

1. INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS

One thing that I have learned in this business is that you cannot change or undo behavior that has been in existence for 18 and 20 years. You have to work with that student and find out how they learn best. Realize that some things stay in your office and other things don't, but you make that clear to the student. (R. Stratzen, former NCAA Vice President for Educational Services, personal communication, June 28, 2002)

Advisors are aware that students arrive on campus with a variety of life experiences. They also know that students will continue to have experiences on campus and in their own lives that will impact their education. Therefore, when they interact with students, they are required to understand them individually but also within the larger context of how they might define themselves.

Welcome to *Advising Student-Athletes: A Collaborative Approach to Success* in which we challenge academic advisors, both in and out of the athletic department, as well as trained counselors, to consider one facet of difference or diversity that they may not have contemplated before: How does the status of student-athlete impact ways in which an advisee experiences life on campus?

We argue that being an athlete has had a significant impact on students prior to their arrival on campus and will continue to have a significant effect on their education after they have arrived. We suggest that although the role of sport may differ significantly (e.g., as high profile national powerhouses or as additional extracurricular activities) across respective campuses, the experience of being an athlete will affect all young people similarly. However, as with any large group of people, diversity within this student group should inspire reflection on other variables, such as the gender, ethnicity, major choice, and other characteristics that are specifically relevant to students at a particular postsecondary institution. Rather than minimize these differences, we ask helping professionals to consider this information within the larger context.

We are excited to provide *Advising Student-Athletes: A Collaborative Approach to Success*, which we know will be a useful resource for all those working with student-athletes on campus. We are honored by the strength of the chapter authors, all leaders in the field both with respect to research and applied practice. What a gift to have all of these wonderful professionals contribute to the student-athlete monograph!

We were very purposeful in forming our editorial team, in ensuring that we selected readers from a wide range of campuses including 2-year colleges, small liberal-arts colleges, and Division I institutions. Through this selection process, we know this will be a valuable resource for all advisors regardless of the type of institution in which they are working.

The content and style of each chapter vary greatly; we had asked

the authors to incorporate a range of items into their writing because we wanted to make their words as applicable as possible for practicing academic advisors. Therefore, quotations (from former college student-athletes, athletic academic advisors, former coaches, and sport administrators), text boxes, wisdom based on practice, and many other applied elements bring the text to life. Within each chapter, we provide current literature in the field, resource listings (including people and institutions, Web sites, professional organizations, books, etc.), discussion questions, and specific action steps to consider.

In determining chapter content, we wanted to encourage advisors to look at larger factors that might impact both the student-athlete experience as well as the reaction of helping professionals to a student-athlete on campus. Therefore, Emmett Gill and Anton Goff offer information on the current academic reforms that will impact the student-athlete body and daily advising work. In another chapter, Carol Gruber asks readers to consider athletic department culture in addition to mechanisms that facilitate campus collaboration. Lisa Nordeen encourages reflection on one's own biases and highlights the unique elements of the student-athlete population. Al Petitpas and Kelly O'Brien have addressed career considerations of student-athletes. Mary Howard-Hamilton and Henry Villegas explain student development theory and Edward F. Etzel, Jack C. Watson II, and Paul Downey highlight ethical and legal issues that will help guide daily work with college student-athletes.

Throughout this book, we have woven case studies that point to the implications of advising practices in specific institutional settings (e.g., the 2-year college, historically black university, selective institution, Division III school) and also for those specific diverse populations within the athletic community (e.g., gay-lesbian-bisexual, those with learning challenges or mental health concerns, and international and African American students). To address issues that many advisors are currently wrestling to resolve (e.g., use of social networks) or face while trying to implement best practices (e.g., crisis intervention), we have also included a range of hot topics.

Finally, we have included several examples of exemplary practices in working with a student-athlete population. We made every effort to include a diverse range of institutional settings as well as a variety of forms and procedures. Please take time to review the information included in this monograph as well as the Web sites and other resources throughout the monograph.

Our hope is that in reading the experts' contributions, readers will take time to think critically about the implications for their own campuses and will initiate conversations with other advisors and student affairs professionals to create the best possible environment for the growth and development of the young student-athletes.

The advising faculty and staff, as well as student-athletes, must be aware of the prejudices that exist on campus. Advisors must determine strategies to dispel myths and provide accurate information regarding the positive accomplishments of student athletes and the real life pressures and constraints that make them a special student population (Gruber, 2003, pp. 46–47).

Sport permeates all aspects of society; that is, even a person with very little interest in sport will interact with it in some way. Television channels are devoted specifically to sport as are sections of almost every newspaper; sport is an element of every newscast and can be heard on most radio stations. People express strong emotions about sport. Some may feel passionately about a particular sport or team such that they organize their schedules around a particular sporting event or competition. Others are strongly opposed to sport, questioning the role it plays in the culture, the message it sends to youth, and even the financial and other resources that might go into this seemingly meaningless activity. Notably, many relationships, through teammates, spouses, and coworkers, have been born and developed because of sports.

At this time, we would like you to think about your feelings toward sport and student-athletes. Be honest with yourself and think about the personal experiences (direct and indirect) that may have shaped or impacted this perspective. In particular, when you reflect upon advising student-athletes, what thoughts come to mind? Again, be honest with yourself. Are your current thoughts similar to views you held in the past? Do you think your current views can or will be altered in the future? Some people may say that there is no difference between a student-athlete and another student on campus; others feel student-athletes make up a privileged group on a campus; still others express a range of other thoughts and experiences about student-athletes. Some questions you may wish to consider include:

- Do you take time to get to know the role sport plays in this student's life?
 - Do you talk to student-athletes about their transition to your campus and how sport might impact this transition process?
 - Do you treat student-athletes like any other student you meet without asking them about their sport?
 - Do you challenge student-athletes in the same way as other students with respect to academic and career goals?
 - Do you try to ignore or minimize advisees' roles as student-athletes?
 - Do you speak with student-athletes about a game or are you more likely to speak with them about games they won or in which they played well?
 - Do you think about the other roles student-athletes aim to fulfill outside of academics or athletics?
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Finally, as you consider the thoughts put forth in this monograph, we also suggest that you consider the core values of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) (2004). Academic advisors are responsible

1. to the individuals they advise,
2. for involving others,
3. to their institutions,
4. to higher education,
5. to their educational community, and
6. for themselves and their professional practice.

We feel that the role of student-athlete will impact your practice across each of these areas outlined by NACADA; therefore, we encourage you to think of the implications of practice across each of these domains.

Enjoy. We welcome any comments or feedback that you have. Please take the time to let us know your thoughts. We can be reached using the below contact information:

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