DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTS OF ACADEMIC COACHING ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF MEN’S COLLEGE BASKETBALL PLAYERS AT A NORTHERN CALIFORNIA UNIVERSITY

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Presented
to the Faculty of
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by
Lucas William Gabriel

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As a former Division I college basketball player and current college basketball coach, I am well aware of the graduation rates of student-athletes. Student-athletes are recruited to campuses all over the country with the promise that if they perform for the college’s basketball team their education will be paid for, and they will be able earn a college degree. However, the promise of the opportunity to earn a college degree falls short if adequate academic support is not provided especially for first generation, low income, and/or at-risk student-athletes. The end result is low graduation rates student-athletes.
As a result, I created a student-athlete study program which was comprised of tutoring, class monitoring, frequent meetings with players and professors, and additional support. This program was more than just “study hall,” which generally is not sufficient for academically unprepared students (as they are already behind and are not proficient at self-studying methods). The program I developed and the results of the program are described in Chapter III of my project. The project allowed me to make a difference for the student-athletes who I knew personally through athletics and who I worked with both academically and athletically on a day-to-day basis.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

College basketball has become a big time business. In 2009, over 72,000 fans attended the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I National Championship in Detroit, Michigan (Columbia Broadcasting System, 2008). The popularity of the sport has led to huge television deals with major broadcasting companies such as Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and American Broadcasting Company (ABC) (Columbia Broadcasting System, 2008) and has led to amazingly large million dollar contracts for Division I college basketball coaches. For example, in 2008, the head coach at Kansas University, Bill Self, signed a 10 year, 33 million dollar contract (Columbia Broadcasting System, 2008; Katz, 2008). Other examples include John Calipari of University of Kentucky who makes 3.96 million dollars per year, and Billy Donovan of University of Florida who makes 3.5 million dollars per year (Perrin, 2009). “More than 10 percent of the 343 Division I coaches collect guaranteed annual compensation of more than $1 million” (Perrin, 2009). Even at California State University, Chico (Chico State), a NCAA Division II losing basketball program for four of the last five years, the head coach Greg Clink makes 84,000 dollars per year base salary (Clink, personal communication, November, 2009).

With this popularity, there is great pressure to win basketball games making college coaching a very unstable profession. One poor season in the win-lose aspect of
college basketball can lead to a coaching staff losing their jobs. Because of this, coaches are extremely competitive, and many will do whatever they can to get outstanding players that will help them win championships. In too many cases, winning has become all that matters. The spirit of having a winning program has spread to Division II athletic programs even though they do not receive the same kind of television coverage and national recognition as Division I teams.

Along with the major contracts that coaches receive, major college basketball programs generate millions of dollars for colleges and universities through ticket sales, television contracts, and merchandise sales. The Division I student-athletes who are partly responsible for the revenue generated, are recruited to these institutions with the promise that they will go to school for free, and that they will leave with a college diploma. However, when examining graduation rates of student-athletes, it is clear that the promise of graduation is often not fulfilled.

This situation is complicated by the fact that many of the men’s basketball players come from low income backgrounds and are often under prepared academically for the rigors of college academics. These students are already at-risk for being able to earn a college degree. Without a major effort by the university and athletic program to assist these students with an academic support program, their chances of failure are high.

Statement of Problem

Overall, the graduation rates for college men’s basketball student-athletes across the entire nation are usually lower than the graduation rates of other college student-athletes and college students in general. At Chico State, the academic
performance has been low. When examining the graduation rate for the basketball players who came to Chico State as freshmen from 1998 to 2001, only 54% graduated (National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA, 2008). In comparison, the graduation rate for Chico State Track and Field team was 80% during the same period of time (NCAA, 2008).

When considering the support that was given to the basketball student-athletes, which includes financial assistance, and considering that the student-athletes were on the team for four to five years, the graduation rate is very low. One reason for the low graduation rates is that in an effort to get better players, coaches will help at-risk students be accepted to the college or university as a special admit. Special admissions refers to one or both of the following conditions: the first condition is that the student-athlete did not meet all of the college’s admission requirements, and/or the second condition is that the student-athlete did not meet all the NCAA freshmen requirements.

When student-athletes do not meet all of the NCAA’s freshmen, or initial eligibility requirements, then they are classified as “a partial qualifier . . . who does not meet the requirements for a qualifier but who, at the time of graduation from high school, has completed at least one of the . . . requirements” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2009, p. 97). Students have either successfully completed the required core curriculum with a specified minimum grade-point average, or he has the specified minimum SAT or ACT score (NCAA Division II Manual 2009-2010, 2009).

Many partial qualifiers are from economically disadvantaged areas. Most states in our country provide less funding for schools in impoverished areas and more funding
for schools in affluent areas (Lipton & Oakes, 2007, p. 16). Because the high schools that most partial qualifiers come from are under funded, the schools have many problems, which make teaching conditions extremely difficult. For example, Steven Branch, a teacher at an economically disadvantaged school describes his classroom as having hardly any room to walk around. He also notes that there are no windows or cabinets in his classroom. He concludes “the district is in such dire financial straits that the teachers can’t make photocopies; we don’t have overhead projectors, nor do we have enough space for the children” (Lipton & Oakes, 2007, p. 17).

Often at schools such as these, athletes are given higher grades not for their academic achievement, but rather for their positive attitudes and cooperative behavior. In the past, I have personally coached players from high poverty low-achieving high schools located in the bay area of California. They were specially admitted into school as partial qualifiers. Both players are very talented athletically; however both were also extremely unprepared academically for college. They both went to economically disadvantaged, Title I, high schools and have low total Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores of 940 and 980. By comparison, the average college bound senior in 2008 had an average SAT score of 1,511. I had them targeted as academically at-risk students before they even stepped on campus.

Before 1986, the academic requirements set by the NCAA for college student-athletes were minimal and fairly lax. Student-athletes could be making little to no progress towards graduation, be enrolled in “joke curricula” classes, and still be eligible to play. In response to low, and disgraceful, graduation rates of student-athletes, the NCAA set out to reform the academic requirements (Gabriel, 2005). In 1986, Proposition
48 was introduced to all NCAA Division I schools. This was the first of many new requirements to come over the next 23 years.

Put most simply, rule [proposition] 48 stipulates that beginning in 1986, freshmen athletes who want to participate in sports in any of the nation’s 277 Division I colleges and universities must have (1) attained a minimum score of 700 (out of 1600 possible) on the SAT or a score of 15 (out of a possible 36) on the American College Test (ACT) as well as have achieved a C average in 11 designated high school courses, that include English, mathematics, social sciences, and physical sciences. . . . Further, . . . any student who achieves at least 2.0 in all high school courses but does not meet the new terms of no. 48 can receive athletically related financial aid in his or her first year, but cannot practice or compete in intercollegiate athletics. This student would have three varsity years of participation remaining. (Edwards, 1984, p. 10)

After changing the high school preparation requirements, the NCAA also made changes in the way student-athletes could remain eligible throughout their college career. The reform movement continued throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s. Today student-athletes have requirements that cover number of hours that must be completed every semester and school year, minimum cumulative grade point averages, deadlines for a declaration of a major, and progress towards degree requirements, to name a few.

Monitoring the student-athletes academic progress and eligibility requirements as well as providing appropriate support is an important part of all successful athletic programs. For most Division I and II programs this responsibility falls within the athletic department and for Division II schools, it falls specifically with the head coach.

College coaches recognize that for most high school student-athletes, being able to participate in a college athletic program is a dream come true. Whether coaching student-athletes for a big time Division I program, such as University of Kansas, or a smaller Division II program, such as Chico State, coaches and players alike know that the experience is an honor and privilege. At the same time, there are duties and
responsibilities that must be met as both an athlete and as a college student. Thus, college coaches have to guide and support their student-athletes in both athletic and academic areas. Both of these realms are important because student-athletes must be able to succeed as college students so they will be eligible to be on the team and graduate with professional skills. Furthermore, if the student-athletes cannot play, then the coach can never be truly successful. Therefore, neither area can be ignored.

Academic Requirements for Student-Athletes

In order to be eligible as a college freshman, students must first complete a minimum of 16 (for Division I) or 14 (for Division II) core courses in high school (NCAA, 2008). Next, student-athletes must earn a required grade-point average (GPA) in the core courses. For Division I programs the GPA depends on the university, while it is a minimum of 2.0 GPA or higher for Division II programs. In addition, student-athletes must “present a qualifying test score on either the ACT or SAT and complete the amateurism questionnaire and request final amateurism certification” (NCAA, 2008).

The qualifying SAT or ACT score is on a sliding scale, which means that the higher one’s high school GPA is the lower score the student can get on the SAT or ACT and still be accepted into different universities or colleges. Institutions may have a higher standard than what the NCAA requires for eligibility, which may prevent a student-athlete from being accepted and admitted to a particular college or university. However, for eligibility, the minimum GPA requirement that a student has to have based on his or her SAT or ACT score is shown in Table 1 (NCAA, 2008).
Once the student is enrolled in college and is eligible for his freshman season of play, he must continue to meet benchmarks every semester and again at the end of each academic school year in order to remain eligible. According to Lauren Wilson, the Athletic Compliance Coordinator at California State University, Chico, the rules to stay eligible at a NCAA Division II institution are as follows: (1) a student-athlete must meet satisfactory progress which is completion of 24 units per year, (2) by the fifth semester, the student-athlete must declared a major, (3) a student-athlete must pass six units or more every semester while maintaining a cumulative GPA of a 2.0 or higher. If a student is completing his or her first 24 units during his or her freshman year, then s/he will remain eligible with a cumulative GPA of 1.8 or higher. If a student is completing units 25-48 (the sophomore year), then s/he will remain eligible with a cumulative GPA of 1.9 or higher. At the Division II level, after a student has completed 48 units, the student-athlete must maintain a cumulative GPA of a 2.0 or higher at the end of every semester in order to be eligible.

At the Division I level the academic standards are higher. For example, student-athletes must complete certain percentages of a degree program at the end of the second, third and fourth year of competition. In addition, at least 18 of the 24 units must be completed during the regular school year and not during summer school sessions. Of course, at both Division I and Division II colleges and universities, the academic GPA requirements may be higher, so student-athletes may have to maintain higher GPAs in order to remain enrolled at their particular institution.
Table 1

**Core GPA and Test Score Sliding Scale for Division I Eligibility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cumulative GPA In Core Classes</th>
<th>Minimum SAT Score</th>
<th>Minimum ACT Score</th>
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<tr>
<td>3.50 &amp; Above</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.400</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.300</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.200</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.100</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.900</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.800</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.700</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.600</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.500</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.400</td>
<td>860</td>
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<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.100</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.000</td>
<td>1010</td>
<td>86</td>
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Given the complexity of today’s increasingly, and more rigorous academic requirements, there is a constant need of checking, assisting, and monitoring student-athletes’ academic performance. In order to accomplish this task, academic support programs are needed. Student-athletes have to perform on and off the court in order to maintain the academic eligibility so that they can participate on a collegiate team. However, if eligibility is the only thing that coaches, athletic directors, faculty, administrators (including college deans and presidents), and the student-athletes themselves, care about, then college sports would be one of the most hypocritical aspects of today’s institutions of higher education.

In our society, obtaining a college education, which includes earning a bachelor’s degree, is a critical goal of our college students, and it gives them access to better opportunities for employment. Extracurricular activities should add to one’s college experience, not deter a student from his or her education. One might assume that when a student-athlete competes on a college sports team, s/he is also obtaining a college education and working towards a college degree. Yet, for many years, student-athletes could participate on intercollegiate teams for four or five years, and still not earn a degree. For example, from 1970-1980, Purdy, Eitzen, Stanley, & Hufnagel (1982) reported that at Colorado State the graduation rate for men’s basketball players was a low 39.4%. When situations such as these came to light, (along with public outrage), the NCAA responded with academic reforms. The goal of these reforms are to ensure that student-athletes were making appropriate progress towards a college degree while competing and participating on their school’s athletic team for four or five years.
The reforms include many benchmark requirements that must be monitored and checked each semester for student-athletes to continue with their eligibility. In addition, student-athletes who come to college academically under prepared do not have any extra time to take remedial courses that do not count for graduation. They also cannot take lighter academic loads, so they can have more time “catch-up” to fellow students who have stronger academic backgrounds. The unprepared or at-risk student-athletes must make quick gains on their academic skills and at the same time complete academic courses. Thus, academic support programs are especially needed for the at-risk students.

Introduction of the Project

My project is to design, implement, and examine the results of an academic support program for men’s college basketball players at Chico State.

The duties of a coaching staff are comprehensive and include more than “on-the-floor” coaching and recruiting. For example, as the assistant coach of the men’s basketball team at Chico State, I am also in charge of the academic support program. Since a support program is essential to the success of our program and for the success of our student-athletes, it often takes valuable time away from actual on the floor coaching and recruiting duties. The responsibility of running the academic support program is very time consuming and requires daily attention. Monitoring and tutoring is important for many student-athletes, but it is especially important for unprepared partial qualifiers.

To begin, at-risk and or unprepared students are identified. Student-athletes’ high school GPA and SAT scores are examined as well as their note taking skills, vocabulary, and writing skills. The goal of our academic support program is twofold: to
have student-athletes remain eligible to play, and to help the young men be successful in
college so that they can graduate. The ultimate goal of a college education is to prepare
students in “acquiring the desired knowledge, skills, and competencies needed for the
21st century” (Kuh, Kinzie, Cruce, Shoup, & Gonyea, 2007, p. 5). Kuh et al. (2007)
elaborates on the importance of earning a bachelors degree, noting,

... degree is linked to long-term cognitive, social, and economic benefits to
individuals, benefits that are passed onto future generations, enhancing the quality
of life of the families of college-educated persons, the communities in which they
live, and the larger society. (p. 4)

In designing an Academic Support Program, several components are included.
The components consist of strategic instruction, tutoring and study hall sessions,
monitoring class engagement, communication with academic advisors, individual
progress meetings with coaches, comprehensive graduation plans, and an academic
accountability plan. The purpose of this thesis project is to: first, present a review of the
literature on academic support for student-athletes: second, to explain the components of
the academic support program I designed: third, to select key benchmarks for evaluating
the program: fourth, to report the results: and fifth to discuss the results.

Limitations of the Study

There are a few limitations of this project. While there are many similarities to
all intercollegiate basketball teams, there are also differences that would impact students
academic success at different institutions. The main differences are found between
Division I and Division II universities. My project is being conducted at a NCAA
Division II northern California university. Thus, this project cannot be broadly
generalized to other divisions. Three key areas of difference include:
1. The travel schedule of a Division II men’s basketball team is not as intense as a Division I team. For instance, a typical road trip for the NCAA Division II men’s basketball team generally starts on a Thursday afternoon after class and ends late on a Saturday night or very early on a Sunday morning around 2:00 in the morning (Argenal, personal communication, November, 2009). A typical Division I road trip leaves before class early on a Wednesday morning and does not end until Sunday afternoon. This means if a Division I team has a road trip two weeks in a row, the student-athletes will only be in class for four of ten school days. A Division II team, however, would be in class for eight of 10 school days (Argenal, personal communication, November, 2009).

2. Another limitation of this project is that Division II men’s basketball players rarely leave college early to become professionals. Although, some Division II players may go on to play professional basketball overseas after college, they are rarely, if ever offered contracts from professional teams before their senior year. On the hand, some Division I men’s basketball players are offered professional contracts before they graduate.

3. The final limitation is that not all Division II athletes are on a full scholarship. Many Division II basketball players have only partial scholarships, while all Division I university’s men’s basketball players receive full scholarships. A full scholarship covers tuition, books, and money for living expenses. Thus, Division II players do not have the same type of financial assistance as Division I men’s basketball players. Many Division II student-athletes have to work part time jobs during the school year and full time summer jobs just to afford school.
Questions to be Answered

Since college graduation takes four to five years, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to measure improvements of the graduation rates of the Chico State Men’s Basketball team. However, by examining benchmarks such as improving one’s GPA and completion of classes that are part of a degree program, student-athletes can show positive and significant progress toward earning a degree. It is my hope to show that, with a proper academic support program, such progress can be made.

Definition of Terms

- Student-athlete. An athlete that is given a scholarship to attend a particular college or university because of their talents in a particular sport.
- Scholarship. Financial aid that is given to a student-athlete that does not need to be paid back because of a student’s talent in a particular sport.
- Full Scholarship. A full scholarship pays for a student-athlete’s room and board, tuition, and books.
- Partial Scholarship. A partial scholarship covers one or more, but never all of these three things: room and board, tuition, and books.
- NCAA. The “National Collegiate Athletic Association” regulates every rule in place for any University that is apart of its association.
- March Madness. This refers to the NCAA National Basketball Tournament that last the entire month of March. There are Conference Tournaments in early March and the Winner of each of tournaments is granted an automatic bid into the National Tournament. March Madness is capped off with the Men’s Final Four and a National
Champion is crowned. The media attention that this event attracts is unparalleled by any other sport or event.

- Division I. This is the highest level that a University can be involved with when they are part of the NCAA. This division receives the most media attention and generally the highest level of student-athletes. Although, there are exceptions to this.

- Division II. This is the second highest level that a University can be involved with when they are part of the NCAA. This division also receives much media attention, but not with same amount of regularity or intensity of Division I.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Most people in America recognize the importance of going to college and graduating. According to the United States Census Bureau, a college diploma expands one’s opportunity to have career that pays well or at least better than for those who do not have a college diploma (EarnMyDegree.com). Unfortunately, not everyone can afford the high cost of tuition, books, and room and board for four or five years. Therefore, many students apply for student-loans or scholarships in order to make it possible for them to attend college.

One type of scholarship that can pay for part or all of the college expenses is an athletic scholarship. These types of scholarships are usually given out to students who are outstanding athletes in a given sport. The students who receive these athletic scholarships are known as student-athletes, and the conditions, and rules for receiving such a scholarships are govern by either the NCAA or the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA).

There are different levels of competition for student-athletes. For the NCAA, there are three divisions (I, II, and III) and for the NAIA, there are two divisions (I and II). NAIA, which has approximately 287 member college institutions, is smaller and totally separate and different from the NCAA, which has approximately 1,300 member institutions (NCAA, 2008). This literature review will focus only on
student-athletes playing at Division I and II NCAA schools. NCAA Division III student-athletes will not be examined because they do not receive scholarship money. According to the NCAA,

A student-athlete is a student whose enrollment was solicited by a member of athletics staff or other representative of athletics interests with a view toward the student’s ultimate participation in the intercollegiate athletics program. Any other student becomes a student-athlete only when the student reports for an intercollegiate squad that is under the jurisdiction of the athletics department, as specified in Constitution 3.2.4.4. A student is not deemed a student-athlete solely on the basis of prior high school athletics participation. (*NCAA Division II Manual 2009-2010*, 2009, p. 52)

Getting an athletic scholarship is tied to a person playing a particular sport for a particular college. In the 1980’s, the NCAA came under national scrutiny when the low graduation rates for student-athletes became highly publicized. For example, one NCAA report that received much attention stated that “. . . only 27% of white and 14% of minority male student-athletes receiving scholarship assistance graduate after 4 years” (Weber, Sherman, & Tegano, 1987, p. 78). What people thought was a seemingly great opportunity for student-athletes to gain a college diploma was the realization that many student-athletes were being exploited for their athletic talent and enrolled in courses that were not progressing them towards a degree.

In response to growing criticism, the NCAA governing board changed eligibility requirements for the 1986 incoming freshmen and followed with changes for continuing eligibility as the student-athletes progressed through college (Gabriel, 2005). The main purpose for the changes (or reforms) was to increase the graduation rates of all student-athletes, especially for those who participated in the revenue sports of football and men’s basketball.
Twenty-three years later, graduation rates of student-athletes are still constantly watched and monitored in the literature and media (Gaston-Gayles, 2004). In addition to stricter academic requirements for initial on-going eligibility, each college and/or university that is a member of the NCAA is required by the federal government to report on the graduation rate of all scholarship student-athletes, and these rates are compared to the graduation rates of all the students in each college (NCAA, 2008). In response to the strict academic requirements, academic support programs have grown and expanded over the years in order to assist student-athletes in all their academic endeavors (Gaston-Gayles, 2004). In the literature review, not only will the current graduation rates of students-athletes be discussed, but the various types of academic support programs for student-athletes will also be explored.

Current Graduation Rates

Federal legislation dictates the guidelines for reporting graduation rates, but the NCAA is responsible for preparing the final report.¹ Even though the NCAA is responsible for preparing the final report, all the data included in the yearly report is “…provided by the [member] institution with NCAA Bylaw 30.1 and the Federal Student Right-to Know and Campus Security Act” (NCAA, 2008). For Division I, the only student-athletes who are included in federal graduation report are those who received some form of athletics aid (athletic scholarship money) for any period of time during their entering year at their school and are full time students. Students who are on the team

¹ The NCAA has recently (2005) crafted another form for reporting graduation rates called the Graduation Success Rate (GSR). However, this report cannot be compared to the general student body and has several “exceptions” for including or excluding certain student-athletes. Therefore, it will not be used or discussed in this thesis project.
roster, but do not receive any money from the athletic department or who join the team anytime after their freshmen year of college are not included in the federal report.

Overall Rates for Division I

In 2008, the NCAA reported that the graduation rate for 18,723 scholarship freshmen student-athletes who started college in 2001-02 school year was 64%, which was an all-time high and even higher that the overall graduation rate for all students during this time period which was 62% (NCAA, 2008). The student-athletes graduation rate appears to be a tremendous improvement from the 1980 percentages. However, there are several factors that contribute to the difference.

First, students are given six years to graduate (not four), and second, the overall rate includes all student-athletes, both male and female, not just the males. Third, there were major changes in high school academic requirements for incoming freshmen in order for them to participate in college athletics. Student-athletes must take 15 core classes and have minimum Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or American College Testing (ACT) scores depending on their overall high school grade point averages in core subjects.

A fourth reason that is given for higher graduation rates is that the NCAA changed many of the rules regarding practice time, restriction on campus-living conditions, and other limits on the hours student-athletes can spend on athletic activities (Gaston-Gayles, 2004). Finally, providing academic support services became required for Division I schools and many have expanded these support systems beyond the basic requirements. Thus, graduations rates were bound to improve. As Rishe (2003) notes,
many observers may be shocked to and that athletes have higher graduation rates than all other students, it is not very surprising. Student-athletes face institutional controls (e.g., minimum academic standards to maintain athletic eligibility, mandatory study halls, and specialized academic advising) that other students do not. These controls produce the general result that student-athletes have higher graduation rates than all other undergraduates. (Rishe, 2003, p. 425)

Even with all of the changes and reforms for institutional control for athletic participation and “despite the academic support services that are strongly encouraged and available for student-athletes, not all groups of athletes are graduating at the national rate” (Gaston-Gayles, 2004, p. 75). Therefore, a closer examination of different sub-groups is important in order to understand exactly how student-athletes have improved in their academic performance and where there are still discrepancies. If college institutions are to find “… the proper balance between intercollegiate athletics and the goals of higher education so that student-athletes experience positive gains in student learning and personal development …,” then is vital that various sub-groups be investigated (Gaston-Gayles & Hu, 2009, p. 315).

Division I Males and Females

In 2008, NCAA reported that for the 2001-02 Division I freshmen cohort, 56% of the male student-athletes graduated while 59% of the males for the general student graduated (NCAA, 2008). During the same time period, the female student-athletes had a 72% graduation rate, while the overall female graduation rates were 64% (NCAA, 2008). Overall, all females graduate at a higher rate than males, but the difference between male and females in the general student body was five percentage points while the difference between male and female student-athletes is 16 percentage points. “Women have higher graduation rates than men in general, and this gender graduation gap is exacerbated when
focusing on student-athletes at schools with the most prominent athletic programs” (Rishe, 2003, p. 407).

Since male and female student-athletes have the same eligibility rules and requirements, and the same type of academic support, many have sought to understand the student-athlete gender gap. Some attention has been given to the high school preparation differences of male and female student-athletes. Most of the female student-athletes have superior high school preparation to the male student-athletes (Rishe, 2003). While this may be a factor, there are two other factors that should also be considered.

One of the major reasons for the gap between male and female student-athletes is the opportunity for having a professional career in sports once they leave college. Most women do not have an opportunity to have a professional career in sports; the only professional team sport for women is the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA). Also, besides the few slots for tennis and golf for individual sports, the majority of college women student-athletes will not go on to be professional athletes. Thus, women focus more on academics because “they [women] do not have the same opportunities to sign a lucrative professional athletic contracts” (Rishe, 2003, p. 415) as men.

Another reason that has been presented for the difference in graduation rates between male and female student-athletes is in the difference between revenue and non-revenue sports. In particular, two of the men’s sports, football and men’s basketball, not only make most if not all of the money for athletic programs, but they receive a lot of attention from loyal fans and the media. As Rishe (2003) explains, “Male athletes (especially in football and basketball) generally face greater pressures to succeed because
they face more media exposure and because their performance can have major financial implications for their athletic departments” (p. 417). This greatly impacts the male student-athletes who

. . . in general face greater present and long-term pressures to succeed athletically than do female athletes. This burden to succeed most likely impacts the intensity and time dedicated to athletic training and preparation, leaving much less time to focus on academics. (Rishe, 2003, p. 414)

Among the male student-athletes, men basketball players tend to have the lowest graduation rates. The NCAA federal report found that for the students who entered college from 1998 to 2001, only 46% of the Division I men basketball players graduated (NCAA, 2008), which was the lowest graduation rates of all male teams. The media attention men’s basketball teams make the male student-athletes especially vulnerable. “Each spring, the national frenzy of March Madness builds to a celebration of basketball at the Men’s Final Four. The Division I Men’s Basketball Championship is the Association’s most-attended event-and the most watched on television” (Crowley, 2006, p. 72). Even if male basketball player and his teammates are not in the March Madness, they are caught up in a role conflict between the being a student and a “big man” on campus. When researching men basketball players, Adler and Adler (1991) found that “Most athletes entered college holding their athletic role as primary, their social role secondary, and their academic role tertiary” (p. 191).

Thus, high school preparation, professional sport opportunities, media and fan attention, and pressures to succeed from the college have been given as possible reasons for impacting the overall graduation rate differences between the male and female student-athletes.
Division I White and Minority Male Student-Athletes

The NCAA also reports on the specific graduation rates for various ethnic groups for males. In 2008, the graduation rates for the male student-athletes showed that white males had the highest rate (61%) while black and American Indian males had the lowest (48% and 32%, respective) (NCAA, 2008). When comparing the individual ethnic groups of student-athletes to the individual ethnic groups of the general student body, only the male black student-athletes are graduating at a higher rate than their general student counterparts. (See Table 2 for the 2008 graduation rates by ethnic groups for NCAA Division I: Males.)

Table 2

2008 Graduation Rates by Ethnic Groups for NCAA Division I: Males

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student-Athletes</th>
<th>All Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N-R Alien</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though the male black student-athletes are graduating at a higher rate than all male black students, they are graduating at a rate of 13 percentage points below white male student-athletes and 14 points below white male students in the general student body.

In the revenue sports, of basketball and football, the gap between white and black student-athletes widens. “For example, white basketball players graduated at a rate of 53%, but Black basketball players graduated at a rate of 35%. White football players graduated at a rate of 62% and Black football players experienced a 45% graduation rate” (Gaston-Gayles, 2004, p. 22). Dr. Richard Lapchick, founder of The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES) at the University of South Florida, conducts a yearly comprehensive analysis of graduation rates for Division I men’s basketball and football teams. Lapchick (2009) acknowledges the positive academic improvements, but also notes that the continued “. . . significant disparity between the academic success between African-American and white men’s basketball student-athletes is deeply troubling” (p. 1). He believes that “…one of higher education’s greatest failures is the persistent gap between African-American and white basketball student-athletes in particular and students in general” (p. 1).

Division I White and Minority Female Student-Athletes

The NCAA also reports on the specific graduation rates for various ethnic groups for females. In 2008, NCAA reported the graduation rates for the female student-athletes showed that white females had the highest rate (74%) while black and American
Indian females had almost the lowest rates (66% and 65% respective) (NCAA, 2008) (See Table 3).

Table 3

2008 Graduation Rates by Ethnic Groups for NCAA Division I Females

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student-Athletes</th>
<th>All Athletes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnict Group</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N-R Alien</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


When comparing the individual ethnic groups of female student-athletes to the individual ethnic groups of the females in the general student body, only the Asian, other,and Non-Residents (NR) Aliens female student-athletes are graduating at a lower rate than their general student body counterparts. See Table 3 for 2008 graduation rates by ethnic groups for NCAA Division I females. Furthermore, white females student-athletes have the highest graduation rates for all the females and males, athletes and non-
athletes. Gaston-Gayles (2004) notes that most minority student-athletes come to college less academically prepared than their peers, and that “this finding is compounded by the fact that minority students continue to experience problems in the academic domain, more so than do non-minority students” (p. 81). However, for female student-athletes, most minority students have higher graduation rates than their general student body counterparts.

Overall Rates for Division II

A major difference between Division I and Division II sports is in the minimum and maximum financial aid awards for student-athletes. For example, Division I football and basketball players receive full scholarships, which include tuition, books, room and board.

Many Division II student-athletes pay for school through a combination of scholarship money, grants, student loans and employment earnings. Division II athletics programs are financed in the institution's budget like other academic departments on campus. (NCAA, 2008)

In 2008, NCAA reported that for the 6,016 Division II student-athletes entering college in 2001-02, 55% graduated (NCAA, 2008). During the same time period, the graduation rate for all students at NCAA Division II schools was 46% (NCAA, 2008). Even though many Division II schools do not have the same levels of academic support at Division I schools, student-athletes are still graduating a higher percentage than the general student body. Similar to Division I, a closer examination of different sub-groups is also important for Division II athletic programs. The student-athletes in Division II have similar discrepancies to the student-athletes in Division I.
Division II Males and Females

In 2008, Division II male student-athletes had a 49% graduation rate, compared to 42% of the males in the general student body. Female student-athletes had a 64% graduation rate while females in the general student body had a 50% graduation rate. (NCAA, 2008). For Division II, overall, all females graduate at a higher rate than males, but the difference between male and females in the general student body is only eight percentage points while the difference between male and female student-athletes is 15 percentage points. Thus, even in Division II, the female student-athletes have the highest graduation rate.

Division II White and Minority Male Student-Athletes

Specific graduation rates for various ethnic groups for males and for females are also reported for Division II schools. In 2008, the NCAA reported the graduation rates for the male student-athletes showed that Non-Resident Alien males had the highest rate (57%) while black and American Indian males had the lowest (39% and 37%, respective) (NCAA, 2008). See Table 4 for 2008 graduation rates by ethnic groups for NCAA Division II males.

Similar to Division I, there is a gap of 13 percentage points between white and black student-athletes. When comparing the individual ethnic groups of student-athletes to the individual ethnic groups of the general student body, only those males who self-identified as Asian and Other are not graduating at a higher rate than their general student counterparts. Thus, most male minority student-athletes are graduating at a lower rate than the male white student-athletes.
### Table 4

**2008 Graduation Rates by Ethnic Groups for NCAA Division II Males**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N-R Alien</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>N-R Alien</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Division II White and Minority Female Student-Athletes**

The NCAA also reports on the specific graduation rates for various ethnic groups for females in Division II. In 2008, the NCAA reported the graduation rates for the female student-athletes showed that white females had the highest rate (66%) while black and American Indian females had almost the lowest rates (51% and 50% respective) (NCAA, 2008). See Table 5 for 2008 graduation rates by ethnic groups for NCAA Division II females.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N-R Alien</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>N-R Alien</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


When comparing the individual ethnic groups of female student-athletes to the individual ethnic groups of the females in the general student body, only the Asian female student-athletes are not graduating at higher rate than their general student body counterparts. Furthermore, white females student-athletes have the highest graduation rate of 66%. This is 16 percentage points higher than African American female student-athletes.
Division I and II Graduation Rates for Men’s Basketball Student-Athletes

The NCAA also reports on the specific graduation rates for various team sports. Of all the sports, the men’s basketball team consistently has the lowest graduation rate. In 2008, the overall graduation rate was 46%, which is lower than any other men or women’s sport in NCAA Division I (NCAA, 2008). For Division II, men’s basketball players graduation rate is 45% (NCAA, 2008). Gaston-Gayles and Hu (2009) believe that high profile sports, such as men’s basketball, should be examine in order to determine their participation in their sport effect their participation in “educationally purposeful activities” (p. 316). By the graduation rate alone, it suggests that men basketball players are struggling in the classroom.

Adler and Adler (1991) conducted a sociological study of men’s basketball programs at the NCAA Division I. This study offers a significant insight to men’s basketball program because in addition to their research, Adler and Adler spent three years participating with a Division I team. One of their major findings was the pressure to win that all men basketball teams face. This pressure is passed on to the student-athlete and in turn impacts their academic performance. As one player said,

In college, the coaches be a lot more concerned on winning and the money comin’ in. If they don’t win, they may get the boot, and so they pass that pressure onto us athletes [sic] . . . . I go to bed every night and I be thinkin’ ‘bout basketball. That’s what college athletetics [sic] do to you. It take over your mind. (Adler & Adler, 1991, p. 85)

Having a winning program is of up most importance, and it is more important than graduation rates when it comes to a head coach keeping his job. Adler and Adler (1991) found that because of the pressure to win, many basketball coaches focus all their
efforts on “basketball” and emphasis basketball responsibilities to their student-athlete as being much more important than academic responsibilities. “Universities’ attachment to attaining and holding the commercial benefits associated with big-time athletics caused other facets of athletes’ experiences to pale in comparison to their athletic requirements” (Adler & Adler, 1991, p. 84).

In many cases, the concern for academic responsibility is ignored. Many student-athletes found that what the coaches had told them about the importance of academics was not what the coaches really cared about once the students arrived on campus. As one player said,

When I first came in, from what they were saying, I thought they’d keep on my ass. Like if I wasn’t going to class I’d have to go out and run bleachers or something . . . I’ve finally realized that … Nobody’s gonna send you runnin’ if you don’t do all of these things. (Adler & Adler, 1991, p. 142)

Throughout their study, Adler and Adler found that many basketball coaches would public stated the importance of academic, but in reality, did not check on their players academic progress except to show interest in having their players’ eligible.

Wolverton (2007) notes that even with the new academic requirement, there is still more concern with eligibility that about that actual education that student-athletes are receiving. For example, Wolverton found that NCAA’s requirements make it almost impossible for student-athletes to change their majors when most students change their major three or four times. “We’re forcing young students to really make uninformed decisions just to stay eligible . . . We see a lot of folks getting into majors that perhaps don’t match their interest and abilities, and that may be problematic” (Wolverton, 2007, p. 1).
Adler and Adler (1991) also point out that coaches were advising student-athletes and picking out their classes for them rather than the student-athletes seeing a campus advisor. Coaches were placing student-athletes in classes that they knew their players would pass, but not in classes that help them graduate in five or six years. In some cases, student-athlete are ensured to be eligible for only one or two years, only to be ineligible for their junior or senior year. One player described his frustration of not being able to pick his own classes by saying, “How could I get into this shit? They got me takin’ nutrition, mental retardation, square dancing, and camp counseling. I thought I was goin’ learn something here. It’s a bunch o’ bullshit” (Adler & Adler 1991, p. 134). At the same time, most student-athletes feel they cannot go against their coaches. Thus, they stay in the classes that they do not want to be in.

The amount of time that basketball player spend in practice is only part of the picture. The road trips that the teams have during the school year make it even harder for student-athletes to keep up with their schoolwork. A typical college basketball road trip starts on Wednesday morning and ends on Sunday night with games on Thursday and Saturday. Student-athletes are expected to study and complete homework while they are traveling, but the reality of the road trip schedules makes any amount of studying almost impossible. Adler & Adler (1991) select one player’s quote to illustrate what they found to be typical among many basketball players:

. . . I wouldn’t take a book ‘cause I knew I wouldn’t study…Because when you travel, you would travel a day before the game... like all day, and airports take a lot out of you…Then you go to practice. And then Coach would tell you, “get a good night’s sleep; get somethin’ to eat.” So you go to sleep and you think you’ll study then. No, you’re thinkin’ about the game tomorrow. Then you get up in the morning. Eat breakfast… And then you gotta go to shootin’ practice at 12. And that’s 12 to 1, maybe 1:30. An’ you come back over, you eat a pre-game meal… get
ready for the game. An’ then it’s time to play the game. You’re tired after the game. You can’t study then. And then it’s time to go another city to play another one. An’ then you gotta go practice again. So I had to stop takin’ the books because there’s no way you can study on the road. . . (Adler & Adler, 1991, p. 139)

The length of the basketball season begins in the fall semester and does not end until the middle of the spring semester. It begins on October 15th and goes until March. Basketball is the only sport where student-athletes are in season during both the fall and spring semesters. For other sports, student-athletes have an easier school work load during their season and a tougher school work load during their off season. Unfortunately, basketball student-athletes cannot do this. In addition, during the basketball season, student-athletes spend over 40 hours a week on athletic related activities (games, practices, weight lifting, traveling, etc.). Thus,

That much time spent on athletics is alarming because it leaves very little time during the week to devote to other activities, such as academics and other educationally purposeful activities. Moreover, student-athletes could potentially miss out on the learning that takes place from interacting with peers and engaging in other educational activities outside of the classroom and off the field. (Gaston-Gayles & Hu, 2009, p. 316)

There are many difficulties for the college basketball players when trying to keep up with schoolwork during the basketball season. When there is a lack of academic concern from the coaches and athletic directors, these players may give up on their academic work. Many college basketball players realize this inevitable fact by the end of their first year. “They recognized, then, with varying degrees of sadness, that their college careers could have no more than limited academic potential” (Adler & Adler, 1991, p. 141).
Academic Support for Student-Athletes

In responding to the academic support needs of all student-athletes, there are several areas that need to be addressed in order to help them overcome the challenges of balancing both academic and athletic demands. In particular, two specific areas that must be addressed are time management and class attendance. For many student-athletes who come to college unprepared for the academic demands, a more complete academic support program will be needed.

Time Management

Figler and Figler (1991) note that managing their time effectively is the greatest challenge for student-athletes especially since the amount of time that they have to dedicate to their sport makes them unique from other students.

While it’s true that student government leaders, those who work on school publications, and those in drama or band also spend considerable time on activities, they seldom give the large number of hours for as many months as athletes do. Besides, they often can determine for themselves how much or how little time to devote to their activity while athletes have no choice beyond the decision of whether or not to compete at all. (Figler & Figler, 1991, p. 1)

During their first year of college, many student-athletes find themselves in situations where are expected to spend twice the amount of time competing and training for their sport that they did in high school. VanderStoep and Pintrich (2003) advise college students that the most important resource that they have is themselves—their time, their effort, and their persistence at tasks (p. 80). Thus, it is not just about time-management, but about self-management! “The ability to self-regulate is a key predictor of academic success, . . . [and] ultimately self-managed students accept more responsibility for their learning” (Peter, 2005, p.161).
Since student-athletes are literally asked to balance and give equal attention to both academics and their sport without doing a disservice to either, the need for instruction in time and self-management skills are essential. If student-athletes are not taught to properly manage their time, they are doomed in the classroom (Figler & Figler, 1991).

Isenberg and Rhoads (2001) also note the importance of learning how to develop time management skills. If student-athletes are to be successful in both academics and athletes, they must be able to manage their time effectively. However, Isenberg and Rhoads (2001) also stress that this is a skill that must be taught because most student-athletes are not natural at managing their time. Furthermore, time management also involves organization, “which involves keeping your goals in mind, staying on top of things, anticipating demands on your time, and planning accordingly” (Isenberg & Rhoads, 2001, p. 42).

Class Attendance with Participation

A second area that should be addressed when setting up academic support for all student-athletes is class attendance with participation. Because of college teams travel for sports competition throughout the week, student-athletes may miss classes. Thus, when they are not traveling, the importance of being in class is heightened (Walter & Siebert, 1987). The relationship is between student grades and student attendance can be dramatic. Survey results show that faculty and students both agree that the final grade is highly affected by class attendance (Sleigh, Ritzer, & Casey, 2002). For example, in one study, 85% of students who received at grade of a B or better were always or almost always present in class, but the percentage of students who received a C- or lower were
often absent 45% of the time (Walter & Siebert, 1987). Thus, coaches, professors, advisors, and administrators often communicate to students the importance of being in class.

Attending class is the first step, but once they are there, students must pay attention, participate, and take notes. Gardner & Jewler (2003) note that “learning is not a spectator sport... participation is the heart of active learning” (p. 96). When examining books on how to succeed in college, most will include advice on how to pay attention in class, how to participate, and how to take class notes e.g., (Gardner & Jewler, 2003), *Your College Experience: Strategies for Success*, VanderStoep & Pintrich, 2003, *Learning to Learn: The Skill and Will of College Success*, and Ellis, 2003, *Becoming a Master Student*.

Walter and Siebert (1987) also believe that having notes on what is happening in class is very important since “...several days after hearing a lecture, most students can at best recall only about 10% of what was said” (p. 86). Taking good notes is important if students expect to do well in their courses. Wiemer (2002), recognizing the importance of class notes, suggest that professors as well as academic support centers should help students learn how to take better notes and use such notes to enhance their studying (p. 59-61). Finally, student-athletes have to miss class when they are on road trips, so it is important that they have a system for getting the class notes, or the class information, they missed when traveling.

**Academic Support for At-Risk Student-Athletes**

For unprepared student-athletes, a more complete academic support program is needed such as the one’s described by Gabriel (2005) and Peter (2005). Both programs
involved a comprehensive range of strategies for improving retention and academic success. Gabriel’s program, called the Strategic Study Program (SSP), was designed specifically for at-risk student-athletes. It includes seven main components: 1) instruction on learning strategies, 2) strategic tutoring for current courses, 3) monitoring class engagement, 4) communication with academic advisors, 5) contact with the student-athletes coach’s, 6) use of motivational strategies, and 7) implementing an accountability plan.

Peter (2005) developed a similar program, Learn for Success (LFS), for at-risk nursing students. The LFS program includes four main components: 1) study skill workshops, 2) study groups, 3) peer tutors, and 4) core faculty coaching. For both programs, the intent is to teach the students learning strategies, self-management strategies, and to use motivational strategies in order to help the at-risk students become academically successful.

For the SSP, learning strategies and strategic tutoring took place in a two-hour time period four days a week with half the time devoted to learning strategies instruction and half the time to strategic tutoring. Tutors were hired and trained so that they could help the student-athletes apply the strategies to their current academic tasks and assignments. The time was structured and ensured that at-risk student-athletes would not only have a daily scheduled time for academics, but also that the intensity of their time for academics would be increased. Since most of the at-risk students have a lack of basic skills, this kind of immersion and intensity is needed (Gabriel, 2010, personal interview).

For the LFS program, Peter (2005) uses peer tutoring, and the students learned learning strategies at workshops. The students met with faculty coaches (at least once a
week) to help them connect the two and to also set goals and utilize other self-management skills (p. 161). The goal of the meetings with the faculty coaches was to help the at-risk students learn how to “. . . manage their own efforts to acquire knowledge and skill, rather than rely on others” (Peter, 2005, p. 160). Peter notes that the main goal throughout the first semester was to help students learn how to self-manage. “Self-managed students set learning goals, selects an implement goal strategies, sustain self-motivation, monitor performance and correct ineffective strategies for goal attainment. They take control of their learning and behavior” (Peter, 2005, p. 160).

For the SSP program, Gabriel (2005) also notes that at-risk (or unprepared) student-athletes must not only attend the SSP sessions, but they must also meet with their professors. Meeting with professors can make a difference for the students learning how to master their academic tasks. Gabriel (2005) also states that another goal of the SSP is to teach the students how to work on their studies outside of the SSP sessions. Thus, time-management and/or self-management are important parts of both programs.

Monitoring Class Engagement is extremely important because it is more than just stressing class attendance. Having students discuss their class notes and describe what “going on” in class helps the students stay engaged in the course material (Gabriel, 2005). Many student-athletes may have to be taught how to take good class notes. There are several ways to do this. One way to do this is to have at-risk students compare their notes with class notes from someone who has excellent notes and have the at-risk student fill in the missing parts (Gabriel, 2005). By working together, the at-risk student-athletes can not only see what good notes look like, but they will also learn how to pick out what information is important.
For the SSP program, contact with student-athletes coaches is also listed as an important component. Gabriel (2005) notes that the coaches need to know the academic progress of the student-athletes because their performance in the classroom directly affects the team. Furthermore, coaches can be additional motivators. Most of the student-athletes choose the college that they attend based on the coach, so coaches can help student-athletes keep their efforts balances to both their academics and their athletics. Gabriel (2005) notes coach’s involvement was essential for the success of the academic support programs that she directed at both the University of Kansas and the University of Arizona. She notes,

For any student-athletes who joined the program, the attitude of their head coach was very influential on the student’s participation and longevity in the program. I believe that without the head coach’s support and weekly interactive communication between us, the program would not have obtained the high successes rate that it did. (Gabriel, 2005, p. 210)

Student-athletes must know that academics are important to their coaches, and they must know that their coaches feel that they are capable of graduating.

Similarly, Peter (2005) used nursing faculty to connect with the at-risk nursing students. In the nursing program, the nursing students were admitted to the program as a cohort, and most of their classes are taught by a small group of nursing faculty. She recruited and trained the faculty and each was assigned seven students. By meeting with their students every week, the consistent contact provided them with time to rapport with each of their at-risk students so that they could support them and teach them motivational and self-management strategies.

For the LFS program, the nursing students had a set graduation plan where all the classes that have to be taken for the nursing degree are already set up. For the student-
athletes, most had different majors in their university so the graduation requirements were different for each student (Peter, 2005). Thus, the SSP included a component of having the students write out graduation plan that would fit into their athletic scholarship time period. Student-athletes also met with campus academic advisors. Student-athletes must know that they are taking the correct classes in order to graduate and remain eligible for their sport (Gabriel, 2005). Knowing exactly how to graduate by knowing what classes have to be completed can be motivational as students keep track of their progress toward their ultimate goal of graduation.

In addition, both programs (the SSP and the LFS) used other motivational strategies. Gabriel (2005) and Peter (2005) note the importance of at-risk students to be motivated “. . . to try hard, persist in the [academic] task, [and] build self-confidence . . .” (Peter, p. 160). Motivational strategies can help students learn how to link “their goal accomplishment to their academic success. Goals motivate students toward effort and persistence” in their academics (Peter, p. 160).

Peter (2005) and Gabriel (2005) both include the accountability action plan. To be in the nursing program, the at-risk students were required to be in the LFS program. For the SSP, the at-risk student-athletes were not always required to participate in the SSP program so the accountability action plan became an important ingredient to hold students to the high standards of the program. Thus, the student-athletes were held accountable for any missed sessions or classes. Students had to attend “make-up” sessions, which were held on Sunday afternoons and Thursday evenings. Students who were assigned to a make-up session had to attend, or they were not allowed to stay in the program (Gabriel, 2005). The make-up sessions not only helps students with their time
management, it also gives the student a chance to show their commitment to their academic responsibilities. Finally, common themes for both programs described above were high levels of structure, intensity, and learning how to learn. In their study of improving college education program for at-risk students, researchers found that these principals are key ingredients for “underprepared students” but work for all others in education (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2008, p. 13).

During the first five years of the SSP at the University of Arizona, Gabriel (2005) reports that of the 46 participants (all participants from 1992 to 1995 including freshmen, transfer students, and older students) in the SSP program, 76% of them graduated (p. 12). The graduation rate for just the “football student-athletes” who started as freshmen, 58% graduated as compared to 61% of non-at-risk football student-athletes during the same time period (Gabriel, 2005, p. 15). At the time of Peter’s article, not enough time had past for her to track the students through their graduation since the program had just started. However, she does report that of the 40 at-risk identified students, 95% were retained . . . compared to 97% of the rest of the students in the class. Furthermore, “eighty-five percent of the original LFS students and 82% of the total number of at-risk students, achieved a GPA of 2.5 or above as compared with 96% of non-at-risk students. (Peter, 2005, p. 163)

Conclusion
Receiving an athletic scholarship can help students earn a college degree, and in many case these students would not have been able to afford college without the scholarship. Earning a college degree can help student-athletes expand their opportunities
to have a career that is satisfying and pays well once they leave college. However, receiving an athletic scholarship places many demands on the students and it does not guarantee graduation. Student-athletes need academic support to help them balance the demands of athletes and academics so they can be successful and earn their college degrees.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the academic support program that was created for the Chico State Men’s Basketball team will be described. The program consisted of eight components: 1) leadership from the top, 2) academic organization and time management, 3) weekly meetings, 4) progress reports and self evaluation, 5) contact with professors, advisors and/or counselors, 6) utilization of campus resources, 7) participation in study hall, and 8) accountability and follow through. For this chapter, I will only describe what each component consisted of. Further discussion of every component will be expanded upon in chapter four.

The components of the academic support program were derived from my research on academic support for student-athletes, which suggest that the most effective support programs are comprehensive with a high degree of structure and rigor. Across the country, most Division I and II teams have study hall, contact with professors and advisors, and the utilize campus resources (Argenal, personal communication, September, 2010). However, the additional components for my support program were adapted from two separate programs. The first program, called the Strategic Study Program (SSP), was specifically designed for at-risk student-athletes and implemented at two major universities by Gabriel (2005). “For the student-athletes who participated at least one year in SSP, 76% graduated within six years, which was a significant increase
from the projected graduation rate of most at-risk or unprepared students” (Gabriel, 2005, p. 12). Typically, unprepared and/or at-risk students have an overall graduation rate of 30% within eight years of enrollment (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 1). The second program I used as a resource for this project was designed for at-risk nursing students (Peters, 2005). Peters’ program also had success in both retention of at-risk student (95% were retained), and the students also showed significant improvement in their grades. Peters (2005) did not report graduation rate results since the program had not been implemented long enough to follow the students through graduation. However, retention and grade point averages were used as benchmarks to show that the students were making progress towards graduation at significantly higher rates than previous at-risk students (p. 163). Both specialized programs showed significant academic improvements for at-risk students and are thoroughly described in chapter two.

My Involvement

When I came to Chico State in August of 2008, the new Head Men’s Basketball Coach, Greg Clink, had already invited me to be one of the assistant coaches and charged me with the responsibility of the academic support program. When Coach Clink was hired, one of his main objectives was to improve the men’s basketball academic standing since the program he took over had the worst academic standing in the entire athletic department. Not only did men’s basketball have the lowest team GPA in the athletic department, but it also had the lowest graduation rate in the athletic department. Significantly improving the men’s basketball team’s academic standing was a high priority for Coach Clink.
As an assistant coach and master’s student, I was excited to have the opportunity to be in charge of creating a new academic support program for the team. This was an important project for me and for our team. First, as a student in the School of Education, I am interested in teaching different types of learning strategies and also learning new ways to run an effective academic support program; secondly, members of the basketball team were in academic trouble. By being in charge of the academic support program, and with the support of Coach Clink, I set out to create a program that would make a difference for our student-athletes. I was able to implement the program described in this chapter for the past two years.

Leadership from the Top

The first component of the academic support program is leadership from the top. In 2008 Greg Clink was hired as the Head Men’s Basketball Coach at Chico State. Not only was he trusted with the responsibility of turning the program around in the win/lose column, but it was also made clear to him by the athletic director, Anita Barker, that the academics of the men’s basketball team need to improve.

As the head coach, Greg Clink is the leader of the Chico State Men’s Basketball program. Coach Clink and I met to discuss the program that I designed and agreed on all components before it was introduced and implemented with the team. This program would not have been possible without his endorsement. Coach Clink sets the rules and the standards for the team, and at the very first team meeting of the year, he did not discuss basketball. The meeting was entirely about academics. In his speech, he laid out the vision and the structure of the academic program. He noted, the vision is for all of
the student-athletes on the men’s basketball team to graduate from Chico State and to stay eligible to play over the course of four to five years. He made it clear that no student-athlete would be a part of the program if he did not take his academics seriously.

The academic support program required a high standard for effort and a strict monitoring of the student-athletes progress by the coaching staff. Coach Clink made it clear that everyone should be giving his best effort in the classroom. Cheating or short cuts of any kind would not be tolerated. Every student-athlete would stay in close communication with the coaching staff by having weekly meetings with their assigned academic coach (see description below).

All student-athletes were provided with an academic binder. Since the binders included dividers for every class, student-athletes made a section for each class where class notes and handouts were to be kept in an orderly fashion. In addition, they completed a basic weekly schedule form (Gabriel, 2005). The student-athletes had to write in all their standing appointments. On the example shown (see Figure 1), this student-athlete’s basic schedule includes all his academic and athletic obligations. I also had the students plan for showers, eating, and walking to class time so they could improve their time-management skills. Thus, the comprehensive weekly schedule was a visual reminder of all that had to be accomplished during the week.

All of the student-athletes had a typical weekly schedule, which did not change much from week to week. Thus all weekly obligations were written down on one page, so that every student-athlete had a visual picture of their week’s schedule. (The weekly
Note. This fall semester weekly schedule form is an example of a form filled-out by a student-athlete on the Chico State Men’s Basketball team. All of the student’s classes are listed along with the study hall times and team obligations. Finally, lunches, showers, eating and even walking times, etc. are on the schedule. Note that on game weekends that are out of town, the team leaves on Thursday mornings.

Figure 1. The weekly schedule form.


calendar was to be filled out with all home games, road trips, assignments, and tests that would be due for the entire semester.)
In addition to the Weekly Schedule form, every student-athlete was also given a planner with a semester calendar. The calendar was to be filled out with all home games, road trips, assignments, and tests that would be due for the entire semester.

**Weekly Meetings**

Student-athletes in the program were assigned an assistant coach who would specifically monitor their academic progress. Thus, the title “academic coach” was designated for this task. All of the student-athletes that were the most at-risk were assigned to me.

In order to be consistent, I had a set time each week for each student-athlete. Since our meetings were one on one, I would always ask to see graded assignments so that I could be sure exactly how well each student-athlete was doing.

In addition each student-athlete showed me his class notes, which served as one indicator of class engagement. If there were little or no notes for a class, then I knew the student-athlete was either not attending or not engaged.

Encouragement was also given at every meeting by all academic coaches. We let the students know that we believed in their potential and ability. I often told my student-athletes, “I know you can make it in college.” This was important to help the student-athletes with their confidence and commitment to academics.

At the weekly meetings, I had the opportunity to evaluate the way the student-athletes were managing their time, which led to me helping student-athletes arrange for tutoring, especially if they were struggling with a class. When a student-athlete was not doing well in a class, I would immediately walk over to the student services building and
set him up with a weekly tutor for that class. At Chico State, the Student Services
provides free tutoring for almost any class offered at the university.

Progress Reports—Self-Evaluations

The student-athletes were required to get a progress report from their
professors (see Figure 2). The first progress report was provided just after the first third
of the semester had passed (about five weeks from the start of school), and the second
progress report was provided two weeks before finals begin. Progress reports were to be
filled out by the professors, recording the course title, student-athlete’s current grade, and
the professor’s signature. There was an additional space for comments if the professor
wished to add anything. In the sample progress report below (Figure 2), it shows how the
student-athlete is currently performing in his classes.

Contact with Advisors/Counselors and
Professors

Academic/Counselor

All of our student-athletes met with academic advisor/counselors at least once a
semester to discuss the requirements for general education, their major and minor. Every
student-athlete had a copy of his own plan to graduation. The counselors help the student-
athletes pick their classes and double-checked their progress toward earning a degree. We
called this activity making a “graduation plan.”

Professors

Many student-athletes were extremely intimidated and nervous to visit their
professors during their office hours. Before sending the student-athletes to visit their
Chico State Men's Basketball Official Grade Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Prof. Signature</th>
<th>Prof. Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Awesome Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B+ / A-</td>
<td></td>
<td>Excellent exam performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B- / C+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Great attend. Good written work. Needs better 2nd exam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A-</td>
<td></td>
<td>Doing fine job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Doing very well!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The progress report example displayed in Figure 2 shows all the courses (covered-up for student’s privacy) that this student-athlete was enrolled in, the student-athlete’ current grades, the professors’ signature (covered-up for student’s privacy), and comments made by the professors. Twice a semester, student-athletes met with all of their professors, who completed the progress report.

*Figure 2.* Sample progress report.
professors, I would role-play the meeting with them so that the student-athlete could
practice what types of questions to ask. It was during this time that I would teach the
student-athletes how to ask follow up questions so there would be no confusion about
how to find out what they needed to do in order to improve their performance.

For visiting professors, we found that typically, most professors did not how to
give students specific suggestions on how to improve in their class. Some professors
generally made comments such as “study harder,” or “try harder.” Sometimes a professor
will give a more detailed answer such as sit closer to the front or attend the next review
session. These answers are too general and non-specific for a typical struggling student
and often leave the student feeling more frustrated because he doesn’t know how to study
harder. So I taught my student-athletes to ask for specific help in the following ways:

1) Dr. Jones, will you go through my paper with me and show me what I’m doing
wrong?

2) Dr. Jones, can I go through the last test with you and discuss the questions I
missed.

3) Dr. Jones, can I go through the homework with you and will you discuss the
incorrect answers for me?

4) Dr. Jones, will you look at my class notes, or can I discuss with you what you
were talking about when you discussed grass roots movements? I don’t think I
understood everything.

5) Dr. Jones, I’ve been making flash cards for the next test, can I show them to you
to see if I’m on the right track for preparing for the next test.
6) Dr. Jones, I’m really not a good speller, would you mind writing some key names and concepts down on the board for me during lectures?

These questions are very specific and having them helps the student-athlete start a dialog with the professor that will lead to specific types of suggestions that will actually help the student improve his standing in the class. Even if a professor cannot tell the student how to do better in class, these types of questions start an exchange of information.

Once student-athletes met with their professors, I would meet with them again to discuss the benefits of the visit. We also discussed how these kinds of visits needed to occur more than once or twice a semester and that was something they needed to do on their own.

Utilizing Campus Resources: Workshops, Tutoring, and Guest Speakers

At least a couple times per semester, we had guest speakers and workshops for the student-athletes. For academics, some workshops topics were as follows: “How to Read a Text Book,” “Preparing for Test and Test Taking Skills,” and “Learning Styles.” These workshops gave the student-athletes specific strategies for improving their academic performance.

For topics other than academics, we had other guest speakers in order to address the topics that benefit their well-being. For example, one speaker was a nutritionist who spoke to the athletes about eating properly for energy, getting enough sleep, and other ways to take better care of themselves. We also had an expert speak to the student-athletes about managing their finances. One guest speaker was an ex-student-
athletes who addressed how to handle the temptations of using performance-enhancing drugs. He also shared tips how to balance athletic responsibilities and academic obligations.

Dion Robinson was a star from the Chico State Men’s Basketball team in the mid 1990’s, was one of our guest speakers. After graduating from Chico State, Robinson moved to Sacramento and became a successful businessman. Dion Robinson brought his daily planner and spoke to the team about how important is to be organized in order to maintain success in the business world. He then drew comparisons to his playing days, staying organized, and managing time properly to his success on the court. Mr. Robinson believes there is a direct correlation to his organization skills and his success in both basketball and business.

The goal of the workshops was to help everyone with there the study habits, but also to address some of their challenges beyond academics.

Study Hall

Study Hall was held four times a week, Monday through Thursday from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., on the third floor of the campus library. This floor was chosen because the library has two rules for this floor: no conversation and no cell phone talking. In addition, I added three more rules to ensure that study hall would be effective: (1) be on time, (2) no facebook or texting, and (3) be respectful to yourself and others.

There was no excuse for missing study hall. All appointments, meetings, or anything that could potentially interfere with study hall were to be scheduled at another time. Students would arrive, and because of the large selection of cubicles, they would
spread out. Since there were also other students studying on the third floor, the atmosphere was conductive to getting work done. At the same time, I was there to not just hold students accountable, but also to help any student out who was stuck on an assignment or did not know how to get started.

Study hall was mandatory for all newcomers (freshman and new transfer students) and any student-athlete who had a cumulative GPA below a 3.3. However, anyone on our team could join study hall sessions. Many times, student-athletes that did not have to come to study hall, still came anyway.

Accountability and Follow-Through

Before the beginning of each semester, all student-athletes brought me their class schedule. Next, I logged each schedule into a special format so that at any hour of any day I would quickly know what classes the student-athletes should be in. Figure 3 shows the schedules for three of student-athletes members.

As part of our accountability plan, our head coach asked me to conduct random class checks. To conduct a class check, I would go to a student-athlete’s class and make sure that he was there. By having all the students’ classes listed on one page, it made it possible for me to do class checks at any random time.

It was essential that our accountability and follow through plan included consequences. Just as someone was disciplined for missing practice (such as being required to perform extra drills or even be forced to sit out a game), the student-athletes were also disciplined for missing class, study hall, or academic meetings. For example, if a student-athlete arrived late for study hall, that student was required to attend extra study
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>SOC 100 9:00-9:50 Butte 102 M-W-F</th>
<th>BLAW 302 10:00-10:50 Glenn 202 M-W-F</th>
<th>ACCT 202 11:00-11:50 Glenn 112 M-W-F</th>
<th>MGMT 304 10:00-10:50 Glenn 214 Tu-Thurs</th>
<th>CMST 330 11:00-11:50 Tehama 108 M-W-F</th>
<th>POLS 155 11:00-11:50 Ayres 120 Tu-Thurs</th>
<th>KINE 332 8:00-9:15 Yolo 183 Tu-Thurs</th>
<th>KINE 388 11:00-12:15 Yolo 145 &amp; 206 Tu-Thurs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-9 AM</td>
<td>MWF</td>
<td>Tu-Th</td>
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<td>ACCT 202 11:00-11:50 Glenn 112 M-W-F</td>
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<td>POLS 155 11:00-11:50 Ayres 120 Tu-Thurs</td>
<td>KINE 332 8:00-9:15 Yolo 183 Tu-Thurs</td>
<td>KINE 388 11:00-12:15 Yolo 145 &amp; 206 Tu-Thurs</td>
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<td>BLAW 302 10:00-10:50 Glenn 202 M-W-F</td>
<td>ACCT 202 11:00-11:50 Glenn 112 M-W-F</td>
<td>MGMT 304 10:00-10:50 Glenn 214 Tu-Thurs</td>
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<td>KINE 388 11:00-12:15 Yolo 145 &amp; 206 Tu-Thurs</td>
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<td>KINE 332 8:00-9:15 Yolo 183 Tu-Thurs</td>
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<td>1-2 PM</td>
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<td>BLAW 302 10:00-10:50 Glenn 202 M-W-F</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-3 PM</td>
<td>SOC 100 9:00-9:50 Butte 102 M-W-F</td>
<td>BLAW 302 10:00-10:50 Glenn 202 M-W-F</td>
<td>ACCT 202 11:00-11:50 Glenn 112 M-W-F</td>
<td>MGMT 304 10:00-10:50 Glenn 214 Tu-Thurs</td>
<td>CMST 330 11:00-11:50 Tehama 108 M-W-F</td>
<td>POLS 155 11:00-11:50 Ayres 120 Tu-Thurs</td>
<td>KINE 332 8:00-9:15 Yolo 183 Tu-Thurs</td>
<td>KINE 388 11:00-12:15 Yolo 145 &amp; 206 Tu-Thurs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. This is a simple format to allow one to know when and where the student-athletes have class. One can easily run class checks by using this format.*

*Figure 3. Sample student schedules format.*

hall. All extra study hall sessions were held on Sunday, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. If a student-athlete missed a make-up session, or did not use the Sunday make-up session in a positive way, then he would have a 6:00 a.m. workout on the track the next day with one of the coaches. If the student-athlete missed class, not only was he assigned extra study hall, but he also received a 6:00 a.m. track work out and the potential of being held out of a game, depending on the number of misses.

Both years of this program, early in the fall semester, on any given Sunday, there could be two to three student-athletes who had to attend Sunday make-up study hall. By mid-semester and through the entire spring semester, it was very rare that any
student-athlete had to attend a Sunday make-up study hall. This trend was very similar to players being late or missing class. Early in the fall semester of both years, players would be late to class or even miss class. By the middle of the fall semester and then throughout the entire spring semester, it would be extremely rare for a player to miss or being late to class. Furthermore, missing class or being late to class was normally a mistake made by an underclassman, and rarely, if ever, was such a mistake made by an upperclassman.

Outcomes of Program

In the fall of 2008, when our coaching staff took over the basketball program, the team’s cumulative GPA was 2.18, and six players were ineligible to participate in any of the games because their GPA was below a 2.0. At the end of the first year of the implementation of the academic support program, the men’s basketball team cumulative GPA rose to 2.7. At the end of year two, the men’s basketball cumulative team GPA improved again to a 2.84. Furthermore, all of the student-athletes were eligible.

In the last two years, there have been ten student-athletes in the program who have been eligible to graduate. Eight out of ten of those student-athletes graduated. If we continue this pattern, our projected graduation rate will be 80%, which is 26% higher than the graduation rate from when we took over the program. The only two players that have not graduated did not finish their eligibility here at Chico State.

Conclusion

The academic support program that I created for my project consisted of eight components. The components, described in this chapter were (1) leadership from the top, (2) academic organization and time management, (3) weekly meetings, (4) progress
reports and self evaluation, (5) contact with professors, advisors and/or counselors, (6) utilizing campus resources, (7) study hall, and (8) accountability and follow through.

Each of the components was based on my research, which included the programs developed by Gabriel (2005) and Peters (2005). However, because I applied the eight components to a new context, my project was distinct from those described in the literature. For example, Coach’s Clink’s “leadership from the top” was developed because we felt as a coaching staff that the program would not work unless the entire team knew that Coach Clink cared about academics. Class checks were conducted; however, I did not complete a certain number of class checks every week based on the existing research. I developed my own class checks system, which included a random selection of checks. Additionally, nowhere in my research did I find how often progress reports should go out. Thus, I used progress reports based my weekly interviews with the students and on the results of my class checks. Furthermore, in my research, I did not find information on what others did for accountability and follow through. This component was developed through trial and error. Study hall being moved from an enclosed classroom to the third floor of the library is a perfect example of how I figured out ways to make this program more efficient and effective as I developed it.

In the Chapter IV, I will share the reactions, opinions, and feelings of the student-athletes, coaches, and myself regarding the academic support program.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I will describe the feelings, reactions, and thoughts of the student-athletes and coaches who participated in the academic support program. Throughout this thesis, I have advocated the importance of having an academic support program for all student-athletes. Because of the demands of student-athletes and the service that they provide for their university, it is critical that the university and athletic department provide an academic support program in order to ensure that the student-athletes are not being exploited, and that they have the opportunity to earn a college degree.

Leadership from the Top

The head coach of a men’s basketball program has a huge influence over his student-athletes. He influences their social, athletic, personal, and academic decisions and choices. There is rarely a decision a student-athlete makes that the head coach does not know about. The head coach serves as a parental figure, and he sets and enforces the standards that the student-athletes must adhere to (Adler & Adler, 1991). If academics are to be part of a student-athlete’s requirements, then it is essential that the head coach clearly communicates this message from the beginning. The program described in Chapter III of this project would not have been possible without Coach Clink’s full
support. Coach Clink wanted to change the culture and attitude toward academics to be positive and rigorous. Because of this, the student-athletes were able to have success with their academics.

When Coach Clink was first hired, he inherited a team with a 2.18 GPA average, which was the lowest team GPA in the entire athletic department. There were student-athletes who were already on the team, and in the previous years, they had not paid much attention to academics. Half of these students were ineligible for competition and the other half were barely getting by. This low academic achievement is not uncommon for men’s basketball players across the country. However, Chico State’s academic achievement was low even when compared to other men’s basketball programs. Coach Clink knew that a change in attitude would not be enough to pull the program out of academic embarrassment. Clink appointed me to run an intense support program for the student-athletes to ensure that they could be successful in their academic endeavors. My task was to create a program that would not only be approved by Coach Clink, but one that would also produce positive results.

A current player, John¹, felt that one main reason he excelled in his first three semesters in college was that “. . . the coaches emphasized from the very start that academics were the most important aspect to being apart of Coach Clink’s program. I knew that I had to push myself academically to be apart of Chico State Basketball” (Student-athlete, personal communication, March, 2010).

¹. The student-athletes real names are not used in this thesis project.
When running study hall, if student-athletes even started to become distracted or lose their focus, I would only have to mention Coach Clink’s name to get them to refocus.

Academic Organization and Time-Management

When Coach Clink took over the program, he also brought with him new student-athletes to join some of the old players. During these first two years, Clink brought in ten freshman, which is over half of the student-athletes who participate in the program. These young men had never experienced the intensity of a college basketball program, and we felt that the student-athletes being organized were going to be essential to their success. Not only would they have to improve their academic skills, but they were going to have to improve their time management skills as well.

For most freshmen, learning how to manage time is a challenge, and something that they must learn how to do in order to be successful in college (Figler & Figler, 1991; Isenberg & Rhoads, 2001; VanderStoep & Pintrich, 2003). The first step I took in teaching our students how to manage their time was to provide them with an organizational system similar to the one developed by Gabriel (2005) for at-risk college students. Every student-athlete was provided with an academic binder in order to ensure that our student-athletes got off to a good start. The binder included organizational forms that the student-athletes had to use to help them plan their days, weeks, and semester calendar. This is especially important for collegiate men’s basketball players because they had to fit classes, studying time, basketball practices, weight room sessions, film sessions, game days, and road trips into any given week. By having weekly obligations
written down on one page, the student-athletes had a time-management plan they could follow.

This semester calendar helped our student-athletes plan ahead especially for weeks where they had several tests or papers due on or near the same date. When the team travels to away game, the student-athletes are given “excused” absences from the Dean of Students since they are representing the college. However, they still are responsible for all lectures, or any schoolwork that may be missed. The semester calendar helps the student-athletes to plan ahead and discuss their “CSU” travel plans with professors.

The student-athletes all had different strengths and weaknesses when it came to completing their academic assignments. Some of the student-athletes had very poor note taking skills. For instance, one of the student-athletes was literally trying to write every single word that his professor was saying. So I went to a couple classes with him and sat next to him. I took notes, and he took notes. When the class was over, we compared our notes and this was how I showed him to pick out the main points of what the professor was saying. After a few times modeling for him, his note taking improved. When discussing this later with Paul he said,

I just knew I better be in class doing something or I was going to be hittin’ the track so I just wrote down anything and everything. I really wasn’t thinking about doin’ well in school, I just wanted to play basketball, and I knew Coach Clink wouldn’t let me play unless I was taking care of business with my books. So I went in those classes and just started writing. When Coach Gabe sat in class and took notes with me, he made me realize that all of these rules were to help me, not punish me. (Student-athlete, personal communication, March, 2010)

The reason I sat in class with this young man and took notes with him was that I literally could not think of any other way to teach him how to take notes properly. By
modeling, I was able to show him how to take notes, and he was able to follow my example. I continued to check his notes over the course of the next two years and not only did I see vast improvement in his note-taking skills, but also a strong sense of self-confidence in his academic demeanor.

Weekly Meetings—Progress and Self-Evaluations

The main goal of these academic meetings was to support the student-athletes in their academic endeavors. Student-athletes were assigned an academic coach at the beginning of the year. The academic coach was simply an assistant coach that was charged with monitoring a student-athlete academic progress throughout the semester. Student-athletes met with their academic coaches once a week to have honest dialogs about how they were doing in their classes. It was very important to make sure that the student-athletes realized that these meetings were to help them, and not to have the coach upset or mad if they were having difficulty. Coach Argenal stated, “The academic meetings allowed me to talk about something other than basketball with my guys, and I feel that it showed them that I care about them. It was proof that I’m not interested in just their basketball skills” (Argenal, personal communication, September, 2010).

It is not enough to just ask a student-athlete if he is struggling or not. Many student-athletes were not aware of when or why they needed help, so just asking them to “self-report” could often be inaccurate. Since many students-athletes in our program have never done well in school, it was important to monitor their progress every week. In addition, what I consider to be good grades and what the student-athletes consider to be good grades are usually very different. Some were happy to have a C- in a class, not
realizing how quickly a C- can turn into a D or an F by doing poorly on the next
assignment. Upon closer examination of the differences of perception about grades, many
of the students shared with me that they thought getting a C was acceptable. Many had
high school coaches and parents who were pleased with them if they were earning C’s
since many of their friends were earning D’s and F’s. Kuh et al. (2006) notes that
precollege experiences often “shape expectation,” that student have for college. Students
that earned average grades in high school usually expected to do about the same in
college. “Students whose expectations for college were relatively low were more likely to
report college experiences congruent with these low expectations, compared with
students with relatively high expectations” (Kuh et al., 2006, p. 33). Thus, the
intervention of our academic support program was vital to raise the expectations. The
weekly meetings were an important part of the program’s acceptance among the student-
athletes.

We always made it clear that no one would be treated differently if they were
not meeting their academic goals. The meetings were so we could intervene and help
anyone who was struggling. With this approach, we could have honest dialog and
student-athletes were more inclined to actually tell us how they were doing in their
classes. Cory, a current player, reflecting about our weekly academic meetings stated the
following:

There were so many times I thought that I was doing better. Once I thought I had
two A’s and three B’s when I actually was on pace for one A, two B’s, one C and
one D. Seeing the percentages on paper all together really helped me realize where I
was at, and it motivated me to work harder to get my grades up. (Student-athlete,
personal communication, April, 2010)
Cory, as well as others also reported that the weekly meetings really helped them with their organization. Another student-athlete stated,

The weekly academics meetings really helps keep you organized whether you want to be or not. When your coach asks to see everything and knows what all your assignments are, it makes you try a little bit harder and it forces you to stay on top of everything. (Student-athlete, personal communication, April, 2010)

In sum, these meetings were used to keep the student-athletes motivated toward their academic goals and to aid them in keeping a balance between academic and athletic responsibilities.

Contact with Professors, Advisors and/or Counselor

At least once a semester our student-athletes were required to meet with an academic advisor/counselor. This was done so that our student-athletes could understand how every class they were enrolled in would help them achieve the ultimate goal of graduation. It is important to know what one is working towards in order to stay focused over the course of four to five years that it takes to graduate. Adler and Adler (1991) found that when student-athletes were not participating in choosing their classes and did not know why they had been enrolled in certain classes, they were more likely to become detached from their academics. In their research, Adler and Adler (1991) also found that academic detachment leads to many student-athletes giving up earlier aspirations and resigning themselves to a lower academic goals and performances. Astin (1999) also notes that for students to have positive college experiences, they must be involved in their courses and in determining the courses that they need to be enrolled in. Whether a course is an elective or a requirement, students need to be involved in planning their semester
schedule each year so they can have a vision on how their classes will lead them to their ultimate goal of graduation.

For example, a struggling student, James, was in his third year of school, when I started this academic support program. He had to sit-out from playing one year because of a knee injury. Before we started the program, he was not clear about his academic status and his path to graduation. He even contemplated not coming back to school when he injured his knee. In an interview, James shared the following:

Coach had me meet with Lauren Wilson [my academic advisor], and we went over my graduation plan. Once I saw how far I had come, there was no way I could give up. It’s crazy to think that I did not even realize how close I was to graduating, even with all the struggles I have had to this point. I still have two years of eligibility to play and only seventeen classes left to graduate. With the academic support that the coaches have for me, there is no doubt in my mind that I will graduate. (Student-athlete, personal communication, March, 2010)

James is an excellent example of how important it is for students to meet with academic advisors who can help map out a clear, detailed, and explicit plan for graduating.

I also constantly stressed how important it was to visit professors during their office hours. However, for some of the student-athletes, this was extremely intimidating for them. Many of the student-athletes put off going because they were threatened to meet a professor face to face so I had to physically walk them to their professor’s office and sit in on their first meeting. One player that I had to walk over to his professor’s office hours on a few different occasions during his first college semester really started to excel. The next semester that same student-athlete was struggling in a different class. I said to him, “Let’s go see your professor during his office hours,” and that student-athlete told me that he was going to handle it on his own. He came back to me a couple hours
later and told me all about the meeting and how nice his professor was. It was amazing to see how much he had matured in his first year, yet it is important to note that this may not have happened if he was not given the support he needed initially. Students can make significant changes that will help them succeed in college, but when they first arrive they need guidance and support.

Wankat (2002) reports that student interaction with faculty is extremely important for retention and student academic success. He writes, “Professors have a primary role for increasing their students’ academic involvement” (p. 174). Additionally, in their book, Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter, Kuh et al. (2005) found that “to foster student success, faculty, staff members, and others must ‘make time for students’ . . . There is no substitute for spending time interacting with student” (p. 80). Furthermore, they note that the most successful colleges and universities have programs that teach their students about “the importance of meeting with their instructors during office hours to be sure they are performing satisfactorily . . .” (p. 116)

Utilizing Campus Resources: Workshops, Tutoring, and Guest Speakers

We were constantly sending student-athletes to workshops on campus or bringing in people to work with the team. For example, Dr. Gabriel, Professor at Chico State, conducted a workshop that taught the student-athletes a strategy for reading textbooks. During the workshop, Dr. Gabriel also showed our student-athletes how to make effective note cards for test preparation. Current player Jack said, “Dr. Gabriel’s workshops really helped me become a more efficient student. After attending one of her
workshops, I not only felt as though I read more in less time, but I also retained more of what I read” (Student-athlete, personal communication, April, 2010).

The Learning Center on campus also offered learning strategies workshops for taking notes, test preparation, and understanding one’s own learning style. All of these workshops helped our student-athletes develop their study and academic skills.

We also used the learning center’s tutors. However, we found that their tutoring system was very inefficient when came to dealing with upper division courses. The harder the class, the less likely a tutor exists or is available. For example, when I took student-athletes to the learning center to get a tutor for a lower level class such as “College Algebra,” we would have no problem finding a tutor that could work with the student-athlete without interfering with his workout schedule. However, if we tried to get a tutor for a harder-upper division course such as a 300+ Geology course, there would either be no tutor for that subject or only one tutor. Often, that tutor could only meet at a time that we had basketball practice. The Learning Center was only effective for lower division courses and ineffective for upper division courses.

Study Hall

Study hall was as important as practice or a game, and Coach Clink communicated this feeling of importance. The student-athletes knew that they were not to be one second late or miss study hall for any reason. Study hall was not time for messing around, talking socially, wasting time on the Internet; it was time to work on all academic responsibilities.
Originally, we ran study hall in a small classroom in the athletic building. This was a major mistake because it was a constant battle to get the student-athletes to not talk to each other the entire time. The student-athletes are not only teammates, but also good friends, so they were also tempted to converse when placed in a confined space. Instead of getting mad at the student-athletes, I moved study hall to the cubical section of the third floor of the library.

On the third floor, the student-athletes were able to spread out away from each other and concentrate on their studies. Also, each student-athlete was able to have his own cubical/work space on the third floor, which made it very conducive to learning and studying. One student-athlete told me “In the classroom every two seconds I would look up and see a smiling teammate, and it was so hard to stay focused, but in my booth (cubical) in the library I can really zone in” (Student-athlete, personal communication, April, 2010).

Accountability and Follow-Through

Accountability and follow through were the most important parts of the academic support program. The student-athletes knew that they would be held accountable, and the coaches were as serious about academic responsibilities as they were about athletic responsibilities. This was especially important for the at-risk and unprepared students because even if they felt like giving-up, or not going to a class, they knew the consequences would be immediate, and this was something they understood.

For example, if a student-athlete was late to or missed a study hall session or did not comply with the rules of study hall, then he would have to attend a make-up study
hall session on Sunday afternoon. The purpose of the extra or make up session was twofold: first, to let the student-athletes know we would hold them accountable for following all study hall rules and expectations, and second, to give any student-athlete a chance to get back on the right track.

If the “make-up session” was not enough to get a particular student-athlete back on track, then he would have meet one of the coaches at 6:00 a.m. for a three mile run. This run was also awarded to those who were caught missing or being late to class. Three miles may not sound like very much until one factors in that the student-athlete will still have his team practice and weightlifting for that day. Student-athletes do not want to have to also do a three-mile run, especially at 6:00 a.m., when a typical day for the student-athletes is not over until 7:00 p.m. We found that 6:00 a.m. runs, not only had an effect on the behavior of the student-athletes who had to run, but it also had an impact on the rest of the team. One current player told me, “. . . whenever I feel like not going to class, I remember that 9:00 a.m. sittin’ is better than 6:00 a.m. runnin’” (Student-athlete, personal communication, April, 2010). As a result, Chico State Men’s Basketball players rarely miss class.

Accountability was important because many freshmen college student-athletes often did not understand the importance of class and study hall attendance. However, they did want to be on the team so going to class was important for that reason at first! By the end of the first semester, the freshmen student-athletes were realizing how the class attendance helped them be successful in their classes.

Coach Clink is very serious about academics. When a former player was caught plagiarizing by a professor on campus, Coach Clink made a major statement to the
team. This was one of the most talented players to ever put on a Chico State uniform and Coach Clink took away his scholarship and kicked him off the team in the middle of the season. It is important to note that this was not the first mistake that this player had made, but there are not very many college coaches in America that would kick the most talented player in conference off of their team at that point in the season. Holding just one player accountable forced everyone to fall into line, especially when it was one of the better players. Our team only won three more games the rest of that season. However, the tone has been set for every player in the program that this type of behavior would not be tolerated.

Outcomes of the Program

The impact of the academic support program has been substantial. The quantitative results included a higher team GPA, higher GPAs for individual student-athletes, higher completion rate of courses that are required for graduation, and lower numbers of student-athletes on academic probation or not qualifying for athletic competition.

Braxton (2006) suggests several categories that can be used as markers of student success. These include the following: academic attainment, acquisition of general education, development of academic competence, development of cognitive skills and intellectual dispositions, occupational attainment, and preparation for adulthood and citizenship (p. 2-5). These markers are comprehensive and include both quantitative and qualitative indicators of success. While the academic attainment and acquisition of
general education (e.g. completion of courses and GPA’s) are generally viewed quantitative measures, the other markers address qualitative measures of student success.

Braxton (2006) suggests that part of academic competence “includes writing and speaking in a clear, correct, and effective mann . . ” (p. 3). For example, when some of the student-athletes first stepped on campus, they spoke by using informal slang and non-standard English terms that made it hard for the coaching staff and their professors to understand exactly what they were trying to say. Through their course work, tutoring from the Learning Center, and individual mentoring from myself and the other coaches, these student-athletes begin to understand that they needed to improve their language skills. This included how to use Standard English in their writing and speaking. Some student-athletes had to learn a “new dialect” so that they could interact with their professors and even other students on campus.

I often told my student-athletes that it is important to keep their “at home dialect,” but they also needed to learn how to speak in a professional arena. In our mentoring and informal conversations, student-athletes say things to me that I would make them re-say properly so that they could realize the difference. Some of the most common corrections were fairly simple such as “He do. . .” Then I would say, “He . . . what?” And then, after a pause, the student-athlete would say, “He does.” Another example is when a student-athlete would say, “I seen it,” and we would stop, and he would repeat, “I have seen it,” . . . or “I saw it.” My all time favorite phrase to correct was “I ain’t seen nothing,” which would be corrected by me saying, “You ain’t seen nothing . . . no . . . . You haven’t seen anything.” This may seem minor, but learning to use correct subject-verb agreement in their speaking led to better writings skills and
helped all the students perform better on their assignments and when they were participating in class discussions.

Another qualitative marker that Braxton (2006) uses to measure student success is the development of cognitive skills and intellectual dispositions (p. 4). Part of the definition that Braxton presents includes the following:

The development of good academic work habits, the development of an interest in intellectual and cultural matters, an increase in intellectual activity, and the acquisition of such attitudes and values as intellectual tolerance, intellectual integrity, wisdom, and lifelong learning. (Braxton, 2006)

For example, Zaharius, was taking a class that required a research paper that was due at the end of the semester. In October, through our weekly academic meetings, I realized that he had not started the assignment and there was only a little over a month left until the paper was due. When I went to help him start his research, I realized that he did not even know how to use the library resources to get him started. We mapped out a plan that took him through the process of searching the library for references, making note cards, starting the project early and not relying on last second cramming. He wrote a rough draft and went to a writing tutor for feed back. This process of developing good academic work habits will transfer to excellent job skills in any profession. This young man has continued to demonstrate good academic work habits and increased interest in intellect activities.

Additionally, because of the guest speakers that came to the Chico State campus, our student-athletes were able to take an interest in cultural matters. For example, Jack went on his own to see the author of *Three Cups of Tea*, Greg Mortenson
speak. *Three Cups of Tea* is about the quest that Mortenson went on in Afghanistan and Pakistan to build schools. This is a perfect example of a student-athlete taking an interest in intellectual cultural matters.

A third qualitative marker that Braxton (2006) uses to measure student success is occupational attainment (p. 5). “Occupational attainment includes experiencing job satisfaction, obtaining a job classified as professional, semiprofessional, or managerial . . . significant levels of accomplishment include having a job in which there is an opportunity to use one’s special abilities” (Braxton, 2006, p. 5). Many of the student-athletes arrived on campus with only one goal in mind, which was to play college basketball. Many of the student-athletes had not thought about a future career. Many times when I ask student-athletes what they wanted to major in they would reply “I don’t know,” or “business.” When asked why they wanted to major in business they would say things like “So I can make money,” or “I want to have my own business.” When asked what kind of business they were going to have, most would say, “I don’t know.” They had no idea what they wanted to major in or what type of career they might prepare for. However, in college classes, the student-athletes began to think about the future professions that they could become qualified for. Some of the student-athletes that have gone through our basketball program have begun professional careers such as a financial assistant, and a high school teacher.

A fourth and final qualitative marker that Braxton (2006) uses to measure student success is preparation for adulthood and citizenship (Braxton, 2006, p. 5). “College attendance shapes social skills and personal habits important for adult living . . . the development of such skills and habits supplies us with a set of indicators of college
student success” (Braxton, p. 5). This includes “meeting deadlines, starting and finishing tasks, budgeting one’s time and effort, and doing several things at one time and keeping them straight” (p. 5). Any student-athlete who is able to graduate and stay apart of our college basketball program for four to five years will be a master of these types of skills. Our student-athletes had to fill out calendars and weekly schedules to help them manage their hectic schedules. This is an obvious example of how our student-athletes learned to manage their time, and thus helped them become prepared for adulthood and citizenship.

What we have noticed as coaches, is that we require them to do this as freshman when they come in, but by their sophomore year they are doing it on their own. Many of the students even expanded on what we gave them for a basic organizational tool. For example, Zaharius now uses the calendar and alarm system on his I-phone instead of the hard copy weekly schedules that we gave him.

The coaching staff has observed the student-athletes being more independent, mature, and responsible. For instance, after one year of being in the support program, if a student-athlete has a cumulative GPA of 3.3 or higher, he does not have to come to study hall anymore. However, they still benefit from class checks, weekly meetings, and every other part of the academic support program. Still we feel that a student with a cumulative GPA or 3.3 or higher is mature enough to schedule his own study time. Currently there are four student-athletes in our program that do not come to study hall because of the maturity that the have demonstrated over the two years.
Recommendations

When trying to implement this program at another university, I highly recommend that athletic programs hire a director to solely be in charge of the academic support program. One assistant is capable of doing all of the class checks, weekly meetings, academic monitoring, and study hall sessions for a team if that assistant is not given any actual basketball responsibilities. Thus, to also give the assistant coach the responsibility of academic monitoring and running the academic support program for all the student-athletes is too much responsibility. The university administrators and faculty cannot expect their athletic program to be in sync with the academic demands of their institution if proper support is not available. To have a successful athletic program, universities and colleges should support the student-athletes in both areas: academics and athletics.

A college basketball coach has a set of responsibilities that include recruiting and student-athlete evaluation, recruiting updates and mailings, assisting in campus visits for recruits, all film exchange for pre, regular, and post season, opponent scouting, game plan development, on the floor coaching, practice plan organization, promotion of all youth camps and clinics, supervision and daily leadership of youth camps and clinics, film breakdown and editing, assisting in organization of strength and conditioning, individual skill development during off-season, and group skill development during season. Plus, there is a substantial amount of time that assistant coaches spend on the road both with the team and on their own recruiting and evaluating.

The qualifications for the academic director would be a minimum of a master’s degree, and I would prefer that he or she had a Ph.D. Furthermore, this person should also
have a background in athletics so that he or she can relate to the student-athletes. The academic director needs to be mindful to the fact that he or she is dealing with student-athletes who not only have a very time consuming schedule but also will at times be both mentally and physically exhausted. The academic director must have the qualifications to actually help the student-athletes in the classroom, while also realizing that student-athletes are different from their classmates.

Most universities with Division II athletic programs will be able to justify hiring a person solely for academic support if that person is going to handle the academic support of all the teams. It would most likely be too expensive to hire an academic director for each sport team. If one academic director was hired for the athletic department, this person would not be able to be at every practice or every game or athletic event. However, this person would need to have the respect that the head coaches of college programs demand. Additionally, this person will only be effective if he or she has the support of all the head coaches and if the head coaches hold the student-athletes accountable to their academic responsibilities. Otherwise, the academic director will feel undermined, and there will be a conflict of interest.

Conclusion

College Basketball has become a multi-million dollar business. Television contracts, ticket sales, and merchandise have led to college basketball coaches making millions of dollars in some cases. However, with these million dollar contracts has also come the pressure to win, which has led to very unstable job conditions. If coaches do not have winning programs and ultimately win championships, they get fired. Because of this
pressure, winning has become the most important aspect, and student success in the classroom has taken a back seat to “on-the-court” success. Graduation rates across the country are low for men’s basketball players and most of the time men’s basketball players graduate at a lower rate than the athletes in other sports. This is why we set out to create an academic support program that would generate success in the classroom for the men’s basketball players. Although our program did have success, I feel that even more success can be achieved if athletic programs to were to hire a qualified person that was only responsible for running an academic support program similar to the program that I designed for the Chico State Men’s Basketball Program. As stated in my recommendations, it is too time consuming and too much responsibility to ask assistant coaches to handle all academic support on top of their coaching responsibilities. Assistant coaches cannot be expected to run an academic support program effectively and accomplish their mission to win games without working a ton of overtime hours. For example, in my effort to run this program at Chico State, I often times found myself working from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Most people are not willing to work those types of hours. Also, Chico State has only two paid coaches (the head coach and head assistant). As the second assistant coach, my time was volunteered because I knew it was a good opportunity to gain coaching experience and achieve my master’s degree at the same time. If I had not volunteered my time, Coach Clink and Coach Argenal could not have implemented this academic support program because there was simply not enough hours in a day to handle that much responsibility.

It is extremely important for colleges and universities to hire people to implement effective academic support programs for student-athletes to promote the
academic success of student-athletes. As stated in chapter one, student-athletes are recruited to campuses all over the country with the promise that if they perform for the college’s basketball team their education will be paid for, and they will be able earn a college degree. Yet, actual graduation is not being obtained over 50 percent of the time.

My field notes showed that as student-athletes did better in the classroom, they became more confident in all aspects of their lives. They had more of a peaceful focus and felt more and more like they belonged at Chico State. This was seen very strongly with the African American athletes. I feel that this new peaceful focus and confidence translated directly to their play on the court and in essence made them better players.

The reputation of Chico State Men’s Basketball before Coach Clink was that the players did not go to class regularly, many did not study or prepared for class, and some acted disrespectful to others on campus. Today, the reputation of Chico State Men’s Basketball is changing. Players go to class, study, and are respectful to others on campus. Most are passionate about their sport and school. This is a direct reflection of Coach Clink’s leadership. Coach Clink supported the academic program initially, and then his team followed his lead. Coach Clink made sure that the entire team knew the consequences of missing class, being late to class, and not turning in progress reports on time. Coach Clink constantly stressed to the players how important it was to introduce themselves to professors, to be respectful, and conduct themselves as gentlemen on campus. This led to a better overall basketball program and in turn this led to a better overall basketball team. Chico State went from winning six games every year to winning 16 games last season.
There are some questions that can be further explored with this project. For instance, do the universities and colleges in this country ignore the low graduation rates of men’s basketball teams and fail to provide adequate academic support because most of these student-athletes are African American? Are there any underlying issues of equity in this project? Does better academic performance lead to “on the court” success? If student-athletes graduating from college promote a better overall program, and in turn, a better basketball team, why do universities not give their student-athletes more academic support? The most important question is this: do universities not know how to give effective academic support for their athletic program or are universities not concerned about providing this service? Either way, providing effective academic support should be addressed because the graduation rates across the country are not acceptable.

I believe that the academic support program implemented for this project has proved that men’s basketball players are capable of graduating and achieving academic success in college. This support program is a template that I believe can produce positive results at any university in the country.
REFERENCES
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AN ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR
STUDENT-ATHLETES
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INTRODUCTION

In this project, I will outline an academic support program for student-athletes. The program consists of eight components: 1) leadership from the top, 2) academic organization and time management, 3) weekly meetings, 4) progress reports and self evaluation, 5) contact with professors, advisors and/or counselors, 6) utilization of campus resources, 7) participation in study hall, and 8) accountability and follow through. These eight components will allow other universities to run a proper academic support program for student-athletes of any sport.

As stated in Chapter II, among student-athletes, men’s basketball players tend to have the lowest graduation rates. The NCAA federal report found that for the students who entered college from 1998 to 2001, only 46% of the Division I men basketball players graduated (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2008), which was the lowest graduation rates of all teams. Clearly, an academic support program for men’s basketball players with a structured curriculum is needed for universities across the country.

This curriculum is only a general format, and it may be adjusted as needed. This project differs in scope from traditional curriculum projects because this project involves creating one-on-one relationships with student-athletes who are at different levels of schooling, different levels of academic skills, different majors, and need tailored study skill tutoring sessions. All student-athletes encounter these eight components of the academic program at different times during the semester. The director of the academic support program works with students individually to create a schedule that incorporates aspects of all eight components depending on students individualized needs. The following project outlines each of these eight components for universities interested in
creating an academic support program for student-athletes, specifically for men’s basketball players, and ideally raising the graduation rates for their student-athletes.
COMPONENT #1: Leadership from the Top

RATIONALE/OVERVIEW:

The head coach of a men’s basketball program has a huge influence over his student-athletes. He influences their social, athletic, personal, and academic decisions and choices. There is rarely a decision a student-athlete makes that the head coach is not aware of. He serves as a parental figure, and he sets and enforces the standards that the student-athletes must adhere to (Adler & Adler, 1991). If academics are to be part of the student-athletes’ requirements, then it is essential that the head coach clearly communicate this message from the beginning. If the head coach does not make it clear that academics are important, then the academic support program has a limited chance of success.

OBJECTIVES:

The objective is that student-athletes will have a clear vision of the expectations that must be met in order to fulfill their academic responsibilities.

PROCEDURE:

This is the first step to conducting a proper academic support program. Its purpose is to capture the attention of the student-athletes and to help these students realize that doing poorly in academics and ultimately not graduating is unacceptable. Methods for the leader of an athletic program may include:
1. A formal academic meeting at the beginning of every year.
   A. At this meeting the vision and the structure of the academic program must be discussed.
   B. At this meeting it must be made clear that no student-athlete will be apart of the athletic program if he/she does not take academics seriously.

2. There must be strict monitoring of the student-athletes academic progress over the course of every semester.

3. The leader must continue to emphasize the importance of academics throughout the semester and hold student-athletes accountable when expectations of the components are not met.

CLOSURE:

This is an on-going program, and the leader can never stop stressing the importance of academics or not hold the student-athletes accountable. If the student-athletes ever feel that academics are not important to the head coach, then their effort levels can drop dramatically.
COMPONENT #2:
Academic Organization and Time-Management.

RATIONALE/OVERVIEW:
Being organized is essential to student-athletes success. Not only will they have to improve their academic skills, but they are also going to have to improve their time management skills. For most freshmen, learning how to manage time is a challenge and is essential for college success (Figler & Figler, 1991; VanderStoep & Pintrich, 2003; Isenberg & Rhoads, 2001). This is especially important for collegiate men’s basketball players who on any given week have to fit in classes, studying time, basketball practices, weight room sessions, film sessions, game days, and road trips.

OBJECTIVES:
The objective of this component is to teach student-athletes how to properly manage their time. This component is so essential because the demands on student-athletes are far greater than those on a normal student.

PROCEDURE:
All student-athletes should be provided with an academic binder. The binder should include dividers for every class, and student-athletes must make a section for each class where class notes and handouts are to be kept in an orderly fashion. In addition, student-athletes must complete a basic weekly schedule form, which will have all their standing appointments. This form should always remain as the first page of the student-
athletes academic binder. Figure 1 shows an example of a weekly schedule form. This blank semester weekly schedule form needs to be filled out by every student-athlete. All of the student’s classes should be listed along with the study hall times and team obligations. Additionally, lunches, showers, eating, and even walking times, etc. should also be on this schedule.

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

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*Figure 1.* The weekly schedule form.
CLOSURE:

The length of the basketball season begins in the fall semester and does not end until the middle of the spring semester. It begins on October 15th and goes until March. Basketball is the only sport where student-athletes are in season during both the fall and spring semesters. For other sports, student-athletes have an easier school work load during their season and a tougher school work load during their off season. Unfortunately, basketball student-athletes cannot do this. In addition, during the basketball season, student-athletes spend over 40 hours a week on athletic related activities (games, practices, weight lifting, traveling, film, etc.). Thus, that much time spent on athletics is alarming because it leaves very little time during the week to devote to other activities, such as academics and other educationally purposeful activities. Moreover, student-athletes could potentially miss out on the learning that takes place from interacting with peers and engaging in other educational activities outside of the classroom and off the field. (Gaston-Gayles & Hu, 2009, p. 316)

There are many difficulties for the college basketball players when trying to keep up with schoolwork during the basketball season. When there is a lack of academic concern from the coaches and athletic directors, these players may give up on their academic work. Thus, being organized and having a strong handle on one’s time management is extremely important for men’s basketball players.
COMPONENT #3:
Weekly Meetings

RATIONALE/OVERVIEW

Weekly meetings provide an opportunity to evaluate the way the student-athletes are managing their time, which will lead to helping them arrange for tutoring, especially if they are struggling with a class.

OBJECTIVES:

The main goal of these academic meetings was to support the student-athletes in their academic endeavors.

PROCEDURE:

Student-athletes in the program need to be assigned a qualified person who will specifically monitor his academic progress.

A set time must be established each week for each student-athlete. Since the meetings are one on one, the academic coach must always ask to see graded assignments. Seeing graded assignments allows the mentor to know exactly how well each student-athlete is doing.

In addition, each student-athlete must show his class notes. Class notes serve as one indicator of class engagement. If there are little or no notes for a class, then it can be concluded that the student-athlete is either not attending or not engaged.
CLOSURE:

These meetings are extremely important because they will help the student-athlete know immediately when he is struggling in a class. Prompt knowledge about a student-athlete’s progress will allow tutors to be assigned as soon as problems arise. Weekly meeting will help student-athletes pass classes that they would have otherwise failed. These meetings keep the student-athletes motivated toward their academic goals and aid them in keeping a balance between academic and athletic responsibilities.
COMPONENT #4:

Progress Reports and Self-Evaluation

RATIONALE/OVERVIEW:

It is important for student-athletes to know exactly where they stand in their classes. Progress reports allow student-athletes to find out their exact grades over the course of a semester. Feedback throughout a semester helps student-athletes stay focused and allows them to work toward the ultimate goal of graduation.

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of progress reports is to allow the student-athletes to know exactly where they stand in their classes as the semester goes along.

PROCEDURE:

Student-athletes must be required to get progress reports from their professors (see Figure 2 in Chapter III). The first progress report should be provided just after the first third of the semester has passed (about five weeks from the start of school), and the second progress report should be provided two weeks before finals begin. Progress reports are to be filled out by the professors with a recording of the course title, student-athlete’s current grade, and the professor’s signature. Figure 2 shows a sample progress report. The progress report includes fields for the student-athlete’s current grades, the professors’ signature, and comments made by the professors. Twice each semester, the student-athletes must meet with all of their professors to complete this form.
Figure 2. Sample Progress Report form.

CLOSURE:

Progress reports also allow student-athletes to evaluate themselves. By discussing their grade with their professors, they can decide for themselves if they are devoting enough time to their academics or not. In many cases, after progress reports, students will reach out for help because they will have self reflected and realized that they need help in certain classes.
COMPONENT #5:

Contact with Professors, Advisors and/or Counselors.

RATIONALE/OVERVIEW:

Contact with professors, advisors, and counselors is very important so that the student-athletes can understand how every class they enroll in will help them achieve the ultimate goal of graduation. Knowing what one is working towards helps a student stay focused over the course of four to five years that it takes to graduate. Adler and Adler (1991) found that when student-athletes were not participating in choosing their classes and did not know why they had been enrolled in certain classes, they were more likely to become detached from their academics. In their research, Adler and Adler (1991) also found that academic detachment leads to many student-athletes giving up earlier aspirations and resigning themselves to a lower academic goals and performances. Astin (1999) also noted that for students to have positive college experiences, they must be involved in the choice of their courses. Whether a course is an elective or a requirement, students need to be involved in planning their semester schedule each year so they can have a vision of how their classes will lead them to their ultimate goal of graduation.

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this component is for student-athletes to know why they are taking every class that they take. This allows the student-athlete to see the light at the end of the tunnel.
PROCEDURE:

All student-athletes must meet with academic advisor/counselors at least once a semester to discuss the requirements for general education, their majors and minors. Every student-athlete must have a copy of his own academic plan. The counselors help the student-athletes pick their classes and double-check their progress toward earning a degree. This activity is called making a “graduation plan.”

CLOSURE:

Wankat (2002) reports that student interaction with faculty is extremely important for retention and student academic success. He writes, “Professors have a primary role for increasing their students . . . academic involvement” (p. 174). Additionally, in their book, Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter, Kuh et al. (2005) found that “…to foster student success, faculty, staff members, and others must ‘make time for students’…There is no substitute for spending time interacting with students” (p. 80). Furthermore, they note that the most successful colleges and universities have programs that teach their students about “the importance of meeting with their instructors during office hours to be sure they are performing satisfactorily…” (Kuh et Al, 2005, p. 116)
COMPONENT #6:  
Utilization of Campus Resources

RATIONALE/OVERVIEW:

The Learning Centers on campuses across the country offer study strategy workshops for taking notes, test preparation, and understanding one’s own learning style. All of these workshops help student-athletes develop their study and academic skills. Learning Centers on campuses also have tutors who can help student-athletes who are struggling in certain classes.

OBJECTIVES:

The goal of utilizing campus resources is to help the student-athlete develop positive study habits.

PROCEDURES:

1. Locate the learning center on campus and find out their operating hours.
2. Find out when and where their workshops on study skills are and then make the student-athletes attend these workshops.
3. When a student-athlete is struggling in a class, (one would know if they are struggling because of the weekly meetings and progress reports) take him to the learning center and help him connect with a tutor.
CLOSURE:

It is extremely beneficial to take advantage of the resources that already exist on college campuses across the country. There are academic workshops and tutoring services available that are essential components for a successful support program.
COMPONENT #7:

Study Hall

RATIONALE/OVERVIEW

Study hall is as important as practice or a game, and this feeling of importance needs to be communicated by the leader of the program. The student-athletes must know that they are not to be one second late or miss study hall for any reason. Study hall is not time for socializing, or surfing the Internet; it is time to work on all academic responsibilities. Because student-athletes are so busy, having a set time for them to study and complete their academic assignments is crucial.

OBJECTIVE:

The goal of study hall is to provide a consistent time for student-athletes to study for exams and also complete their academic assignments.

PROCEDURE:

Study Hall is held four times a week, Monday through Thursday outside of practice and class time, at the campus library. The library is chosen because most libraries have two main rules: no conversation and no cell phone talking. In addition, three rules must be added to ensure that study hall will be effective: (1) be on time, (2) no facebook or texting, and (3) be respectful to yourself and others. There is no excuse for being late or missing study hall. All appointments, meetings, or anything that could potentially interfere with study hall are to be scheduled at another time. Students must
spread out from each other. Since there will also be other students studying in the library, the atmosphere will be conducive to getting work done. The person running study hall is not there to hold students accountable and to help any student who is stuck on an assignment or does not know how to get started. Study hall is mandatory for all newcomers (freshman and new transfer students) and any student-athlete who has a cumulative GPA below a 3.3. However, anyone on the team may join study hall sessions if he abides by the rules.

CLOSURE:

Study hall should not be conducted in a small classroom or any type of confined space because it will be a constant battle to get the student-athletes to focus and not socialize. The student-athletes are not only teammates, but also good friends, so they will be tempted to converse when placed in a confined space. Instead of having to hold student-athletes accountable for socializing, simply move study hall to a section in the library where they can spread out away from each other. By spreading out in the library student-athletes will be able to concentrate on their studies. Furthermore, each student-athlete will be able to have his own workspace, which will be very conducive to learning and studying.
COMPONENT #8:

Accountability and Follow Through

RATIONALE/OVERVIEW:

It is essential that the Accountability and Follow Through plan include consequences. Just as someone is disciplined for missing practice (such as being required to perform extra drills or even be forced to sit out a game), the student-athletes must be also disciplined for missing class, study hall, or academic meetings. Student-athletes must realize that academics are as important as their sport.

OBJECTIVE:

To hold student-athletes accountable for not taking their academic lives seriously.

PROCEDURE:

Before the beginning of each semester, all student-athletes must turn in their class schedules. Next, create a spreadsheet that shows all student-athletes’ schedules. Figure 3 shows a sample of a student schedule format. This is a sample format that shows, at any given time, when and where the student-athletes have class. One can easily run class checks by using this format.
As part of the accountability plan, random class checks must be conducted. A class check is when one literally goes to a student-athletes class and makes sure that the

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**Figure 5.** Sample student schedules format.
student-athlete is actually attending class. By having all the students’ classes listed on one page, it makes it possible to do class checks at any random time.

There are consequences for missed classes. If, for example, a student-athlete arrives late for study hall, that student is required to attend an extra study hall. All extra study hall sessions will be held on Sunday, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. If a student-athlete misses a make-up session, or does not use the Sunday make-up session in a positive way, then he will have a 6:00 a.m. workout on the track the next day with one of the coaches. If the student-athlete misses class he is assigned an extra study hall, a 6:00 a.m. track work out, and the potential of being held out of a game, depending on the number of misses.

CLOSURE:

Accountability and follow through is the most important part of the academic support program. The student-athletes must know that they will be held accountable, so the coaches must be as serious about academic responsibilities as they are about athletic responsibilities. This is especially important for the at-risk and unprepared students; even if they felt like giving-up, or not going to a class, they will know the consequences will be immediate. If the leader of the athletic program does not hold student-athletes accountable, the program will have a limited chance of success.
APPENDIX A

REFERENCES


