CONSENT FORM***Student-Athlete Perceptions in the Collegiate Environment*

You are invited to participate in a research study of non-cognitive factors affecting your academic experience. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a member of an intercollegiate sport team with a high Academic Success Rate (ASR), and have completed at least one year of varsity competition. It is being asked that you read this form and seek answers to any questions you may have before completing and submitting the survey.

This study is being conducted by Tyler Yelk, a graduate student in the Department of Education at the University of Minnesota Duluth.

**Background Information**

The purpose of this study is to examine non-cognitive factors affecting academic experience from the perspective of the student-athlete at a university whose athletic department has an exceptionally high ASR.

**Procedures**

If you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete the attached survey in a truthful manner. Your honesty is strongly encouraged. Upon completion of the survey, you will be asked to return your responses in the self-addressed envelope via campus mail or hand delivery to the Athletic Office. It is important that you do not provide any of your own contact information or identifying marks so that your completed survey remains anonymous.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Participation in this study is voluntary. There will be no compensation in exchange for your participation. You have the right to cease participation in the research study at any point up until the submission of your completed survey via campus mail.

**Anonymity**

Your individual responses for the study will be kept anonymous. You will not be providing any information that would reveal your identity to the researcher or the target audience. Anonymity is being provided in hopes of truthful and honest responses from the participants. Surveys, data, and results will be kept in a secure location for one year and will then be destroyed.

**Inferred Consent**

Consent will be inferred through the act of returning the survey to the researcher via campus mail. By returning this survey, you affirm that you are fully informed of the voluntary nature of your participation, your individual rights as a participant, and that you are giving the researcher consent to include your responses in the research study. There will be no signed documentation of consent.

**Questions and Contact Information**

If you have question of any kind involving the purpose of the study, your rights, or to clear up confusion about survey items, you are encouraged to contact:

Tyler Yelk  
Principle Researcher  
218-726-6834  
tyelk@d.umn.edu

Diane Rauschenfels  
Graduate Advisor  
218-726-8547  
djrausch@d.umn.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and about like to speak with someone other than the researcher or project advisor, you are encouraged to contact

Fairview Research Help Line  
#815 Professional Building  
2450 Riverside Avenue  
Minneapolis, MN 55454  
(612) 672-7692

Should you misplace or lose the envelope, surveys can be submitted via campus mail to the following address:

Tyler Yelk  
University of Minnesota Duluth  
285 SPHC 1216 Ordean Court  
Duluth, MN 55812

*Please hold on to a copy of this document for your personal records.*

## Appendix C

**ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT CONSENT FORM***Student-Athlete Perceptions in the Collegiate Environment*

You are being asked to allow student athletes from your athletic department to participate in a research study of non-cognitive factors affecting your academic experience. Your department was selected due to its proximity to the principle researcher and its high Academic Success Rate (ASR). It is being asked that you read this form and seek answers to any questions you may have before completing and submitting the survey.

This study is being conducted by Tyler Yelk, a graduate student in the Department of Education at the University of Minnesota Duluth.

**Background Information**

The purpose of this study is to examine non-cognitive factors affecting academic experience from the perspective of the student-athlete at a university whose athletic department has an exceptionally high ASR.

**Procedures**

If you choose to allow your athletic department to participate in the study, access to your head coaches will be requested. The coaches will then be approached to ask for their consent to contact their student athletes. It will be only after receiving consent from yourself and the chosen head coaches, that student athletes will be contacted and invited to participate in the study.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Participation in this study is voluntary. There will be no compensation in exchange for your participation. Participants have the right to cease participation in the research study at any point up until the submission of your completed survey via campus mail.

**Anonymity**

The name of your university will not be disclosed. Participants will not be providing any information that would reveal their identity to the researcher or the target audience. Anonymity is being provided in hopes of truthful and honest responses from the participants. Surveys, data, and results will be kept in a secure location for one year and will then be destroyed.



**Inferred Consent**

Consent will be inferred through the act of returning the survey to the researcher via campus mail. By returning this survey, participants affirm that they are fully informed of the voluntary nature of participation, their individual rights as a participant, and that they are giving the researcher consent to include their responses in the research study. There will be no signed documentation of consent.

**Questions and Contact Information**

If you have question of any kind involving the purpose of the study, your rights, or to clear up confusion about survey items, you are encouraged to contact:

Tyler Yelk  
Principle Researcher  
218-726-6834  
tyelk@d.umn.edu

Diane Rauschenfels  
Graduate Advisor  
218-726-8547  
djrausch@d.umn.edu

**Statement of Consent**

I have read the above information and voluntarily consent to have my athletic department included in the research study.

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please hold on to a copy of this document for your personal records.*

## Appendix D

**SAMPLE SURVEY**

Non-Cognitive Factors affecting Student Athlete Performance

Check your GPA Range: 4.00-3.51 \_\_\_ 3.50-3.01 \_\_\_ 3.00-2.51 \_\_\_ 2.50-

2.01 \_\_\_ 2.00 > \_\_\_

*Answer the following questions using Likert Scale and circle a number.*

5) *Strongly agree.*

4) *Agree.*

3) *Neither Agree nor Disagree.*

2) *Disagree.*

1) *Strongly Disagree*

Professors see me as having a high academic ability.

5      4      3      2      1

I feel that I have a high academic ability.

5      4      3      2      1

I feel that I am a strong leader.

5      4      3      2      1

I am the leader on group projects for school.

5      4      3      2      1

I feel I am held to the same standards as my classmates.

5      4      3      2      1

My classmates feel I am held to the same academic standard as others in my classes.

5      4      3      2      1

I feel that my academic experience has been affected positively because of my involvement in athletics.

5      4      3      2      1

I feel that my academic experience has been affected negatively because of my involvement in athletics.

5      4      3      2      1

I feel other students think less of me because I participate in athletics.

5      4      3      2      1

I am comfortable making my classmates aware I participate in intercollegiate varsity athletics.

5      4      3      2      1

I am comfortable making my professors aware I participate in intercollegiate varsity athletics.

5      4      3      2      1

I believe students have a positive perception of me as a student athlete.

5      4      3      2      1

I believe there is added stress from competing as a student athlete.

5      4      3      2      1

I feel I have been given tools to cope with added stress from athletic competition.

5      4      3      2      1

I am aware of resources available for me to seek help with stress management.

5      4      3      2      1

I feel I can talk with my coach about personal matters.

5      4      3      2      1

I feel I can talk with my coach about the stresses of college.

5      4      3      2      1

I know where I can go on campus for help regarding personal matters.

5      4      3      2      1

I know where I can go on campus for help regarding stress.

5      4      3      2      1

I have a positive image of student athletes on campus.

5      4      3      2      1

My professors have a positive image of student athletes on campus.

5      4      3      2      1

My classmates have a positive image of student athletes on campus.

5      4      3      2      1

I have good time management skills.

5      4      3      2      1

I feel confident in handling my own stress.

5      4      3      2      1

I am a confident person.

5      4      3      2      1

I am confident about my abilities as a student.

5      4      3      2      1

I believe my classmates respect me as a student.

5      4      3      2      1

I place more value on myself as an athlete than I do as a student.

5      4      3      2      1

I place more value on myself as a student than I do as an athlete.

5      4      3      2      1

## Appendix E

**Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI)****Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research Curriculum  
Completion Report****Printed on 10/5/2012****Learner:** Tyler Yelk (username: tyelk)**Institution:** University of Minnesota**Contact Information** 1021 Brainerd Ave

Duluth, MN 55811 USA

Department: Athletics

Phone: 218-726-6834

Email: tyelk@d.umn.edu

**Group 2.Social / Behavioral or Humanist Research Investigators and Key Personnel.:** Complete all required modules. The optional modules must be completed as they apply to your research activities. For questions, call 612--624--0212 or email rcr@umn.edu.

**Stage 1. Basic Course Passed on 10/04/12 (Ref # 7607696)**

**For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.**

**Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research:** This course is for investigators, staff and students with an interest or focus in **Social and Behavioral** research. This course contains text, embedded case studies AND quizzes.

**Stage 1. Basic Course Passed on 10/04/12 (Ref # 7607697)**

**For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.**

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.  
Professor, University of Miami  
Director Office of Research Education  
CITI Course Coordinator

## Appendix F

**THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL LETTER**

12/18/2012

Tyler S Yelk

UMD Athletics7 Intercolle  
170 SpHC  
1216 Ordean Court  
Duluth, MN 55812

RE: "Non-Cognitive Factors Affecting Student Athletes' Academic Performance"

IRB Code Number: 12111323442

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) received your response to its stipulations. Since this information satisfies the federal criteria for approval at 45CFR46.111 and the requirements set by the IRB7 final approval for the project is noted in our tiles. Upon receipt of this letter you may begin your research.

IRB approval of this study includes the recruitment e-mail received December 12, 2012.

The IRB would like to stress that subjects who go through the consent process are considered enrolled participants and are counted toward the total number of subjects, even if they have no further participation in the study. Please keep this in mind when calculating the number of subjects you request. This study is currently approved for 75 subjects. If you desire an increase in the number of approved subjects, you will need to make a formal request to the IRB.

For your records and for grant certification purposes the approval date for the referenced project is November 20, 2012 and the Assurance of Compliance number is FWA00000312 (Fairview Health Systems Research Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare FWA000KMOOS). Research projects are subject to continuing review and renewal; approval will expire one year from that date. You will receive a report form two months before the expiration date. If you would like us to send certification of approval to a funding agency, please tell us the name and address of your contact person at the agency.

As Principal Investigator of this project, you are required by federal regulations to inform the IRB any proposed changes in your research that will affect human subjects. Changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received.

Unanticipated problems or serious unexpected adverse events should be reported to the IRB as they occur.

The IRB wishes you success with this research. If you have questions, please call the IRB office at 612-626-5654.

Sincerely,

Christina Dobrevolny, CIP  
Research Compliance Supervisor  
CD/ks

CC; Diane Rauschenfels