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A STUDY INVESTIGATING ACADEMIC ADVISING SUPPORT FOR
STUDENT ATHLETES AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-CAMDEN

by
Thomas Thomasson Jr.

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree in Higher Education Administration
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 2007

Approved by _____
Dr. Burton R. Sisco

Date Approved 1/26/07

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ABSTRACT

Thomas Thomasson Jr.
A STUDY INVESTIGATING ACADEMIC ADVISING SUPPORT FOR STUDENT
ATHLETES AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-CAMDEN

2007

Dr. Burton R. Sisco
Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a need for an academic advising support program for student athletes at Rutgers University-Camden. Rutgers University-Camden is currently in the process of developing such a program. The sample studied consisted of 122 student-athletes at Rutgers University-Camden.

Data were collected through an 18 item survey designed to obtain background information on the student athletes and their attitudes toward academic-advising at Rutgers University-Camden. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program to calculate the descriptive statistics of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations for responses to the attitude items. One of the major findings in this study was that the student-athletes at Rutgers University-Camden were unaware of the support program that the Athletic Department has made available to them.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all of my family, especially my wife Lauren, for always supporting me throughout this long and tedious process. They are the true motivation and inspiration behind all that I do.

I would also like to thank Rutgers University-Camden Athletic Department for allowing me full access to their department during my internship. I learned more about higher educational system from this experience than I could ever have learned in the classroom.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Student athletes need a variety of support systems to help them succeed in college today. College sports have evolved over time from enhancing individual development, to entertaining the student body, to a multimillion dollar industry that is fueled by public interest in collegiate athletics. College sports are no longer an extra curricular activity; they are a business and run like one. Competition is fierce for athletes who are recruited by top colleges and universities across the United States and given promises ranging from admission to starting roles on an athletic team. The athlete's role at a college can sometimes be equated to a worker in a factory. If the owners of the factory find that the worker is not working to potential or is slowing down, the factory owner may replace the worker with someone who can get the job done faster. Student-athletes face similar situations. They are promised scholarships to attend college, but few are told that if they perform poorly or get hurt, they can lose their scholarship.

The availability of full-ride scholarships are unique to Division I institutions, although Division II institutions may offer limited scholarships. Moreover, most Division I and II institutions provide in-house academic support services to student-athletes such as study halls and time management workshops. Division III institutions are not permitted by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to give athletic scholarships or have in-house academic services for student-athletes. Ironically, student-athletes at all division levels face similar challenges and need comprehensive assistance to succeed in college today. Often, student athletes are more concerned with playing

sports than gaining a degree, which is the main reason for attending higher education. Colleges and universities shoulder some of the blame for this problem. College sports have become a showcase and training ground for many professional teams. It is not that colleges and universities should avoid recruiting the best talent available; they should make every effort to ensure that the student athlete understands the primary reason for attending college is to earn a degree. The college or university needs to emphasize the importance of academics in the lives of student-athletes. Often, this gets overlooked.

Background of the Problem

Student-athletes are a diverse and special population due in part to the roles played on campus, unique lifestyles, and special needs (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1996). Student-athletes are frequently in the public eye such as in the school or local newspaper, or on television giving interviews. Student-athletes have extensive time demands in addition to regular class work (Hood, Craig, & Ferguson, 1992). According to Hood, Craig, and Ferguson, some student-athletes arrive with low entrance scores on standardized tests and poor high school grade point averages. Often, colleges and universities make exceptions to academic standards and allow an athlete the opportunity to attend because the institution knows the athlete can improve its sports program. Better sports programs mean better attendance at games and more revenue from television contracts and ticket sales. For example, the NCAA signed a \$1.725 billion dollar television contract with CBS in 2002.

All student-athletes face significant time commitments, physically grueling workouts, a high-profile existence, and demanding expectations (Carodine, Almond, &

Gratto, 2001). Even for academically gifted students, the combination of academic and athletic requirements can cause considerable strain (Carodine, Almond, & Gratto).

The primary reason for attending college is to earn a degree and ultimately graduate. Hopefully, the degree that a student earns translates into a job opportunity. It is important for higher education institutions to help student athletes attain these goals. The student-athlete during the competitive years is seeking to bring recognition to the institution through a successful, maybe even, championship program. Therefore, it is the duty of the institution to make sure that student-athletes have support systems in place to be successful in and out of the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

Many colleges and universities across the United States have specialized academic support programs in athletic departments staffed by one or more student-athletes advisors. These support programs and professional staff help student-athletes balance academic and athletic responsibilities and acclimate to college life. Rutgers University-Camden recently developed an academic support program for student-athletes with a student-athlete academic advisor. The purpose of this study was to investigate how selected student-athletes used an advisor for academic, athletic, and personal assistance.

Assumptions and Limitations

Student-athletes are responsible for fulfilling several academic responsibilities (attending classes, studying, and passing exams), in addition to maintaining NCAA eligibility standards. If a student athlete fails to satisfactorily meet these academic tasks

the student athlete may be ineligible to compete, receive scholarship aid, and graduate from the institution (Carodine, Almond, & Gratto, 2001).

The limitations that may have affected the study could be the study size, available research on the topic, cooperation from Rutgers University-Camden, and willingness of student-athletes to participate in the study. In addition, researcher bias and truthfulness of participants could have altered the results of the study.

Operational Definition of Terms

The following definitions apply to the terms used in the study:

Athletic Director: Term used to describe the head of the athletic department at an institution of higher learning.

Division I: A term used by the NCAA to describe institutions that have the largest student population. These institutions are able to award scholarships based on athletic performance.

Division III: A term used by the NCAA to describe institutions that have the smallest student population. These institutions are unable to offer athletic scholarships.

NCAA: The National Collegiate Athletic Association is the governing body for college athletics.

Student-athlete: Term used to describe a student participating in intercollegiate athletics, at Rutgers University-Camden.

Student-athlete Academic Advisor: Term used to describe the position in the athletic department at Rutgers University-Camden that is responsible for counseling student-athletes in a wide variety of areas.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: How does the graduation rates of student-athletes affiliated with NCAA Division I institutions compare with Division III institutions?

Research Question 2: What are the attitudes of selected student-athletes at Rutgers University-Camden regarding the academic, athletic, and personal assistance provided by an academic advisor?

Organization of Remaining Chapters

The remainder of this report is presented in four chapters. Chapter two is a review of relevant literature. This chapter reviews literature that is pertinent to the topic and helps to develop a conceptual framework for the study. Chapter three discusses how the research project was carried out. The chapter describes the procedures used in the study, the subjects involved in the study, a description of the data collecting instrument, and how the data were analyzed. Chapter four presents the findings and results based on the research questions outlined in chapter one. Chapter five provides a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, conclusions and recommendations for practice and further research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The Evolution of Collegiate Sports

According to Smith (1988), Yale and Harvard led American colleges into organized intercollegiate athletics in the mid-nineteenth century. However, athletic competition existed in colleges even before the Revolutionary War. In the mid 1700s the most popular sports on college campuses were hunting, horse racing, and cricket (Smith, 1988). Sports were not welcomed on early American colleges with good reason. Sports were very violent and most of the pre-revolutionary colleges were either the products of the Protestant Reformation or the evangelical religious fervor of the eighteenth-century Great Awakening (Smith, 1988). According to Smith (1988):

William and Mary was founded in 1692 to provide Church of England clergymen for the Virginia Crown colony. Yale was formed in 1707 in part to counteract the liberal tendency in religion occurring at Harvard, which was founded by Puritans. Of the six remaining pre-revolutionary colleges chartered after 1745, only King's College (Columbia) and the College of Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania) were non-sectarian. The College of New Jersey (Princeton), Dartmouth, the College of Rhode Island (Brown), and Queen's College (Rutgers University) were, in order, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Baptist, and Dutch Reformed-all founded by ministers with a revivalist impulse from the Great Awakening. (p. 9)

The religious nature of these early American colleges had a great impact on the sports activities on campus. According to Smith (1988), “Most colleges supported physical activity at times but generally restricted sport” (p. 9).

Smith (1988) stated that, “despite the dampening effect on sport of religious orthodoxy, the rapid growth of colleges gave rise to the competitive spirit among institutions of higher learning” (p. 10). This eventually led to colleges to use athletics to promote growth financially and through enrollment (Smith, 1988). Athletics would eventually be sanctioned by college authorities, but not until students organized them in protest to the classical curriculum of early American colleges (Smith, 1988).

The National Collegiate Athletic Association

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is a voluntary association of about 1200 colleges and universities, athletic conferences and sports organizations devoted to the sound administration of intercollegiate sports (<http://ncaa.org/>). According to the NCAA, the purposes of the organization are as follows:

To initiate, stimulate and improve intercollegiate athletics programs for student-athletes and to promote and develop educational leadership, physical fitness, athletics excellence and athletics participation as a recreational pursuit. To uphold the principle of institutional control of, and responsibility for, all intercollegiate sports in conformity with the constitution and bylaws of the Association. To encourage its members to adopt eligibility rules to comply with satisfactory standards of scholarship, sportsmanship and amateurism. To formulate, copyright and publish rules of play governing intercollegiate athletics. To preserve intercollegiate athletics records. To supervise the conduct of, and to

establish eligibility standards for, regional and national athletics events under the auspices of the Association. To legislate, through bylaws or by resolutions of a Convention, upon any subject of general concern to the members related to the administration of intercollegiate athletics. To study in general all phases of competitive intercollegiate athletics and establish standards whereby the colleges and universities of the United States can maintain their athletics programs on a high level. To initiate, stimulate and improve intercollegiate athletics programs for student-athletes and to promote and develop educational leadership, physical fitness, athletics excellence and athletics participation as a recreational pursuit. To uphold the principle of institutional control of, and responsibility for, all intercollegiate sports in conformity with the constitution and bylaws of the Association. To encourage its members to adopt eligibility rules to comply with satisfactory standards of scholarship, sportsmanship and amateurism. To formulate, copyright and publish rules of play governing intercollegiate athletics. To preserve intercollegiate athletics records. To supervise the conduct of, and to establish eligibility standards for, regional and national athletics events under the auspices of the Association. To legislate, through bylaws or by resolutions of a Convention, upon any subject of general concern to the members related to the administration of intercollegiate athletics. To study in general all phases of competitive intercollegiate athletics and establish standards whereby the colleges and universities of the United States can maintain their athletics programs on a high level. (<http://ncaa.org/>)

The NCAA is divided into three divisions (I, II, III). The divisions are based mainly on student enrollment. For the purposes of this study, research focused on Division I and Division III institutions. There are many differences between NCAA Division I and Division III institutions. The one major difference between Division I and Division III institutions is athletic scholarships. Division I institutions are able to offer student-athletes athletic scholarships. Division III institutions are not able to offer athletic scholarships to student-athletes.

Division I

According to the NCAA, Division I institutions have to sponsor at least seven sports for men and seven for women (or six for men and eight for women) with two team sports for each gender. Each playing season has to be represented equally by each gender as well. There are contest and participant minimums for each sport, as well as scheduling criteria. For sports other than football and basketball, Division I schools must play 100% of the minimum number of contests against Division I opponents; anything over the minimum number of games has to be 50% Division I. Division I teams have to meet minimum attendance requirements (17,000 people in attendance per home game, or 20,000 average for all football games in the last four years or, 30,000 permanent seats in the stadium and average 17,000 per home game or 20,000 average for all football games in the last four years or, be in a member conference in which at least six conference members sponsor football or more than half of football schools meet attendance criterion (<http://ncaa.org/>).

Division I schools must meet minimum financial aid awards for athletic programs, and there are maximum financial aid awards for each sport that a Division I school cannot exceed (<http://ncaa.org/>). Division I athletics focus more on the economic impact of sports and the money generated by attendance to the sporting events. Thus, Division I athletic programs are run more like a corporate business.

Division III

According to the NCAA, Division III institutions must sponsor at least five sports for men and five for women, with two team sports for each gender, and each playing season represented by each gender. There are contest and participant minimums for each sport.

Division III athletics feature student-athletes who receive no financial aid related to athletic ability and athletic departments are staffed and funded like other academic departments on campus. Division III athletic departments place special importance on the impact of athletics on the participants rather than on the spectators. The student-athlete's experience is of paramount concern. Division III athletics encourage participation by maximizing the number and variety of athletic opportunities available to students, placing primary emphasis on regional in-season and conference competition (<http://ncaa.org/>).

The Student-Athlete

Student-athletes are responsible for fulfilling several academic responsibilities (attending classes, studying, passing exams), in addition to maintaining NCAA eligibility standards. If a student athlete fails to satisfactorily meet these academic tasks the student

athlete may be ineligible to compete, receive scholarship aid, and graduate from the institution (Carodine, Almond, & Gratto, 2001). Since student-athletes compete in public, they are subject to praise and criticism by many unknown people (Thelin, 1996). Thus, a student-athlete may be affected emotionally which can have a negative impact on classroom performance. Because student-athletes are sometimes high profile figures on a college campus, they need to be prepared to receive the accolades for success and also learn to accept the criticisms for poor performances. The student-athlete must learn to avoid letting negative criticism impact personal performance on the field and in the classroom. The student-athlete needs to make a clear distinction between school work and athletics. Some research (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1996) has showed that athletes were investing more than 30 hours a week in athletics and related activities. Abell (2000a) reported that this prompted the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to implement regulations to limit practice time to no more than four hours per day and 20 hours per week in structured athletic activities (practice, competition, conditioning, and team meetings). The NCAA also requires that student-athletes be given off one day a week from athletic activity (Abell, 2000b). Carodine, Almond, and Gratto (2001) state, “despite the restrictions on athletic activity, the toll of mental and physical exhaustion and rehabilitation from injury can mean student-athletes still have a limited amount of time to devote to academic pursuits” (p. 1). The importance of providing services to student-athletes that help them deal with both athletics and academics can not be overstated. One position that can help meet the needs of the student athlete is that of a student-athlete advisor. According to Whitner and Myers (1986) “the result of recent demands for accountability from the public as well as the National Collegiate Athletic

Association (NCAA) has stimulated universities to begin placing an emphasis on assisting student-athletes in the areas of academics and student development” (p. 659).

Whitner and Myers (1986) concluded that:

After comparing 10 years of data regarding college athletes and the general college student population, that the educational value of college athletic participation is negative rather than positive. The reality for individuals who work with student-athletes from an academic or student services perspective is that they are confronted daily with people who are under prepared, unlikely to graduate, priority skewed, and manipulated by the demands of their sport. (p. 659)

According to Pascarella, Bohr, Nora, and Terenzini (1995):

The contribution of intercollegiate athletic participation to an individual’s education is being questioned, not only by faculty and administrators, but also by the public news media. There is a small but growing body of evidence on the impact of athletic participation on various educational outcomes. A substantial segment of this evidence suggests that athletic participation may be negatively linked with such outcomes as involvement and satisfaction with the overall college experience, career maturity, and clarity in educational and occupational plans. (p.369)

The athlete is confronted with time demands and sometimes must decide between dedicating time to sports or academics. Most athletes choose to concentrate their time on sports because that is the area they are more comfortable and have the greatest success. Colleges and universities recruit athletes for specific talents on the field of competition

and surround them with the tools needed to improve in competition. They have top notch training facilities, and a training staff to meet physical and emotional needs. However, when it comes to providing a student-athlete with the right tools for academic success, many institutions leave it up to the athlete to find academic assistance.

According to Whitner and Myers (1986), “solutions are generally prescriptive for dealing with student athletes who are marginally prepared” (p. 659). In the mid-1980s, the NCAA increased the academic requirements for first year intercollegiate participation for freshman student-athletes (Whitner & Myers, 1986). This did not address the problem of servicing under prepared student-athletes for college life. Whitner and Myers also found that many institutions arranged tutors and special counseling for student athletes, while others developed special assistance programs. Programs need to be in place to help student-athletes develop as maturing individuals as well as athletes. There should be reciprocal benefit from attending college for both the college and the student-athlete.

Roles and Responsibilities of an Academic Advisor

Many colleges and universities provide student-athletes with academic advising. This helps student athletes remain eligible throughout their competitive careers. A student-athlete academic advisor also helps student-athletes adjust to the changes accompanying college life and aids in retention and graduation rates.

The student-athlete advisor has many roles. The student-athlete academic advisor assists students with selecting courses for academic programs. The advisor helps students select courses that are not only required for a major, but conform to practice schedules. Since student-athletes face many pressures from professors and coaches, a

student-athlete academic advisor helps student-athletes to learn time management skills. According to Whitner and Myers (1986), many student-athletes are under prepared for the rigors of college, so a student-athlete advisor can aid in teaching student-athletes time management techniques, study skills, and test preparation techniques. The student-athlete advisor also assists with career and life goal setting. When a student-athlete is recruited to a college or university he or she visits the campus. This is often the first contact that a student-athlete has with the student-athlete advisor. The student-athlete advisor informs the student of all the academic assistant programs offered by the institution and answers any academic questions. The coach often talks about the sports program and past successes. The student-athlete advisor elaborates further by highlighting what the university has to offer a student-athlete outside of athletics. The student-athlete advisor often sketches responsibility areas such as monitoring academic progress, grades, and class attendance of student-athletes. The student-athlete advisor discusses compliance issues and what happens if a student-athlete misses a class for an athletic event; it is the responsibility of the athlete to inform the student-athlete advisor and attain a class excuse form. The form is then signed by the professor and the student-athlete advisor who keeps the form on record.

Whitner and Myers (1986) research has shown that many student-athletes come to college under prepared for the academic tasks in-and-outside the classroom. In Division I institutions, scholarships are extended to talented athletes who may not otherwise be eligible to enroll in the institution. The same situation is happening in Division III institutions, but without financial aide assistance and academic support. Talented student-athletes are often enrolled as special admission candidates because they may not

meet the criteria for regular admission. According to Whitner and Myers, colleges and universities need to have in place a comprehensive system, with a student-athlete academic advisor, to help the student-athlete make a successful transition into college that leads to success both on-and-off the field.

Summary of the Literature Review

The literature shows that the role of the student-athlete has continued to evolve on the college campus. Now that sports play such a large role on the college campus it is more important than ever that the colleges and universities pay close attention to student-athletes. Student-athletes are coming to college under prepared for the rigors of college life. Typically, the larger Division I institutions are permitted to have in-house student-athlete academic advisors to assist student-athletes. However, the smaller Division III institutions typically use general advisors for all students and may not meet the special needs of the student-athlete. Higher education institutions need to have in place support systems with academic advisors to help student-athletes make the transition into college.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Context of the Study

The research for this thesis project was conducted at Rutgers University-Camden. Rutgers University-Camden is located on 40 acres of waterfront property in the reviving city of Camden, New Jersey.

Rutgers University-Camden has a unique history. Rutgers University-Camden is a division of Rutgers University, the state university of New Jersey. Rutgers University started as a colonial college, became a land-grant institution, and then eventually a state university. Chartered in 1766 as Queen's College, the eighth institution of higher learning to be founded in the colonies, the school opened its doors in New Brunswick in 1771 with a lone instructor, a single sophomore, and a handful of first-year students. During its early years, the college developed as a classic liberal arts institution. In 1825, the name of the college was changed to honor a former trustee and Revolutionary War veteran, Colonel Henry Rutgers (<http://ruweb.rutgers.edu/aboutru/inbrief.shtml>).

Rutgers College became the land-grant college of New Jersey in 1864, resulting in the establishment of the Rutgers Scientific School, featuring departments of agriculture, engineering, and chemistry. Further expansion in the sciences came with the founding of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station in 1880, the College of Engineering (now the School of Engineering) in 1914, and the College of Agriculture (now Cook College) in 1921. The precursors to several other Rutgers divisions were also established during this period: the College of Pharmacy (now the Ernest Mario School of

Pharmacy) in 1892, the New Jersey College for Women (now Douglass College) in 1918, and the School of Education in 1924 (<http://ruweb.rutgers.edu/aboutru/inbrief.shtml>).

Rutgers College assumed university status in 1924, and legislative acts in 1945 and 1956 designated all its divisions as The State University of New Jersey. During these years the university expanded significantly with the founding of an evening division — University College — in 1934 and the addition of the University of Newark (now Rutgers–Newark) in 1946 and the College of South Jersey at Camden (now Rutgers–Camden) in 1950 (<http://ruweb.rutgers.edu/aboutru/inbrief.shtml>). Rutgers University–Camden had a student population of 5,800 students in 2003/04. The university had a student-athlete population of 180. These 180 student-athletes were the focus of this research project. Rutgers University–Camden sponsored eight women’s intercollegiate sports that compete in NCAA Division III. The women’s sports offered at Rutgers University–Camden are as follows: basketball, crew (spring and fall), cross country, soccer, softball, track, and volleyball. Rutgers University–Camden sponsored nine men’s intercollegiate sports that compete in NCAA Division III. The men’s sports offered at Rutgers University–Camden are as follows: baseball, basketball, crew (spring and fall), cross country, golf (spring and fall), soccer, and track.

Population and Sample

For the purposes of this study, a convenience sample of 122 student-athletes was chosen from the total student-athlete population of 180 student-athletes at Rutgers University–Camden. There were 74 women that participated in intercollegiate sports at Rutgers University–Camden in 2003/04. There were 106 men that participated in intercollegiate sports at Rutgers University–Camden in 2003/04. The sample size was

determined by the number of sports that were available for competition during the 2004 spring semester. The student-athletes surveyed participated in baseball, men's and women's crew, golf, softball, and men's and women's track. These sports were chosen because they were participating in NCAA competition at the time of the study. There were 86 men that participated in the study. There were 24 women that participated in the study. A total of 110 student-athletes responded out of a total of 122 surveyed, for a response rate of 90%.

Instrumentation

To protect the rights and safety of the student-athletes, a survey (Appendix A), along with an informed consent form (Appendix B) was submitted to the Rowan University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. The application was approved when approved by the Chair of the Rowan University Institutional Review Board, Dr. Tricia J. Yurak on December 27, 2003(Appendix C).

The study was divided into two parts. The first part of the study evaluated research that compared the graduation rates of student-athletes who participated in sports at the NCAA Division I level to student-athletes who participated in sports at the NCAA Division III level.

The second part of the study consisted of an 18 item survey (Appendix A) administered at Rutgers University-Camden in the spring of 2004.

The survey was designed based on information provided by the athletic department at Rutgers University-Camden. To ensure that the instrument would be valid, reliable, and free of bias, a pilot study was conducted. Ten student-athletes, five coaches, and the athletic department staff at Rutgers University-Camden completed a prototype

survey and provided a critique of the overall design and made recommendations for improvement. Based on the pilot feedback the survey was improved by adding clearer questions in part two of the survey. The 4-point Likert scale was expanded to a 5-point Likert scale. Part three of the survey was added after the athletic department requested the questions be added to help expand their knowledge base pertaining to their student-athletes.

The survey was divided into three sections: background information with respect to gender, class rank, college enrolled, major and participating sport; attitudes toward an academic advisor; and, attitudes about frequency of meeting an academic advisor, in course to graduate, and knowledge of a student-athlete academic advisor. The section of the survey dealing with attitudes toward academic advisor followed a five point Likert scale with values of 5 to 1 assigned to the responses of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree. Each student-athlete was asked to circle the response that best reflected the response to each attitude statement.

Procedure of Gathering Data

On March 15, 16, 17, 2004, 122 surveys were distributed to the student-athletes at Rutgers University-Camden. Packages were given to the coaches of the participating teams with instructions explaining the purpose of the survey, a student consent form (Appendix B), the survey (Appendix A), and instructions for distribution and collection of the survey. The student-athletes completed the surveys prior to practice and each coach collected and returned the surveys as requested.

Data Analysis

Data were entered and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were calculated for the data associated with research question two which included frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation where applicable. Research question one was analyzed using information gathered from the NCAA data base.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Profile of the Sample

The subjects in the study consisted of 122 student-athletes. This sample size was determined by the number of sports that were available for competition during the spring 2004 semester. The sports that were surveyed included baseball, men's and women's crew, golf, softball, and men's and women's track. These sports were chosen because they were the sports that were participating in NCAA competition at the time of the study. The 122 student-athletes represented 67% of the student-athlete population. Of the 122 surveyed, 95(78%) of the subjects were male and 27(22%) were females. A total of 110 student-athletes responded to the survey for a response rate of 90%.

Table 4.1

Gender

n= 110, M= 1.21, SD= .57		
Gender	Frequency	%
Male	86	78.2
Female	24	21.8
Total	110	100

Table 4.1 shows the gender breakdown of student-athletes at Rutgers University-Camden. Males made up 78.2% of the student-athlete sample. Females made up 21.8% of the student-athlete sample.

Table 4.2

Class Rank

Class	n= 110, M= 2.46, SD= 1.12	
	Frequency	%
Freshman	33	30
Sophomore	24	21.8
Junior	22	20
Senior	31	28.2
Total	110	100

Table 4.2 shows the class rank of the student-athletes at Rutgers University-Camden. Freshmen made up 30% of the student-athlete sample. Sophomores made up 21.8% of the student-athlete sample. The remainder of the student-athlete population was 20% juniors and 28.2% seniors.

Table 4.3

College Affiliation

College	n= 110, M= 2.32	
	Frequency	%
Business	10	9
Arts & Sciences	84	76.4
University College	26	23.6
Total	110	100

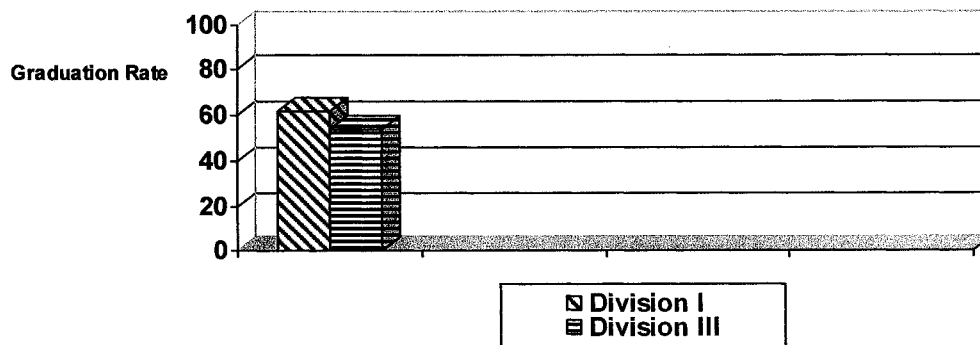
Table 4.3 shows the college affiliation of the student-athletes at Rutgers University-Camden. Nine percent of the student-athletes were enrolled in the School of Business. Seventy-six percent of the student-athletes were enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences. Twenty-four percent of the student-athletes were enrolled in the University College.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: How do the graduation rates of student-athletes affiliated with NCAA Division I institutions compare with Division III institutions?

The data studied regarding the comparison of graduation rates between Division I student-athletes and Division III student-athletes for 2003 were obtained from the NCAA. These data were used to answer research question 1. The NCAA requires that all 327 Division I institutions report graduation rates of all student-athletes annually. Division III institutions do not need to report graduation rates of student-athletes annually. Although not mandated by the NCAA to report graduation rates, some of the 437 Division III institutions do provide data that is included in the NCAA data base.

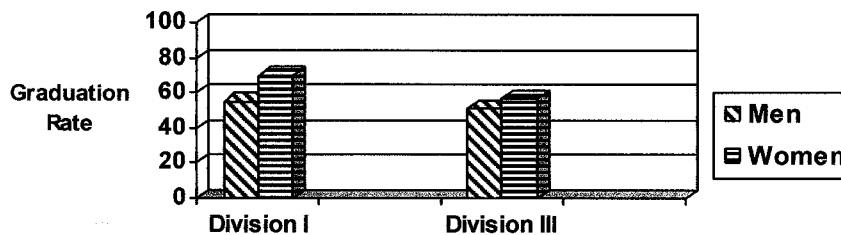
Figure 4.1. Comparison of graduation rates between DI and DIII student-athletes



(http://ncaa.org/grad_rates/2003/d1/d1_aggregate/DI.html)

Figure 4.1 compares the 2003 graduation rates between Division I and Division III student-athletes. The data show the graduation rates for Division I student-athletes were 62%, and for Division III student-athletes a rate of 54%.

Figure 4.2. Comparison of graduation rates between DI and DIII men and women student-athletes



(http://ncaa.org/grad_rates/2003/d2-3/aggregate/DIII.html)

Figure 4.2 compares the 2003 graduation rates between Division I and Division III men and women student-athletes. Division I male student-athletes graduated at a rate of 55% compared to a 70% graduation rate for female student-athletes. Division III male student-athletes graduated at a rate of 51% compared to a 57% graduation rate for female student-athletes (http://ncaa.org/grad_rates/2003/d2-3/aggregate/DIII.html).

Research Question 2: What are the attitudes of selected student-athletes at Rutgers University-Camden regarding the academic, athletic, and personal assistance provided by an academic advisor?

Table 4.4

Academic Advisors Ability to Help with Registration

Level of Agreement	n= 110, M= 3.23, SD= 1.43	
	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	5	4.5
Agree	31	28.2
Undecided	16	14.5
Disagree	50	45.5
Strongly Disagree	8	7.3
Total	110	100

Table 4.4 shows the student-athletes level of satisfaction with an academic advisors ability to help with the registration process. Thirty-three percent of the student-athletes either strongly agreed or agreed with using an academic advisor to help with the registration process. Fifty-three percent of the student-athletes either disagreed or strongly disagreed with using an academic advisor to help with the registration process.

Table 4.5

Academic Advisors Ability to Help with Scheduling

n= 110, M= 3.36, SD= 1.45		
Level of Agreement	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	12	10.9
Agree	17	15.5
Undecided	15	13.6
Disagree	51	46.4
Strongly Disagree	15	13.6
Total	110	100

Table 4.5 shows the student-athletes level of satisfaction with an academic advisors ability to help with scheduling of courses. Twenty-six percent of the student-athletes either strongly agreed or agreed with using an academic advisor to help schedule courses. Sixty percent of the student-athletes either disagreed or strongly disagreed with using an academic advisor to help schedule courses.

Table 4.6

Academic Advisors Knowledge

n= 110, M= 2.97, SD= 1.41		
Level of Agreement	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	9	8.1
Agree	36	32.7
Undecided	31	28.2
Disagree	17	15.5

Strongly Disagree	17	15.5
Total	110	100

Table 4.6 shows the student-athletes level of confidence with an academic advisors' knowledge of program requirements, content and suggested sequence of courses. Forty-one percent of the student-athletes either strongly agreed or agreed that their academic advisor was knowledgeable. Thirty-one percent of the student-athletes either disagreed or strongly disagreed that their academic advisor was knowledgeable.

Table 4.7

Academic Advisors Discuss Academic Success

n= 110, M= 3.37, SD= 1.45		
Level of Agreement	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	3	2.7
Agree	28	25.5
Undecided	31	28.2
Disagree	21	19.1
Strongly Disagree	27	24.5
Total	110	100

Table 4.7 shows the student-athletes level of satisfaction with talking with an academic advisor about academic success. Twenty-eight percent of the student-athletes either strongly agreed or agreed with talking to an academic advisor about academic success. Forty-three percent of the student-athletes either disagreed or strongly disagreed with talking to an academic advisor about academic success.

Table 4.8

Academic Advisors Ability to Assist with Skill Development Issues

n= 110, M= 2.82, SD= 1.42		
Level of Agreement	Frequency	%

Strongly Agree	10	9.1
Agree	44	40
Undecided	27	24.5
Disagree	14	12.8
Strongly Disagree	15	13.6
Total	110	100

Table 4.8 shows the student-athletes level of satisfaction with an academic advisors ability to help with skill development issues. Forty-nine percent of the student-athletes either strongly agreed or agreed with using an academic advisor to help with skill development issues. Twenty-six percent of the student-athletes either disagreed or strongly disagreed with using an academic advisor to help with skill development issues.

Table 4.9

Academic Advisors Ability to Provide Career Advice and Mentoring

n= 110, M= 3.13, SD= 1.41		
Level of Agreement	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	6	5.5
Agree	33	30
Undecided	32	29
Disagree	19	17.3
Strongly Disagree	20	18.2
Total	110	100

Table 4.9 shows the student-athletes level of satisfaction with an academic advisors ability to provide career advice and mentoring. Thirty-six percent of the student-athletes either strongly agreed or agreed with using an academic advisor to provide career advice and mentoring. Thirty-six percent of the student-athletes either disagreed or strongly disagreed with using an academic advisor to provide career advice and mentoring.

Table 4.10

Comfortable Talking to Academic Advisor

n= 110, M= 3.12, SD= 1.42		
Level of Agreement	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	7	6.4
Agree	30	27.3
Undecided	31	28.2
Disagree	27	24.5
Strongly Disagree	15	13.6
Total	110	100

Table 4.10 shows the student-athletes comfort level with talking to an academic advisor. Thirty-four percent of the student-athletes either strongly agreed or agreed they were comfortable talking with an academic advisor. Thirty-eight percent of the student-athletes either disagreed or strongly disagreed they were comfortable talking with an academic advisor.

Table 4.11

Consult Academic Advisor with Trouble with a Professor

n= 110, M= 2.7, SD= 1.44		
Level of Agreement	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	18	16.4
Agree	39	35.5
Undecided	18	16.4
Disagree	28	25.5
Strongly Disagree	7	6.2
Total	110	100

Table 4.11 shows the student-athletes level of satisfaction with consulting an academic advisor about trouble with a professor. Fifty-two percent of the student-athletes either strongly agreed or agreed with using an academic advisor to help with

trouble with a professor. Thirty-two percent of the student-athletes either disagreed or strongly disagreed with using an academic advisor to help with trouble with a professor.

Table 4.12

Consult Academic Advisor with Trouble with a Teammate or Coach

n= 110, M= 3.52, SD= 1.50		
Level of Agreement	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	5	4.5
Agree	18	16.4
Undecided	23	20.9
Disagree	43	39.1
Strongly Disagree	21	19.1
Total	110	100

Table 4.12 shows the student-athletes level of satisfaction with consulting an academic advisor about trouble with a teammate or coach. Twenty-one percent of the student-athletes either strongly agreed or agreed with using an academic advisor to help with trouble with a teammate or coach. Fifty-eight percent of the student-athletes either disagreed or strongly disagreed with using an academic advisor to help with trouble with a teammate or coach.

Table 4.13

Consult Academic Advisor with Personal Issues

n= 110, M= 3.85, SD= 1.64		
Level of Agreement	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	3	2.7
Agree	5	4.5
Undecided	26	23.6
Disagree	48	43.7
Strongly Disagree	28	25.5
Total	110	100

Table 4.13 shows the student-athletes level of satisfaction with consulting an academic advisor about personal issues. Seven percent of the student-athletes either strongly agreed or agreed with using an academic advisor to help with personal issues. Sixty-nine percent of the student-athletes either disagreed or strongly disagreed with using an academic advisor to help with personal issues.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

The study was broken down into two main components. The first part of the study was a comparison between Division I and Division III institutions graduation rates of student-athletes. The data showed that Division I institutions have a higher graduation rate (62%) than Division III institutions (54%).

The second part of the study was intended to gather data regarding the attitudes of student-athletes at Rutgers University-Camden towards academic advising.

Purpose of the Study

Many colleges and universities across the United States have specialized academic support programs in athletic departments staffed by one or more student-athletes advisors. These support programs and professional staff help student-athletes balance academic and athletic responsibilities and acclimate to college life. Rutgers University-Camden recently developed an academic support program for student-athletes with a student-athlete academic advisor.

The purpose of this study was to investigate how selected student-athletes at Rutgers University-Camden used an advisor for academic, athletic, and personal assistance.

Methodology

The participants in the study consisted of 122 conveniently selected student-athletes from Rutgers University-Camden. Of the 122 student-athletes, 110 completed a

survey, resulting in a response rate of 90%. In order to protect the rights of the student-athlete participants, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application (Appendix C) was completed. Participants were also asked to sign an informed consent form (Appendix B) prior to completing the survey.

Data were collected through an 18 item survey (Appendix A). A five point Likert scale was utilized to address the level of student-athletes agreement to statements regarding attitudes towards the use and effectiveness of academic advisors at Rutgers University-Camden.

Data Analysis

The Likert scale data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software program. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the data associated with research question two which included frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation where applicable. The information gathered was used to respond to research question two.

Research question one was answered by information gathered from the NCAA data base.

Findings and Discussion

The data collected shows that student-athletes for the most part are not taking advantage of the services that are provided to them by the athletic department. Fifty-three percent of the student-athletes do not meet with an academic advisor when registering for classes. Another 60% of the student-athletes do not seek the aid of an academic advisor when scheduling their courses. The student-athletes do, however, believe that an academic advisor is helpful in other ways. Forty-nine percent of the

student-athletes feel that an academic advisor can help with academic skills development. Another 51% of the student-athletes feel that an academic advisor is a good mediator when they have a problem with a professor. On the other hand, only 20% of student-athletes would seek the aid of an academic advisor if they were having trouble with a teammate or coach. Only 7% of student-athletes would seek the aid of an academic advisor if they were having problems in their personal life.

Conclusions

The Athletic Department of Rutgers University-Camden appears to be heading in the right direction in serving its student-athletes more effectively. A university that has an intercollegiate athletics program needs to provide services for its student-athletes. Rutgers University-Camden is in the beginning stages of providing such programs for its student-athlete population. Student-athletes are a diverse population because of the unique role on campus, atypical lifestyles, and special needs (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1996). The demands on the student-athlete are many, including having to juggle school, work, practice, and competition. These demands are greater with Division III student-athletes because they are not eligible to receive athletic scholarships. Thus, there is added pressure on the student-athlete due to financial obligations that usually means the student-athlete must work.

Based upon the findings of the study, it can be concluded that Rutgers University-Camden must make an effort to inform the student-athletes of the academic advising services provided by the athletic department. The data show that student-athletes are willing to meet with an academic advisor under certain circumstances. The athletic department needs to better explain the benefits of an academic advisor to the student-

athletes. The student-athlete academic advisor can help student-athletes register for classes, assist with skill development, provide career advice and mentoring.

Recommendations for Practice and Further Research

After analyzing the data collected from the student-athletes of Rutgers University-Camden it is recommended that Rutgers University-Camden continue in developing the position of student-athlete academic advisor. The data suggest that the Athletic Department at Rutgers University-Camden should create an academic advising program.

This study had several limitations. The study was limited to just Rutgers University-Camden. It is recommended for further research that the study be expanded to include several other Division III institutions and compare the findings to the present study. Research should also be done on the feasibility of requiring all Division III institutions record and report graduation rates of student-athletes to the NCAA. This would allow for a better comparison between Division I and Division III institutions.

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APPENDIX A

Survey

SURVEY

PART ONE: Background Information (*CIRCLE ONE*)

1. GENDER: Male Female
2. CLASS RANK: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior
3. COLLEGE: School of Business College of Arts& Sciences University College

(*FILL-IN THE FOLLOWING*)

4. MAJOR: _____
5. SPORT: _____

PART TWO: Using the following scale, rate each of the following:

SA: strongly agree; A: agree; D: disagree; SD: strongly disagree; U: undecided

1. When registering for courses I always meet with an academic advisor.
SA A D SD U
2. I need an academic advisor to help me schedule my courses each semester.
SA A D SD U
3. My academic advisor is knowledgeable about program requirements, content, and suggested sequence of courses.
SA A D SD U
4. When meeting with an academic advisor we discuss ways that I could have more success academically.
SA A D SD U
5. My academic advisor is willing to assist with skill development issues.
SA A D SD U
6. My academic advisor provides career advice and mentoring.
SA A D SD U
7. I feel comfortable initiating conversations with my academic advisor.
SA A D SD U
8. I would consult with an academic advisor if I had trouble with a professor.
SA A D SD U
9. I would consult with an academic advisor if I had trouble with a teammate or coach.
SA A D SD U
10. I would consult with an academic advisor if I had a problem in my personal life.
SA A D SD U

PART THREE: Circle one of the following

11. How many times do you meet with an academic advisor each semester?
Never 1-3 times 3-5 times 5-more times
12. Are you on tract to graduate when your sports eligibility is over?
Yes No
13. Does Rutgers University-Camden have a student-athlete academic advisor?
Yes No

APPENDIX B
Informed Consent

Informed Consent Form

I agree to participate in a study entitled "Investigating the need for academic advising support programs for student-athletes ant Rutgers University-Camden", which is being conducted by Thomas Thomasson Jr.. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the student-athletes perceptions of the academic advising program offered at Rutgers University-Camden. The data collected in this study will be submitted for publication in partial fulfillment of a Masters Degree in Higher Education Administration at Rowan University.

I understand that I will be required to attempt to answer all questions to the best of my ability. My participation in the study is voluntary and should not exceed fifteen minutes.

I understand that my responses will be anonymous and that all the data gathered will be confidential. I agree that any information obtained from this study may be used in any way thought best for publication provided that I am in no way identified and my name is not used.

I understand that there are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study, and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without penalty.

I understand that my participation does not imply employment with the s of New Jersey, Rowan University, the principal investigator, or any other project facilitator.

If I have any questions or problems concerning my participation in this study I may contact Thomas Thomasson Jr. at (856) 256-7575.

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

(Signature of Investigator)

(Date)

APPENDIX C

Institutional Review Board Application

NOV 13
Government Grants and
Sponsored Projects

Appendix D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
APPLICATION FOR REVIEW OF RESEARCH

1. Type of approval review requested (check one): Full Review _____ Expedited Review ☒ Review Exemption _____
2. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Thomas Thomasson Jr.
3. DEPARTMENT: College of Education
- TITLE OF RESEARCH: The need for academic advising support
programs for student athletes at Rutgers University-Camden

CO-INVESTIGATORS: _____

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH (INDEPENDENT PROJECT, MASTER'S THESIS, ETC.): Master's Thesis

4. IF YOU ARE A STUDENT RESEARCHER PLEASE PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING:

MAILING ADDRESS: 330 Richwood Rd. P.O. Box 148 Ewan, NJ 08072

EMAIL: tomthomasson@excite.com TELEPHONE NO. 856-881-1525

FACULTY

SPONSOR NAME: Dr. Burton Sisco

DEPARTMENT OF SPONSORING FACULTY: College of Education

PHONE NO. 256-4500 FAX NO. _____ EMAIL: sisco@rowan.edu

x3717

FACULTY

SPONSOR SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

Your proposal does not meet the criteria for exemption, and a full review will be provided by the IRB.

EXPEDITED REVIEW: ☒ Approved _____ Denied

FULL REVIEW: _____ Approved _____ Approved with modifications _____ Denied

DENIED: _____

See attached Committee Action Letter for additional comments.

Chair, IRB J. Syta

Date 12/22/03

Co-Chair, IRB Harriet Hartman

Date 12/16/03

