With Parts 1 and 2 of this summary exploring student-athletes’ expectations upon entering college and their experiences once they enrolled, the GOALS and SCORE studies also provide key insights into how those aspirations matched the outcomes, and what impact athletics had on participants’ lives after college.

A starting point for this examination is whether student-athletes’ expectations upon arriving on campus were accurate. The data from GOALS show that student-athletes at the time of the study in 2005-06 had realistic expectations of their collegiate experiences based on what others told them they would be like. In fact, 78 percent felt that their academic expectations were very or mostly accurate. Similarly, 70 percent reported having accurate expectations of what their athletics and social experiences would be. Another 25 percent reported that their athletics expectations were somewhat accurate, while only 5 percent said they were not at all accurate.

Significant differences emerged by division and sport group, though all were nearly two-thirds or higher in reporting their experiences were very or mostly accurate. For example, baseball players in Divisions I and II reported greater accuracy of their athletics expectations, while women’s basketball student-athletes reported less accuracy.

Overall, two-thirds of the GOALS respondents reported having a very positive or positive athletics experience, and an additional 19 percent reported that it had been somewhat positive. Only 8 percent called their athletics experience negative.

An even higher percentage (88 percent) felt positively about their potential to achieve their athletics goals while in college. There was a significant relationship between those who reported their athletics expectations were accurate and those who reported positive feelings regarding their athletics experiences and their potential for achieving their athletics goals. Student-athletes in the GOALS study felt positively not only about their potential to achieve their athletics goals while in college, but 84 percent also reported that their coaches had at least a somewhat positive impact on their ability to meet their athletics goals.

Beyond athletics, the data show that coaches affect student-athletes in many other areas. For instance, 26 percent of the GOALS student-athletes thought it was somewhat to very unlikely that they would have attended their current institution if a different coach had been recruiting them, and 68 percent reported that their coach had a positive impact on their academics.

### Percent Reporting Accurate Expectations of Athletic Career by Sport Group and Division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baseball</th>
<th>Men’s Basketball</th>
<th>Football</th>
<th>All Other Men’s Sports</th>
<th>Women’s Basketball</th>
<th>All Other Women’s Sports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Division I</strong></td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Division II</strong></td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Division III</strong></td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Because of the high percentage of entering students who made their college choice on athletics, success in athletics—measured particularly in whether student-athletes participated in postseason competition—certainly affected those student-athletes’ responses regarding their overall athletics experience. Just over one-third of GOALS respondents and 64 percent of the former student-athletes in the SCORE study participated in NCAA tournaments and Division I football bowl games. Of the GOALS respondents, 33 percent reported having very positive feelings regarding their athletics experience, compared with 26 percent of those who did not experience postseason competition. (That follow-up was not asked in the SCORE study.)

**Satisfaction with college choice**

Recipients of the GOALS survey were asked whether they would attend the same school had they had the choice to “do it all over again.”

Across the three divisions, 72 percent reported at least some likelihood that they would. That’s an important finding, given that most student-athletes based their college decision on athletics and academic interests. It’s also comparable to data from the Higher Education Research Institute surveys indicating that about 80 percent of first-year students would definitely or probably make the same decision again.

The responses in GOALS varied by division. About 60 percent in Divisions I and III strongly agreed or agreed that they would attend the same college again (about 75 percent in each division if those who responded somewhat agree are included). About two-thirds of Division II respondents at least somewhat agreed.

Additional differences emerged when comparing those who likely would make their institutional choice again versus those who would not. Most notably, those who based their college choice primarily on academics were much more likely to report that they would attend their institution again. Beyond this, the data also show a significant relationship between student-athletes indicating a likelihood that they would choose their same institution again and the perception of having a support structure at the college (many felt good about their relationships with faculty and the impact that their coaches had on their academic career).

Although the data provide a general description of those who are unsure or who say it would be unlikely they would choose their current institution again (for example, they were likely to have based their initial decision on athletics, less likely to have a support structure, etc.), questions remain as to what motivated this response. On two simple measures of satisfaction with their collegiate experiences, these student-athletes still report positive feelings. Of the approximately 28 percent of respondents who fall into this category, the great majority reported feeling positive about both their academic and athletics experiences.

**Academic outcomes**

Because the SCORE study explores feedback from athletes 10 years removed from their intercollegiate athletics experience, the data are particularly useful in determining how athletics participation affects college students in other areas of their lives, particularly how athletics prepares them for life after college.
In terms of individual academic success for these former Division I student-athletes:

- 56 percent reported they graduated within five years with a bachelor’s degree from the institution in which they originally enrolled
- An additional 6 percent graduated from their first college with a bachelor’s degree in more than five years
- 26 percent said they graduated with a bachelor’s degree from a different college than the one in which they began
- Only 12 percent of these former student-athletes reported that they “dropped out” of college and did not return
- 26 percent reported transferring from one college to another

These results added up to a 10-year, student-centered graduation rate of 88 percent for 1994 entering freshman student-athletes in Division I. That may seem somewhat high given the more typical reports of the federal graduation rates that hover more closely toward 60 percent. However, the federal graduation rate does not account for individuals who earn their degree in six years or more after their initial enrollment and, more importantly, it does not account for transfer students who graduate from an institution in which they did not initially enroll.

The “student-centered” rate from SCORE shows the continued progression toward a degree across two or more institutions leading to high rates of graduation. It is important to note that the graduation rate among the student-athletes in the SCORE study would be very similar to rates calculated by the federal government (that is, ~60 percent) if the same restrictive methodology was applied.

Those wondering whether athletics participation compromises academic outcomes should be comforted in these findings, since it would appear student-athletes are achieving their ultimate goal quite frequently.

In addition, just over 26 percent of former Division I student-athletes in the SCORE study report completing some kind of graduate degree (MA, PhD, LLD, MD, etc.).

Graduation rates are relatively high in all the demographic subgroups listed, but the groups have somewhat different patterns of dropout and transfers. For example, the black males in sports other than baseball, basketball or football have the highest dropout rate (19.9 percent), the highest transfer rate (30.4 percent), and lowest graduation rate (though it’s still 80.6 percent).

The results in the accompanying table lead to additional questions about the causes of differences in graduation success. Predictive statistical models show that the probability of eventual graduation increases for student-athletes who had higher academic performances in high school and who remained in one college (not transferring, for example) and made consistent progress.

As for transfers, the relative impacts of transfer on the academic trajectories of Division I student-athletes is complex. A report from the U.S. Department of Education indicated that transferring during college was associated with a delay in graduation of, on average, seven months when compared with those who did not transfer (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). The relatively high rates of student-centered graduation are largely due to the success of transfers who graduate from other colleges, which explains why those individuals are examined more in-depth.

To start, those who stay in the first school graduate in an average of 4.3 years, while the transfers seem to take somewhat
longer to reach their degrees (4.5-4.7 years). Further, student-athletes who report they stayed in one school graduated at a 90.8 percent rate, while those who transferred graduated at a 79.6 percent rate – a significant difference by statistical standards.

These differences in the probability of eventual success between transfer student-athletes and non-transfers are affected by the academic performance of those students in their initial institution. For example, students who have a college GPA of approximately 2.0 when they transfer are about 20 percent less likely to graduate than 2.0 students who stay in one school. However, those transfers who have a GPA of 3.5 or higher at the time of transfer have only a 2 to 3 percent lower likelihood of graduating than similar students who remain in one institution.

Analyses using the SCORE data have provided researchers with a better understanding of the actual success rate, as defined as bachelor’s degree attainment, of NCAA student-athletes.

Athletics skills useful for career

Speaking of transferring, the skill sets student-athletes learned from their athletics participation did some transferring of their own, as they came in handy later on in student-athletes’ lives.

Most of the respondents in the SCORE study in fact reported that college athletics positively influenced their leadership skills, teamwork, racial sensitivity, study skills, time management and work ethic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence of College Athletics on Former Student-Athletes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Positive</td>
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</table>

Respondents to SCORE were asked whether they believed athletics affected their career. One-half of the former Division I student-athletes reported that the skills and values they learned through athletics did in fact help them a great deal in getting their current job, and another 26 percent reported they were of some help. In contrast, only 16 percent of former student-athletes reported that their personal contacts were of great help in landing a job.

As for the career attainment itself, the SCORE study again provides valuable insight. Overall, a large majority of the former student-athlete sample (91 percent) reported having a full-time job (or two jobs) in the previous year. That’s 11 percent higher than the cohort from Monitoring the Future (MTF), which is an ongoing study from the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan about the behaviors, attitudes and values of American secondary school students, college students and young adults.

Also, only 2 percent of the former student-athletes reported being unemployed compared to seven percent of the comparison MTF group. One-half of the former Division I student-athletes reported that they are either a manager/administrator or professional without a doctoral degree.

Former Division I student-athletes also tended to work at their full-time job longer and earn more money on average than the MTF comparison group. Eighty-one percent of former student-athletes, compared to 65 percent of the MTF cohort, reported working all 12 months the previous year. Also, 48 percent of former student-athletes reported a salary of more than $50,000 per year, while only 16 percent of the MTF group reported income at or above that level.

Generally, former student-athletes report being satisfied with their job, as 87 percent of SCORE respondents said they are at least somewhat satisfied. There were no significant differences by division. There was, however, a significant relationship between satisfaction and degree attainment. Former student-athletes who have earned a bachelor’s degree were significantly more likely to report being satisfied with their current job than those who have not yet earned a bachelor’s degree.