Related Studies on Student-Athlete Experience

The GOALS and SCORE studies are not the first efforts to understand the lives (academic and otherwise) of student-athletes. In the past 20 years alone, many attempts have been made to gauge the experiences and academic pathways of student-athletes, including studies like the NCAA Graduation Success Rate and Academic Success Rate, and the Academic Progress Rate. These have provided objective information regarding the academic outcomes of student-athletes, but they have not provided any direct input from the student-athletes’ perspective on their own athletics and academic experiences.

Another precursor to these studies was the NCAA-financed 1987 National Study of Student-Athletes conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). This study did provide direct input from student-athletes about their lives and directly led to some important legislation – most notably the limits on the amount of time that could be spent each week on athletics-related activities (that is, the 20-hour rule, which limits student-athletes to 20 hours per week in-season). However, those data were limited to Division I students and are now more than two decades old.

The NCAA isn’t the only organization to engage in such research, either. The most notable recent efforts have been the Mellon Foundation-supported studies that were presented in the books “The Game of Life” and “Reclaiming the Game.” These studies provided some useful information but were limited in the types of institutions that were sampled and in the extent to which the student-athletes were asked directly about their experiences and opinions.

Other studies, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and studies from the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA (for example, Your First College Year and the College Senior Survey), have explored student academic engagement, including student-athletes.

Taken together, all of these studies informed, inspired and guided the GOALS and SCORE initiatives, which represent the most comprehensive effort to understand the lives of student-athletes across all three NCAA membership divisions.