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STUDENT-ATHLETE PERCEPTIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL ADVISEMENT

A thesis

Presented to

The School of Social Sciences, Education & Business

Department of Higher Education and Student Development

Taylor University

Upland, Indiana

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development

By

Bailey Judd

May 2016

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**Higher Education and Student Development
Taylor University
Upland, Indiana**

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTER'S THESIS

This is to certify that the Thesis of

Bailey Judd

Entitled

Student-Athlete Perceptions of Institutional Advisement

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the

Master of Arts degree
in Higher Education and Student Development

May 2016

C. Skip Trudeau, Ph.D. Date
Thesis Supervisor

Scott Gaier, Ph.D. Date
Member, Thesis Hearing Committee

Tim Herrmann, Ph.D. Date
Member, Thesis Hearing Committee

Tim Herrmann, Ph.D. Date
Director, M.A. in Higher

Abstract

As colleges and universities continue to enroll student-athletes, higher education professionals should emphasize their efforts to see students succeed in their athletics, as well as their academic work. The current study sought to unearth the student-athlete experience related to advisement using phenomenological design. Advisement is defined more holistically and includes institutional constituents offering support to student-athletes. The results suggest that student-athletes encounter significant challenges or difficulties as they attempt to balance their academic and athletic priorities. Student-athletes indicated several groups of individuals who were key supporters during their time spent in a collegiate sport. Implications from the study indicate a strong desire to see improvement within the athletic department, including the addition of an athletic advisor, as well as a sense of connectivity between sport teams.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Literature Review	5
Student Issues.....	5
NCAA Regulations	9
Counseling and Athletic Advisor Roles.....	10
Chapter 3 Methodology	14
Approach and Design.....	14
Context and Participants	15
Instruments.....	15
Procedures	15
Analysis.....	16
Benefits	17
Chapter 4 Results	18
Theme 1: Context of the Student-Athlete Experience	18
Theme 2: Current Student-Athlete Support System	23
Theme 3: Athlete Support Desires	27
Essence of Research.....	29

Chapter 5 Discussion31

 Connections to Previous Literature.....31

 Implications for Practice35

 Implications for Future Research.....36

 Research Limitations37

 Conclusion38

References.....39

Appendix A: Informed Consent.....43

Appendix B: Interview Protocol46

Chapter 1

Introduction

Mallory jogged around the perimeter of the field as she and her teammates completed an Indian Run. Her calf muscles strained, and the UV rays beat down on their already sunburnt necks. The anxiety of being a new college student, living alone in an empty dorm for the duration of preseason, and feeling the increased physical demands of a collegiate sport seemed too much to handle. For no one reason in particular, Mallory started to cry. As her tears and her sweat mixed on her cheeks, she knew she would have a much harder adjustment to a collegiate athletic program, and to college in general, than she had originally thought.

The transition from a high school to a college environment can seem a thrilling and exciting movement for college athletes. Many students feel liberated by the freedom they encounter in college and often thrive in their environments. Stepping into a college atmosphere can offer many ample opportunities and activities in which students participate. On the other hand, some students find the transition can bring unhealthy anxiety and stress. Students struggle with a variety of issues throughout their time in college. Issues spanning from roommate conflict to academic risk can affect their cognitive, social, moral, educational, and psychosocial development during college. Much like the average college student, college student-athletes face many of the same demands. However, the added factor of their athletic ability and participation can increase

their likelihood of encountering developmental issues. Student-athletes must excel at a high standard. Not only do college student-athletes have to excel in academics, they must also perform at a collegiate level of play. Balancing and maintaining the responsibilities of a student-athlete can prove a difficult task, especially for incoming students. Adjusting to a heightened caliber of academics and athletics is no easy feat.

In addition to balancing academic and athletic endeavors, Parham (1993) identified several demands or challenges confronting college student-athletes, including balancing many elements: social activities versus the isolation from athletic pursuits, athletic success versus lack of success, and physical health versus injuries. Student-athletes must also navigate relationships among coaches, parents, family, and friends, as well as the termination of an athletic collegiate career. This balance can prove difficult to cultivate and can lead to unhealthy personal habits, isolation, or mental and emotional stress, if left unaddressed. These risk factors point to the need for proper counseling and advisement for student-athletes. For its purposes, this study defines advisement more holistically and includes institutional constituents offering support to student-athletes.

The literature provides valuable background knowledge of student-athlete demands and varying advisement methods. The development and identity of a student, academic pressures, physical health and injury management, personal organization and time management, and help-seeking behavior represent some of the areas in which student-athletes face difficulties. Not only do student-athletes have to meet institutional requirements in athletic play, but institutions may also belong to the NCAA or NAIA organizations. These organizations outline specific eligibility requirements. To help manage these demands, the athletic advisor role assists students in each area. More

extensive advisement and knowledge of institutional resources will equip students for holistic success.

To best serve student-athletes and to assist them in finding the proper balance of social life activities, academics and athletics, there exists a great need for advisement. An athletic advisor advises student-athletes in areas of academic concerns, personal issues, injury or rehabilitation, and life skills. Sports advisors assist athletes by reducing stress, addressing interpersonal issues such as family difficulty, managing healthy practices following a sport related injury, and practicing good time management and decision making. More recent models have stressed the importance of holistic advisement. Advisors have the unique opportunity to work with students who feel passionate about athletics. In order to promote a healthy college experience, advisors must integrate the student's athletic passion with the goals of learning in a higher education culture (Hamilton, 2004).

This research sought to examine the perceptions of student-athletes concerning the level of advisement they receive. This study explored the context of the student-athlete college experience as it relates to institutional advisement. Specifically, the research considered athletes' backgrounds; their level of engagement and responsibility in social, academic, and athletic activities; and the advisement they receive from their institution. Student participants also identified their current support system offered by the institution, as well as the desires to see improvement in the athletic programs.

This research defined student-athlete advisement more holistically and included institutional constituents offering support to student-athletes. Advising entails assisting student-athletes with reducing stress and anxiety as well as managing fear, failure,

success, and burn-out. It also address interpersonal issues such as family and friend difficulty (Hinkle, 1994). In essence, the title “advisors” refers to those who take up the responsibility to shepherd student-athletes through an institution. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What do student-athletes perceive about the institutional advisement they have received?
2. How has their athletic involvement shaped their college experience?
3. What recommendation would student-athletes make to improve the athletic program of which they are a part of?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Parham (1993) identified six demands or challenges confronting college student-athletes: balancing athletic and academic endeavors; balancing social activities with the isolation from athletic pursuits; balancing athletic success or lack of success; balancing one's physical health and injuries; balancing relationships with coaches, parents, family, and friends; and dealing with the termination of an athletic collegiate career. This literature review discusses the first five challenges above, leaving the latter unaddressed as its timing relates to students' termination of their involvement in intercollegiate athletic departments. Athletes also face additional challenges such as academic eligibility, injury management, the demands of practices and game schedules, self-esteem problems, and career development concerns (Carodine, Almond & Gratto, 2001).

The literature review explores some of the difficulties and demands student-athletes face in collegiate sports. The review also includes the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) regulations, which address the amount of time students spend in athletic endeavors. Finally, the review discusses previous methods of athlete advisement to provide context and examples of insufficient and beneficial advisement.

Student Issues

College student-athletes encounter of the same issues that non-athletes do. However, their role as student-athlete can intensify these issues. The forthcoming

sections include a review of college athlete development, academic pressure, health- and injury-related difficulties, organization and time management skills, and help-seeking behaviors.

Development. Universally, the average college student-athlete faces similar academic, emotional and personal issues to that of their peers (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1991). Athletes as well as non-athlete students face the typical post-adolescent developmental issues to more serious psychological issues. These issues may include gambling, drinking, eating disorders, depression, and the very extreme, suicidal tendencies. Chickering and Reisser (1993) proposed that college students must successfully master developmental tasks such as management of emotions, movement through autonomy toward interdependence, maturation in interpersonal relationships, establishment of identity, development of purpose, competence, and integrity. Carodine et al. (2001) also indicated students must make decisions about a career and identify and modify personal values.

For many athletes, a significant element of their identity lies in their athletic abilities. Outside of their talents and abilities, they have not established themselves in any other contexts. This strong identification as an athlete leads to potential risks, including emotional difficulties encountered in disengagement from sport through deselection, serious injury, or retirement (Person & Petitpas, 1990). Individuals whose identity appears strongly rooted in an athletic role may lack the necessary social support systems for a smooth transition after retirement (Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001).

Academic pressures. Many students confront the issue of prioritizing their role as a student and their role as an athlete. In general, a number of factors can influence

students' academic performance: the time devoted to daily practices, the degree of flexibility regarding time and location, the fatigue resulting from practice and play, the preclusion of certain college majors because of practice and schedules, and the challenge of balancing athletics and academics.

The term "student-athlete" should give meaning to one's prioritization of academics versus sport. In some universities, the controversy over whether student-athletes are first students or athletes has become an issue. Students are often recruited solely for their abilities on the court or field, not for their academic potential. Some institutions that establish a "students first and athletes second" policy experience inconsistency when coaching staffs ignore regulations (Etzel et al., 1991). The inconsistency emerges as confused students feel pressured by coaching staff to abide by team priorities, such as practices and competitions, that conflict with their academics.

Academically, student-athletes are often considered high-risk because of the difficulty of juggling their time between the sport and the academic experience (Jordan & Denson, 1990). In some cases, athletes score significantly lower than non-athletes in educational and career planning. Frost (1991) noted male athletic involvement has become especially detrimental to academic potential. Conversely, female athletes appear more intrinsically motivated to pursue athletics and encounter fewer academic problems.

Health/injury issues. Student-athlete success in college and emotional well-being connect intimately with success in their sport. With success often defined as winning and playing at a consistently high level, athletes experience significant disappointment and fears when their team experiences key losses or when they perform poorly. Some fears include fear of injury, fear of being cut from the team, or fear of being forced to retire

(Baillie, 1993). Added pressure to perform well exists on the athletic field or arena. Competition for starting play can become fierce for talented athletic programs. Poor practice, a fumbled football, bad at-bat, or poor shooting performance on the court can quickly erode an athlete's self-esteem and affect all areas of his or her college experience. In regards to maintaining physical health, student-athlete practices sometimes run through dinner time, resulting in an additional challenge of finding good nutrition and getting adequate calories to refuel after long workouts (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004).

A growing number of student-athletes experience issues related to adjustment problems, emotional concerns, and psychological distress as a result of their participation in a sport (Watson, 2005). Students appear more susceptible to and may experience maladjustment, emotional illness, and psychological distress (Etzel, 1989). In fact, approximately 10-15% of college student-athletes experience psychological issues that could warrant professional counseling (Watson & Kissinger, 2007).

Organization and time management of other activities. Finding and maintaining a balance between athletics, academics, social groups, and other commitments is an ongoing challenge for student-athletes. Student-athletes must master an especially difficult balancing act as they operate on schedules with limited flexibility. They attend classes in the mornings and early afternoons and participate in their sports activities in the afternoon and early evenings, leaving them with late evening time to devote to studies and other necessary activities (Jordan & Denson, 1990). They engage in time-intensive and demanding sports activities while trying to survive the pressure of other responsibilities. They attempt to keep up with studies while practicing their sport

seven days a week. They must also juggle travel time when teams are away from the university, facing long seasons and often missing classes to travel to their competitions.

Help seeking behavior. College student-athletes meet with an additional set of complex demands, stressors and challenges arising from involvement in a competitive sport; however, they remain one of the least represented populations on college campuses to seek professional help. Existing research has suggested student-athletes may have skeptical views of counseling and face apprehension of stigmatization by coaches, teammates, student peers, and fans (Wrisberg & Martin, 1994). Those athletes who more willingly seek out help experience a better adjustment and have fewer emotional or behavioral problems. Unfortunately, the status as a student-athlete may influence an individual's willingness to reach out to others. Many athletes have become conditioned with "no pain, no gain" and "there is no I in team." Thus, they rely on themselves to provide necessities and often seem unwilling to ask for help. These attitudes may compel students to view help-seeking as weakness (Etzel, Pinkney & Hinkle, 1995). This mentality can prove detrimental for students who refuse to pursue proper advisement.

NCAA Regulations

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), a non-profit association, regulates the athletes of 1,281 institutions, conferences, and organizations, as well as individual athletes. It also organizes the athletic programs at many US and Canadian colleges and universities. As a whole, the NCAA (n.d.) helps more than 460,000 college student-athletes who compete annually in college sports. The majority of four-year institutions that have athletic programs participate in the NCAA, which requires member institutions to abide by specific policies, procedures, and bylaws. However, not all

universities choose to become NCAA members. Some schools choose to belong to the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). Both organizations have various requirements regarding the student-athletes'. Athletes must maintain a full-time student status, earn minimum grade point averages, and take a minimum number courses each semester. Students must also designate a major at the end of their second year of college to remain eligible for intercollegiate athletic competition (Carodine et al., 2001). Sometimes, athletes are even prohibited from seeking outside employment (Fletcher, Benschhoff, & Richburg, 2003). They are expected to spend a majority of their time on the field or court, with conflicting interests or commitments often frowned upon.

NCAA regulations also benefit the student-athlete. The policy states athletes may spend no more than twenty hours per week in their sport during its season. The twenty-hour limit includes all team meetings, conditioning, competitions, and practices. Practices must not exceed four hours per day (Abell, 2000), a rule enacted to protect athletes from being forced to practice so much they could not maintain academic requirements. Some coaches, however, have found loop holes. Coaches host "voluntary" practices that do not count towards the 20 hours. Unfortunately, athletes may consider these practices mandatory and comply for fear of penalization. Student-athletes have also reported they have invested more than thirty hours a week in their sport (Suggs, 1999). Despite NCAA regulations, recent literature confirms student-athletes still face conflicting roles associated with education and athletics (Wolverton, 2008).

Counseling and Athletic Advisor Roles

Athletic advisors or counselors should be professionals who work with student-athletes and can provide appropriate attention to their needs. As students adjust to their

athletic commitments, issues may arise. It is important that athletic advising departments or programs can reach students experiencing difficulty in their sport, academia, or personal activities. Sports counselors or advisors should assist athletes with reducing fear and anxiety, overcoming fear of failure, and managing success and burn out. They should also address interpersonal issues such as family difficulty and can practice problem prevention, coping, relaxation training, decision-making, life management and career planning with student-athlete advisees (Hinkle, 1994). Specifically, advisors should provide help with eligibility monitoring, course selection, assessment of skills deficiencies, tutorial assistance and study hall, and personal and career counseling (Carodine et al., 2001).

In the past, advisors worked with athletes during orientation or when specific psychological services were needed. However, these services prove insufficient for meeting the needs of college student-athletes today. Academic advising has been the most popular and traditional approach consistently supported within athletic associations. More recently, institutions have accepted the responsibility for providing a more extensive advisory commitment to their student-athletes. These provisions include providing students with access to appropriately trained life skills, clinical, and performance enhancement practitioners. Lottes (1991) proposed a service model composed of four main categories:

- Academic, including advisement, tutorial assistance, and career counseling
- Athletic, including injury counseling and transitions issues
- Personal and social, including personal counseling and values clarification

- General, including administrative issues and staff changes

Recent studies have suggested a wellness approach to develop the student-athlete as a total person. Previous wellness models focused on physical health. However, more modern models aim to develop students holistically and enhance their overall college experience. Myers, Sweeny, and Witmer (2000) defined wellness as “a way of life oriented toward optimal health and well-being in which the body, mind and spirit are integrated by the individual to live more fully” (p. 252). Unfortunately, few studies have examined the benefits of student-athlete wellness programs. Additionally, studies focusing on student-athlete adjustment and development, related to increasing demands, prove limited (Watson & Kissinger, 2007).

In addition to a more holistic advisement model, college counselors will benefit from a better understanding of factors affecting the physical health, mental health, and well-being of student-athletes (Watson & Kissinger, 2007). Advisors must consistently integrate the student’s athletic passion with the goals of learning in a higher education culture (Hamilton, 2004). Intercollegiate sports are not all the same, and there exist tremendous differences among different sports at the same institution. If winning games stands as the ultimate (unstated) goal of the university, concern for the quality of student-athlete’s academic and athletic experience may become lost. Coaches and administrators may focus more on winning than serving students’ best interest (Coakley, 1998). Because athletic departments differ from campus to campus, college counselors need to become familiar with the range of beliefs and values of the department on their own campuses (Fletcher et al., 2003). Working collaboratively and familiarizing themselves with the

culture of departments and offices might provide a realistic and manageable place for counselors to begin advocacy and intervention on the behalf of student-athletes.

College student-athletes deal with an extra set of pressures when they pursue their athletic passions. In order to counsel effectively, advisors should become knowledgeable of the student's situation, the culture of the sport—including coaching staff and the athletic department—and the level of support from the university as a whole. Also of important note, student-athletes do not exist in a vacuum. Coaches, parents, friends and significant others can learn how best to serve as influential role models for the student-athletes they care for (Hinkle, 1994). Hill, Burch-Ragan and Yates (2001) noted the success of an intercollegiate athletic program depends on the combined efforts made by the whole institution to make the overall college experience for student-athletes a success.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Approach and Design

This research utilized a qualitative phenomenological design. Phenomenological research seeks to describe a common meaning for several individuals and their lived experiences. The researcher focuses on describing what all participants have in common based on a shared phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). To collect data, researchers typically interview participants and ask them to describe their experience related to the phenomenon. Participants answer two broad questions (Moustakas, 1994): What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? And what contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon? The researcher then records detailed descriptions of “what” and “how” individuals experience a shared phenomenon and analyzes the data to discover significant statements and prominent themes. The essence of the shared experiences narrows to reveal key ideas.

For this specific study, the research sought to describe the phenomenon of the student-athlete college experience, specifically the demands student-athletes face and the advisement support measures available to them at their institution. By way of interviews, the researcher collected valuable information pertaining to the shared experience. Participants in this study included male and female student-athletes ranging from freshmen to seniors.

Context and Participants

The study took place at a Christian liberal arts institution in the Midwest with a student population of 1,730 students and a student-athlete population of around 300. The researcher collected data in the January term semester. After contacting the athletic director, the researcher compiled a list of student-athletes. All student-athletes received an initial email asking for voluntary participation. Nine students responded: six male and three female students. Participant variation included gender, class, and sport discipline

Instruments

The study consisted of 20-30 minute interviews with student-athletes. Each participant answered 18 questions regarding athletic involvement. Students described some of the demands they face as student-athlete, answering such questions as, “What level of advisement did they receive? Did students make their difficulties known to someone that could help them? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected the shared phenomenon?” Participants also addressed questions regarding areas of improvement in their institution’s student-athlete support services (see Appendix B).

Procedures

Upon receiving committee approval, the researcher submitted an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application. After successfully receiving IRB approval, the researcher contacted the athletic director of the Christian liberal arts institution and found all student-athlete rosters on the institutional webpage. The researcher then emailed all eligible students and asked them to respond if they wanted to volunteer. Nine students volunteered for the study. The researcher further explained the study’s purpose and sent an IRB approved consent form in a second email.

The researcher conducted the interviews on campus in a quiet library study room in which students felt comfortable. The researcher audio-recorded participant responses and later coded the transcriptions of the interviews to identify common themes.

Analysis

Upon the completion of all interviews, the interview data was transcribed. By reading the transcriptions and listening to the audio recordings, the researcher analyzed each interview according to the criteria. The researcher utilized a method called, horizontalization: highlighting significant statements, sentences, or quotes to provide an understanding of how participants perceived their athletic experience (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher color-coded major themes and labeled subthemes with varying shape symbols. The researcher determined categories based on the development of meaning: similarities or differences in student responses.

Transcriptions lead to the writing of a textural description. This description depicted the student-athlete experiences in relation to their advisement level. A structural description described the context or setting that influenced the participants to experience the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013), in this case, the student-athletes' college experience and their perceived level of institutional advisement at a Christian liberal arts institution in the Midwest.

To conclude, the researcher composed a description and in-depth analysis of the essence of the phenomenon. Creswell (2013) referred to such a description as an invariant structure. The text focuses on the shared experience of the participants. The shared experiences have an underlying connective structure that defines the overall interpretation of meaning and feelings of participants.

Benefits

This research study influentially addressed varying campus constituents and departments. Institutional departments including athletic departments, student development offices, academic enrichment departments and counseling centers should share interest in the perceptions of student-athletes. University constituents need to continue to seek better avenues of advisements for this specific demographic of students. With improved efforts, not only will current students receive a better experience, but improvements could also provide more appeal to incoming student-athletes and their tuition-paying parents.

Chapter 4

Results

The following section explores major themes and sub-themes as identified by the researcher. After conducting nine student-athlete interviews, the researcher generated three common themes. All three themes emerged from majority response in student-athlete interviews. Majority response included at least five of the nine participants expressing comments related to the stated themes. The study results did not answer the specific research questions but provided a more in-depth understanding of the student-athlete perspective related to collegiate advising. The following three main themes emerged from the data.

1. The first theme is context. Students communicated their overall commitment to the sport and their participation in the sport was a significant priority.
2. Participants spoke to the support systems they have as student-athletes. They discussed the relationships in their lives that provided varying levels of support including, their coaching staff, friends and family, and faculty.
3. Student-athletes expressed hopes for the athletic program and desires to see the program better supported by other individuals on campus.

Theme 1: Context of Student-Athlete Experience

To understand and appreciate the findings and to make meaning of the student-athlete phenomenon necessitates a more full understanding of the responsibilities and

priorities of a student-athlete. The context of the student-athlete experience emerged as one theme. Student-athletes indicated they committed fully to their sport, especially if they received financial scholarship. If student-athletes received financial incentive for their participation in a sport, they felt responsibility toward their team and athletic program. Participants also placed high importance on selecting well-regarded priorities. These priorities ranged from academics, athletics, ministry, and social interests. However, participants generally stated they did not extensively involve themselves in other activities outside of sport and academics.

Time commitment. In order to succeed as a collegiate athlete, students must commit substantial time and effort. Participants discussed their average weekly time commitment to their sport including practices, weight room requirements, films, games or meets, and travel. “It is probably about 20-25 hours a week for practice and game time,” Meredith stated. Alex also shared, “[Game day] is really a whole day thing.” Not only do athletes spend large sums of time in practice and games, but they must also maintain their physical health by visiting the athletic training staff. Owen stated, “I also spend a lot of time in the training room before and after, getting my ankles taped, getting iced afterward.” During in-season weeks, athletes spend four to five hours a day in their sport, a significant commitment but still in compliance with NAIA regulations. Surprisingly, Derek also indicated the off-season commitments vary little in comparison to in-season commitments: “It is pretty extensive. During the off season you would think it would be better – it is better but it is still a big commitment.” Though student-athletes juggle a noteworthy amount of time commitments, participants mentioned the athletic scholarship offered by the institution as one of the significant benefits of their athletic participation.

Financial influence. As a Division II athletic program, the university offers athletic scholarships to deserving athletes. When asked if they received a scholarship incentive for participating in their sport, eight participants indicated they did. They also specified they certainly felt more committed to their sport in light of the financial gift. “Anytime you have money on the line it does increase your commitment,” stated Meredith. Participants also voiced their thoughts regarding their continuation in the sport and attendance at the institution in relation to the financial aid they had received. Jackson stated, “The football scholarship is the majority of my scholarship. Right now, without it, I would either be taking a lot more loans out or probably would not attend [this institution].” Derek also shared that, had he not received an athletic scholarship, his sport involvement may have discontinued and altered his overall college experiences:

I probably would have stopped playing probably somewhere around my sophomore year had I not been receiving money to come and play here. Um, just because it is such a big commitment and I think you have such a different college experience playing a sport then if you don’t play a sport.

Overall, participants appreciated their financial reward for playing a sport and considered their level of commitment at or above the necessary degree. Owen stated, “If I was a walk-on I don’t think I would be as committed. But to be given a scholarship and other financial aid, I would say it really helps with the commitment process.”

Priorities. For student-athletes at this institution, balancing their priorities is a significant undertaking. The results indicated that the participants faced significant challenge when it came to prioritization of their academic, athletic and social responsibilities. As a new student, Alex described difficulty with his first semester.

At first it was hard – the first year was incredibly hard. Um especially for a semester, my grades really suffered then. The first year it was really about trying to balance everything at once. Just kind of realizing I had to give up on a lot of things. So just kind of like blocking time off for school. This is football. This is homework. And if I have time at the end, friends.

Age and maturity of the student-athlete also seemed to be relevant in regards to their abilities to balance priorities. Jackson indicated the best avenue for prioritizing was good time management. “Typically, I am able to keep my priorities where they need to be. But sometimes football needs more time than others and sometimes other things need more time than football.” Participants also mentioned keeping a planner and having a strict schedule was also helpful in managing their responsibilities. “I try to keep a planner. A routine basically. My friends understand that. Really just getting a routine and mindset to focus on what is right and what my priorities are.” Jackson also admitted, “Sometimes the football team is your social life. But I honestly do a lot better when I’m really busy. So, yeah I kind of almost feel like having that time constricting schedule- I’ve done pretty well with it I feel like.”

As a whole, student-athletes often have to choose between their athletics, academics, a social life and their physical health. Sometimes to the detriment of one area, they are able to succeed in the other three. Derek summed up his choice of priorities as the following:

Every day you have four options and you have to pick three. And that is football, school, sleep, and a social life. So if you want to hang out with your friends and you want to get your homework done, then you are not going to be able to have

that much sleep. If you want to get sleep then you are either going to have to dip out on homework or your friends.

George expressed a common experience. “[Balancing priorities] caused a fair amount of stress. Just juggling everything together and so I guess sometimes it is hard to overcome the stress, but it is necessary part of life”.

Extracurricular activities. Student-athletes maintain a busy schedule. When not involved in academics and athletics, they have many opportunities on campus and in the surrounding community to participate in extra-curricular activities. However, participants proved inconsistent in their responses when asked about their participation in activities outside of athletics and academics. Some indicated they had no time for other time-intensive activities, while others expressed interest in a variety of areas. Nonetheless, if an activity seemed important to a participant, he or she would consider making time.

Unlike other participants, Derek expressed a complete disassociation with outside activities. “Honestly, I didn’t feel like I could do anything else. If I was going to commit to something outside I would be stretching myself thin in some area of my life. So I kind of didn’t.” Others, like Cristina, chose to limit their involvement initially but indicated certain areas in which they wished to participate in future years:

Freshmen year I didn’t want to try to get into any outside activities so that I could just focus on school and track. But I know there are a lot of things I would like to do in the future.

George agreed, “I don’t like put myself out there with every group and everything that can be done. But I feel like I get enough social involvement and stuff regardless of sport.”

However, Owen noted several extracurricular areas of interest. “I am very into children’s ministries. I go to church and do the youth ministry there. I also participate in [ministries] as well. It is all about time and where you put your time in.” Generally, participants noted if an activity felt important, they would try to make time to become involved. As one participant reflected,

If I partake in outside extra-curricular activities beyond that [practice and lifting], it is if I have time or really want to make time for it. I have always thought of different things I could do if I wasn’t playing a sport.

Though participants may have expressed interest in participating in an extracurricular activity, they evidenced an understanding that their involvement in collegiate athletics undoubtedly limited their participation elsewhere.

Theme 2: Current Student-Athlete Support System

The study also explored the support system relationships in which student-athletes currently engage or can access on campus. Participants indicated three main support groups: coaching staff, friends and family, and faculty. Though the depth of relationships varied, all participants indicated the significance or value of the connections.

Coaching staff. Many participants noted close relationships they share with their coach(s). Jackson viewed his coaches as more than a coaching staff: “There are a couple that I’m really close with and that I almost see as mentor, father figures in my life. I often talk to him about other [things] outside of football.” Owen expressed similar experiences:

I think my best relationship has been my position coach. He’s the guy I spend most of my time with. He’s a guy a who I go to for everything. We talk about career goals, relationships, friendships, and things to do after college.

Alex, a fifth year senior, shared personal life topics with his coaches: “During my senior year, we would meet for about an hour or so – discussing the team, discussing life. And we still have a relationship outside of football which is really cool.” Mark viewed his coaches as always willing to communicate: “I feel like you can always come to them with stuff that is either about school, especially spiritual things. They have a great amount of understanding.” Even in less personal relationships with coaching staff, Izzie acknowledged her coach “makes it clear that he is there for you if you have a problem.”

One participant, Derek, felt somewhat differently about his relationships with his coaching staff:

I wouldn't really say that any of them have been mentors to me. I respect them but they haven't really invested in me. I wouldn't necessarily go to them for advice. Like if they gave me advice I would take that and consider it. But it is not – those people wouldn't be the first people in my life that I would go to for advice.

Participants also indicated their coaches' commitment to their athletes' academics as well as their athletics. Mark shared,

You definitely feel like they are there to help us and support us. Sometimes they have to remember that we are students too. Um, with commitments and we are here primarily to go to school. So they are there to help us but sometimes they forget that [this institution] is hard.

Similarly, Derek noted, “[Coach] makes sure everyone has academics as a priority.”

Friends and family. Friend groups and social connections played a large part in the student-athletes university experience. Participants acknowledged the difficulty they

sometimes faced when juggling their friendships and maintaining connection to family. Jackson stated, “It takes up a lot of time – takes a lot of effort, takes up a lot of energy.” Nonetheless, student-athletes appreciate the shared experience with other team members. “You develop friendships within the sport. Those become your main friendships because you are seeing them every day,” Derek stated. Izzie also expressed, “My team is my primary source of friends.” Alex, who spends time in multiple friend groups, conveyed his experiences a little differently:

Well friends on the football team you spent 4 hours with them so it was really easy to be friends with them. But back at the dorm you really had to be intentional to carve out time to do that. So yeah it really was difficult to develop friendships during that time.

Though Owen experienced similar friendship interactions to that of Alex and Derek, he fared well by sharing with his roommate: “[My roommate] is the same major, and he and I are really good at just sharing what stresses us out or just helping each other through times when we have the weight of the world on our shoulders.” In the process of pursuing intentional friendship, Meredith noted how overwhelming multiple friend groups can be: “I think I definitely found times where I had over committed myself and whether I know it or not- relationships suffered.” As a senior, she also admitted, “I ended up having a tighter knit group of friends, as opposed to a larger group of multiple friend groups”.

Unlike many other participants, Mark noted his difficulty staying connected with family. In part, his difficulty felt heightened due to the distance between campus and his hometown: “I’m from Georgia so I don’t see them [family] all the time. When we are in season, I can’t just pop home for the weekend. So yeah, definitely limits time I see them.”

Faculty. In regard to their relationship with professors, participants either mentioned their engagement with faculty in the classroom or a more personal, out-of-class interaction. For instance, Owen discussed his student responsibility to let professors know when he would miss class for games and to receive make-up work, alternative assignments, or class notes:

I mean the responsibility is on us as the student to go to them. But it comes down to the student to ask first and then the professor does all they can to help.

Alternate assignment, test- they move it. So the professors do a good job of accommodating.

Meredith and Mark expressed more personal relationships with faculty. Meredith even described the presence of faculty at sporting events:

Various faculty take different positions. Usually, I found like a lot of support from faculty. Like they even had a lot of faculty coming to games and ask me how our season is going. And it is just really encouraging. But you definitely get a sense from certain faculty that our academics should be priority.

Mark reflected the mentorship he received from a faculty member:

Generally, they understand that we have games and they try to do their best to facilitate us. I got really good advice when I was freshmen to seek kind of a faculty member as kind of a counselor and mentor. I go talk to him probably once a week.

The relationships student-athletes share with faculty members have the potential to reach beyond the classroom. When willing, both students and faculty have opportunities to learn from one another. The researcher asked participants to describe possible

improvements in the faculty-and-student-athlete connection. Furthering the connection between student-athletes and faculty members could lead to a rewarding support system.

Theme 3: Athlete Support Desires

Participants responded to the question, “What recommendations would you make to improve the athletic program and the advisement resources that are provided at the institution?” The student-athletes noted three main areas of interest. They expressed a desire for faculty and academic advisors to become more knowledgeable of sport commitments and to take athletic involvement into consideration when evaluating academic goals. Participants also acknowledged a need for specific athletic advisors. Lastly, student-athletes would appreciate better connectedness between athletic teams.

Familiarity of athletics among faculty and advisors. Five of nine participants expressed dissatisfaction in their academic advisors. Some advisors dismissed or took little interest in the fact that the students they advised are also student-athletes. Alex disappointedly voiced, “The advisor I had didn’t really take much consideration in that I was playing football. He treated it just like any other student.” As a recommendation to improve the connection between athletics and academics, Jackson offered, “. . . I think having advisors that know specifically about an athlete’s schedule – what they do, what they ought to go through – might be beneficial. I personally haven’t had a great experience with my advisor.”

One participant noted the added stressor of navigating the changing of her academic major. Izzie entered college as “undecided” and later chose biology. She felt frustrated with the lack of communication after changing her major. “My academic advisor changed and I still don’t really know who that is. So I’m not sure if that is my

problem or they should help me with that.” Owen felt concerned his professors did not notice his absence on away game weekends: “The professor doesn’t really know that I was gone.” To improve relations between student-athletes and their academic advisors, Mark suggested, “Maybe get faculty more involved with the vision of what we want to do. So just more hands on approach from the entire school and better investment.”

Athletic advisors. In an effort to support and serve student-athletes better, several participants mentioned housing specific athletic advisors in the athletic department of the university. Alex explained the concept by stating,

Multiple advisors --that are specific to sports and college. So having kind of a mix, a blend of the two advisors that I had. Maybe not taking place of both of them but having them as an extra resource that you can sit down and say like this is what I need help with. What do I do? How is this going to impact what I do in the future? Someone who has been through it – to tell people what to expect and what to plan for.

This concept could help “build an atmosphere of support.” Jackson mentioned a similar desire but did not know how to expand on the concept of athletic advisors housed in the athletic department: “I don’t know what it would look like but I think it would be something worthwhile to look into it.”

Lack of connectivity between sport disciplines. Several participants expressed an interest in more connection to the other sport disciplines, noting the current exclusivity of each sport team. This exclusivity even appeared somewhat prevalent in Jackson’s remark, “I loved my experience, love my teammates, love my team, love football.” As a senior athlete, Meredith experienced how the university’s tier system segregated athletes.

The tier system offers a set number of scholarships for each sport discipline. However, due to differing numbers of participants on each team, the total amount of scholarship money awarded to each team varies greatly:

I loved my experience, but if I had one thing I could change is that they would reevaluate the tier system in terms of how much money each sport is getting.

[However], I don't think it has taken away from how I valued the experience.

Owen explained the university teams as such:

You kind of tend to stay—football players stay with football players. Volleyball with volleyball. So maybe finding a way where [the institution] can bring all the sports together as a whole. Even though individually, we are very strong and close-knit.

Meredith described her previous involvement in an athletic department organization that encourages student-athletes to connect more with other sport activities and events: “The athletic department- they have [an advisory council] that I was a part of and was able to interact with the athletic director and a fair amount of coaches that way.”

Essence of Research

The results gathered from student-athlete interviews provided a more in-depth understanding of the student-athlete perspective related to the phenomenon of their shared experiences as student-athletes and their level of collegiate advising. The study identified three major themes: (1) the context of the student-athlete experience the participants, including shared commonalities in their overall commitment to the sport and viewing their participation in the sport as a significant priority; (2) the current support system and relationships in their lives whom provided varying levels of support

including, their coaching staff, friends and family, and faculty; and (3) student-athletes hopes for the athletic program and desires to see the program better supported by the individuals with whom they share their campus. The themes identify aspects of the student-athlete experience worthy of consideration as higher education professionals. Not only did the participants identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in their advising relationships, but they also expressed possibilities for improvement and bettering their own—and future—student-athlete experiences.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Parham (1993) identified six demands or challenges facing college student-athletes. Three demands emerged prevalently among participants' experiences, including balancing athletic and academic endeavors, balancing social activities with isolation from athletic pursuits, and balancing relationships with coaches, family, and friends. This chapter further analyzes these demands in relation to each corresponding theme.

While every participant's experience proved unique, the nine interviews revealed three themes. The researcher determined these themes by either frequency of the theme in the interviews or the significance of the theme in a participant's experience. Themes included the context of the student-athlete experience together with commitment to the sport and viewing participation as a significant priority, the significance of relationships with supporting roles, and desires to see the athletic program better supported by other individuals on campus. The following discussion includes connections to previous literature, implications for practice and research, and study limitations.

Connections with Previous Literature

The study results indicated slight commonalties with previous research but proved generally inconsistent by comparison. The culture of the institution participants attended may relate to the overall advisement experience the student-athletes described. The following comparison with prior studies further examines similarities and dissimilarities.

Context of student-athlete experience. The results included three common subthemes in relation to the context of the student-athlete experience. Participants commented on their commitment to the sport and viewed their participation in the sport as a significant priority. They also confirmed they felt even more committed to their sport if they received an athletic scholarship. By receiving a financial gift from the institution, student-athletes felt they owed dedication and commitment to their collegiate sport. Participants' interest in extra-curricular activities also varied, but most seemed more inclined to consider an extracurricular as a priority if it felt sufficiently important to them.

Unlike previous (Fletcher et al., 2003) literature, which presents athletes as expected to spend a majority of their time on the field or court, some participants prioritized varying extra-curricular activities. For example, Owen enjoyed his involvement in community ministries. Likewise, Alex and Cristiana made time for residence hall events and bible studies. The nature of these interests are cultivated from institutional culture highly focused on intentional community and student programming. Cristina described herself as “blown away by the awesome community.” Participants want to become involved but often experience conflict with athletic responsibilities. For instance, Meredith's athletic commitments limited her participation in other activities.

Student-athletes manage busy day-to-day schedules. They attend classes in the mornings and early afternoons, participate in sports activities in the afternoon and early evenings, and have only late evening time to devote to studies and other necessary activities (Jordan & Denson, 1990). Findings in this study proved consistent with results found by Jordan and Denson (1990). Meredith indicated her rigorous scheduled helped her set priorities as a student. The regularly set hours required of athletes forced

participants to become consistent and intentional with the time they had outside of their sport. Their productivity toward their academic work also increased as they had to learn to time manage well. When not actively participating in their sport, participants took advantage of the blocks of time between athletic commitments to prioritize schoolwork. They had to use their time wisely, spending time in the library to avoid most distractions.

Current support system. The theme of the current student support system including three subthemes. Each subtheme relates to a different group of individuals that played a significant role in the student-athlete experience: coaching staff, friends and family, and faculty.

As student-athletes progress through potentially four years of athletic participation at an institution, they must make connections with individuals who provide varying degrees of support. During college, students make decisions about a career and identify personal values (Carodine et al., 2001). Participants identified individuals who provided wisdom as they made those important decisions. Owen mentioned one of his football coaches who helped him make decisions regarding career and life. He noted their conversations extended beyond sport ability to include career goals, relationships, friendships, and post-college aspirations. Not only do the football coaches take the time to make players better on the field, they have vested interest in making them better men.

Some student-athletes who attend institutions that establish a “students first and athletes second” policy can experience inconsistency when coaching staffs ignore regulations (Etzel et al., 1991). Derek noted that his football coach ensures the players make academics a priority. Though encouraging, such attention does not appear the case with all athletic coaches at the institution. Mark reported a different experience:

I don't necessarily think coaches intend to do this, but sometimes, like I said before, they kind of – it is their job – their job to win football games. So when they see us they forget sometimes that oh they just came from a whole school day and they have a lot of stuff going on.

Intentional or not, coaches should remember that their athletes are students first.

Professionals who work with student-athlete populations must emphasize the end goal of receiving a valuable degree, not simply winning football games. Nonetheless, Mark developed a genuine mentor relationship with a faculty member and visits his office weekly. Some participants may not find the support they desire among their coaching staff, but as Mark indicated, some faculty members seem willing to offer wisdom and support to student-athletes. Furthering these connections has the potential to increase retention, alleviate academic stressors, and establish more personal relationships.

Athlete support desires. The research presented student-athlete support desires as a main theme. The researcher invited participants to offer suggestions, make recommendations, or simply make note of areas within the athletic program in which they would like to see improvement. The research identified three subthemes from their responses: participants desired to see more familiarity of athletics among faculty and advisors, made suggestions for specific athletic advisors, and showed an invested interest in improving the connectivity between sport disciplines.

Some faculty members believe athletic involvement proves detrimental in higher education. They argue the time commitment and a desire to succeed as athletes allows student-athletes to let their academic pursuits become second-rate. Other faculty believe significant learning can take place in a team environment or on a playing field. By getting

more faculty involved in the student-athlete experience, both constituents can learn from one another. Mark suggested proposing a common vision between athletics and academics to allow each discipline an opportunity to become more accepting of the other's passions.

Lastly, participants felt a need to become better connected to other athletes on their campus. Generally, though they do not play the same sport, they experience many of the same issues, conflicts and stressors. Together, they could offer one another support. Building connections with other teams also proves important for support, not only in the athletic department but also throughout the university. When student-athletes develop interdisciplinary relationships, they have the opportunity to support one other in athletic endeavors and throughout their development as young adults.

Implications for Practice

As a whole, student-athletes could benefit from a more direct advisory approach. All too often, students' needs pass unnoticed. Student-athletes remain one of the least likely populations on college campuses to seek professional help (Wrisberg & Martin, 1994). For this reason, a more aggressive approach proves necessary. Establishing better communication can promote deeper relationships and a sense for student well-being. One way to bridge the vision and the goals of both athletic and academic disciplines comes in providing specific athletic advisors for student-athletes. These advisors solely meet with student-athletes and familiarize themselves with academic needs—including advisement, tutorial assistance, and career counseling—as well as athletic needs—such injury counseling, and transition issues. They also become familiar with personal and social issues among college-aged students and general administrative issues. Additionally, student-athletes may benefit from advisors who have backgrounds as college student-

athletes. Senior participant Alex would have appreciated someone “who has been through it – to tell people what to expect and what to plan for [as athletes].”

Higher education professionals must recognize the significant need for increased advisory tactics to support student-athletes better. Existing research shows practitioners have the opportunity to improve their intentionality with student-athletes, play a role in their development, and practice collaboration with the institutional athletic departments. Student-athletes can make up a significant portion of a university’s student population, necessitating the continuous improvement of support and advisement services.

Implications for Future Research

Further research should address the area of student-athlete advisement. Though research presents a breadth of information on student-athlete issues and concerns, few studies explore ways to correct or improve the athlete experience. Future research studies should focus directly on individual sports. A deeper study looking at each sport could provide better coverage of the student-athlete advisement experience as it pertains to each unique sport culture. Studies comparing student-athletes at public and private institutions would also offer significant benefit.

Based on the current study, upperclassmen student-athletes evidently had more informed opinions and in-depth perceptions of their athletic experience. Future studies could benefit from an increase in upperclassmen interviews. Also, a focus group setting with senior athletes may generate an informative discussion. Focus groups provide an opportunity to listen to the student voice, explore issues in depth, and obtain insights that might not occur without the discussion they permit. This method of indirect assessment

also provides interaction among the interviewees, collection of extensive data and participation by all the individuals in the group (Krueger, 1994).

Lastly, participant interest to increase connections between sports emerged as an unanticipated response. Future research could identify benefits of these types of relationships for athletic programs and institutions as a whole. The study can also apply to multiple geographical areas including regions outside the United States. Not limited by type of sport involvement, this research can apply to a variety of sport disciplines.

Research Limitations

After conducting this study, the researcher has identified several limitations. The scope of the study proved limited and only contained interviews from student-athletes at a small liberal arts institution in the Midwest. A study conducted at a larger institution might have provided a bigger participant pool and therefore more interview participants.

The study included participants from all four classes, freshmen through senior, and multiple sport disciplines. The differences between sports disciplines made it somewhat difficult draw main themes from participant responses. The study also involved six male participants, while only three female students participated. Though all participants offered excellent insight, the study could have benefited from a more extensive female perspective and a focus on senior athletes involved in a single sport.

Finally, some of the answers provided by the interview participants surprised the researcher. Despite the unanticipated nature of some of their responses, the results nonetheless further examined the phenomenological advisement experience of student-athletes.

Conclusion

The advisement experiences of student-athletes prove relatively underexplored. For this purpose, the researcher chose to examine more in-depth the specific experiences of nine student-athletes at a small liberal arts institutions. This study focused on three research questions:

1. What do student-athletes perceive about the institutional advisement they have received?
2. How has their athletic involvement shaped their college experience?
3. What recommendation would student-athletes make to improve the athletic program of which they are a part of?

Through this research, professionals have a better understanding of the context of the student-athlete experiences, the current support they receive from varying members of an institution, and their desires for advisement improvement.

Higher educational professionals who emphasize student care must give more attention to the students who choose to pursue their passion in collegiate athletics. Institutions hold the responsibility to advocate for appropriate balance and healthy habits in an effort to see students succeed in their athletics and their academic work. Hill et al. (2001) noted the success of an intercollegiate athletic program depends on the combined efforts made by the whole institution to make the overall college experience for student-athletes a success.

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Appendix A

Taylor University Informed Consent

Student-Athlete Perceptions of Institutional Advisement

You are invited to participate in a research study of student-athletes and the level of advisement they receive. You were selected as a possible subject because you are listed on university sport roster. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. The study is being conducted by Bailey Judd as a part of completing her Master's in Higher Education. It is funded by Taylor University MAHE program.

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to understand the difficulties that student-athletes face and the level of advisement that is available to them.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:

If you agree to participate, you will be one of 10 student-athletes (chosen from varying sports and class rank) subjects who will be participating in this research. Participants must be at least 18 years of age.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:

If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following things:
Subject will participate in a voice-recorded interview lasting 20-30 minutes. Your interview answers will be extremely valuable. Once all interviews are conducted, the researcher will look for themes and characteristics displayed throughout the majority of the interviews.

RISKS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:

While on the study, the risks or discomforts include:
Discomfort sharing personal information with unfamiliar researcher.
Fear of loss of confidentiality.

NOTE: If for any reason you would like to discontinue the interview you may tell the researcher that you feel uncomfortable or do not care to answer a particular question.

BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:

The benefits to participation that are reasonable to expect are considerable knowledge of a student-athletes daily difficulties. Gaining insights to particular issues may allow higher education professional to evaluate their current, or lack of, assisting measures that are

available to the student-athlete demographic. Students being interviewed may also provide specific helping techniques that they would be more inclined to participate in.

ALTERNATIVES TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:

Instead of being in the study, you have the option to disregard this consent form. Though your participation would be beneficial, your commitment to this study is completely voluntary.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published. The interview recording will only be heard by the researcher and the transcriber. When the study is completed, recordings will be erased.

Organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator and his/her research associates, the Taylor University Institutional Review Board or its designees, the study sponsor, Skip Trudeau, and (as allowed by law) state or federal agencies, specifically the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) etc., who may need to access your research records.

COSTS

There are no known costs to your participation in the interview. If you need to discuss concerns raised by the interview, please contact the University Counseling center.

PAYMENT

You will not receive payment for taking part in this study

COMPENSATION FOR INJURY

There will be no payment of treatment costs in case of injury.

In the event of physical injury resulting from your participation in this research, necessary medical treatment will be provided to you and billed as part of your medical expenses. Costs not covered by your health care insurer will be your responsibility. Also, it is your responsibility to determine the extent of your health care coverage. There is no program in place for other monetary compensation for such injuries.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

For questions about the study or a research-related injury, contact the researcher Bailey Judd at 937.654.3619, or Skip Trudeau at 765.998.5369.

If you have inquiries regarding the nature of the research, your rights as a subject, or any other aspect of the research as it relates to your participation as subject can be directed to Taylor University's Institutional Review Board at IRB@taylor.edu or the Chair of the IRB, Susan Gavin at 765.998.5188 or ssgavin@taylor.edu.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF STUDY

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with Taylor University.

SUBJECT'S CONSENT

In consideration of all of the above, I give my consent to participate in this research study.

I will be given a copy of this informed consent document to keep for my records. I agree to take part in this study.

Subject's Printed Name: _____

Subject's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Research Questions

1. What do student-athletes perceive about the institutional advisement they have received?
2. How has their athletic involvement shaped their college experience?
3. What recommendation would student-athletes make to improve the athletic program of which they are a part of?

Interview Questions

1. Please state your gender and the sport in which you participate.
2. What class are you (freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior)?
3. How long have you played for this institution?
4. Please describe your time commitment to this sport: practices times, game times, required study groups, etc.
5. Were you recruited for the team or did you walk on?
6. Do you receive financial support as an incentive for participating in your collegiate sport? If so, does it shape your commitment to the sport?
7. Could you explain the nature of your relationship(s) with the coaching staff and/or other athletic department members?
8. Do you feel comfortable approaching the coaching staff regarding areas in your life that are non-sport related? Why or why not?
9. How would you describe your ability to balance athletics, academics and a social life on a college campus?
10. What other activities do you participate in outside of athletics? Do these time commitments put stress on our athletic involvement or your academic success?

11. Do you feel that your participation in a sport has limited your social interactions with friends, family, or a significant other? In what ways?
12. Have you ever felt that you were pressured by others or your environment to put athletics above other priorities? Provide examples if relevant.
13. In your college experience who do you reach out to in a time of need or difficulty? How have they assisted in alleviating your distress?
14. What tactics have you found helpful when balancing your athletic career and seeking a degree? For example, keeping a planner or an accountability partner?
15. Has an injury ever impeded your ability to participate in your sport, classes, or day to day activities? How did you make accommodations for your injury? Who was helpful in assisting in your recovery?
16. Do faculty members accommodate for instances where you will miss class for practice or games? If so, in what ways?
17. As a whole, how do you feel this institution was at providing the necessary resources, outlets, accommodations for you as an athlete? Please provide examples.
18. What recommendations would you make to improve the athletic program and the advisement resources that are provided at this institutions?

