



GOALS and SCORE Studies

Introduction



Athletics as an integral part of higher education is distinctively American. For well over 100 years, colleges and universities in this country have been sending their students to compete against one another on the “fields of friendly strife.” While many nations have a long history of athletics competition, terms such as student-athlete and scholarship-athlete are unique to the United States.

How athletics affects the higher education experience for those who participate is a resultant conversation. While college sports are known to increase teamwork, leadership and health awareness for those who play them, participation for many athletes makes for a different educational experience than for their non-athlete peers.

Influencing the experience is the burgeoning popularity of intercollegiate athletics. Americans have an insatiable desire to cheer their schools on to victory, and a commercialized broadcast environment is ever-willing to placate it. In all, the mix can produce a “win at all costs” attitude both for the participants and those who have an interest (perhaps even a

stake) in their success. Particularly at the highest levels of college sports, that has created debate about the optimal state of athletics in the educational setting.

The NCAA has conducted two significant studies to help inform the discussion. Because all of this revolves around the experiences of student-athletes, both studies are based on feedback obtained directly from them. One focuses on recent classes of athletes, while the other checks in with former players further removed from their competitive days. Together, they offer views into the aspirations, experiences and outcomes of nearly 30,000 men and women who participated in Divisions I, II or III intercollegiate athletics.

The first iteration of the Growth, Opportunities, Aspirations and Learning of Students in college (GOALS) study queried student-athletes from all three NCAA divisions who were participating in athletics in the 2005-06 academic year. Students from about 2,000 teams at more than 1,000 NCAA schools were asked to participate. Responses were collected from teams at 627 institutions (61 percent of the total NCAA membership), and in all, 20,925 student-athletes provided input. Questions probed students’ satisfaction with their athletics, academic and social experiences while in college, as well as their health and well-being.



The Study of College Outcomes and Recent Experiences (SCORE) is a longitudinal examination of student-athletes who graduated from high school in 1994, many of whom were scholarship athletes at Divisions I or II schools. The survey went to 28,079 former student-athletes, 8,529 (30.4 percent) of which responded.

Combined, the GOALS and SCORE studies offer a wealth of information about:

- The **aspirations** prospective students have about participating in college sports (their reasons for choosing a school, their academic goals and expectations about what life as a student-athlete will be like),
- The **experiences** they have as student-athletes (how athletics affects their choice of major, how being an athlete affects their academic engagement, and how athletics time commitments affect their ability to experience all a campus has to offer), and
- The **outcomes** from those experiences (how being an athlete affects their preparation for life after college).

Some of the findings are intuitive, such as student-athletes’ academic engagement being related to whether they define themselves more as student or athlete. But other findings may be surprising, such as student-athlete graduation rates being higher than even previous academic studies have shown, or that athletics participation doesn’t restrict choice of academic major as much as some might think.

The goal of both studies is to provide an objective, data-based examination of the impacts of college sports participation

on college students, not only to know more about what the student-athlete experience has been in the immediate and not-too-distant past, but also to learn more about how to improve it in the future.

How the Research was Compiled

For the first time, student-athletes across the entire spectrum of the NCAA membership have had the opportunity to report on their experiences. In all, more than 20,000 student-athletes responded to the GOALS survey, and more than 8,000 former student-athletes responded to the SCORE study.

GOALS

The sampling plan for the GOALS study was designed so that at least 12 percent of the NCAA member institutions that sponsor a given sport would be asked to survey their student-athletes in that sport. Student-athletes in most NCAA championship sports across the three divisions were targeted for participation. This sampling strategy was implemented to achieve an appropriate representation of the NCAA student-athlete population.

The NCAA research staff created a computer program that sampled institutions at random and selected one to three sports at each NCAA school for the study. Ultimately, students from 2,026 individual sport teams at 1,026 member institutions were asked to participate. Responses were collected from teams at 627 institutions (61 percent of NCAA member schools) and data were analyzed from 20,925 student-athletes. Response rates by selected sport groups are provided below.

Number of GOALS Student-Athlete Respondents by Major Sport Group and Division						
	Baseball	Men's Basketball	Football	All Other Men's Sports	Women's Basketball	All Other Women's Sports
Number of Division I Respondents (Institutional Response Rate = 66%)	655	417	1,658	2,107	423	2,719
Number of Division II Respondents (Institutional Response Rate = 66%)	826	360	1,563	1,009	373	1,534
Number of Division III Respondents (Institutional Response Rate = 54%)	810	463	561	1,763	426	2,726

Data were gathered through a self-administered, anonymous survey presented to student-athletes who were 18 years of age or older, on site at their institution. In a few cases, institutions opted to present students with an electronic version of the questionnaire.

The surveys were administered in a proctored setting through the help of the institution's Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR). Through collaboration with the Faculty Athletics Representatives Association, FARs often help the NCAA research staff administer various studies. For the GOALS study, only the FAR and the team members were present; no athletics personnel (coaches, athletic trainers, etc.) were allowed in the room during the administration. The FAR was provided a specific protocol and script to read that emphasized that the study was completely voluntary and that each student's responses were anonymous.

Students had the option to complete a postcard that was attached to the survey, and thus waive their anonymity. By completing the postcard, students provided researchers with their social security number so that their responses to the GOALS survey could be paired with other academic data that the NCAA already possessed (such as high school and college academic performance data). If they chose to return this postcard, it was detached from the survey and placed in a separate envelope to maintain the confidentiality of the survey through transport and coding. This step was completely voluntary. A total of 8,429 postcards (41.5 percent of the total respondents) were completed and returned to the NCAA.

The NCAA research staff created the GOALS survey with input from several outside academic consultants. Survey questions probed seven related components:

- College athletics experiences
- College academic experiences
- College social experiences

- The student-athlete experience
- Health and well-being
- Time commitments
- Background information

The survey also included an opportunity for open-ended comments.

Once the completed GOALS surveys were received at the NCAA national office, they were sent to an outside vendor for scanning and compilation of a completed database. When the database was returned to the NCAA, it underwent a significant spot-checking process, including hand verifying several hundred surveys in their entirety. Once the data were satisfactorily cleaned, the NCAA research staff and select outside consultants compiled the statistics summarized in this report.

SCORE

To accumulate the pool of former student-athletes needed for the SCORE study, data from more than 100,000 former student-athletes who graduated from high school in 1994 were culled from the Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse (IEC) rosters. In 2005-06, the individuals who graduated from high school in 1994 were about 29-30 years old, and it would have been a little more than 10 years since they graduated from high school and started college.

A subset of 28,079 of these former student-athletes was selected to receive the survey. They were chosen because they fit one of two criteria: (1) They either were recruits of a Division I or II institution who had agreed in 1994 through the IEC application to allow the NCAA to contact them for future research, or (2) they were Division I student-athletes who were a part of the NCAA's Academic Performance Census (an annual collection of academic performance variables, such as GPA and credit hours, from a representative group of Division I student-athletes) in 1994.

The NCAA research staff located each person's current address using a credit-reporting agency and mailed a 12-page survey.

The NCAA received 8,529 mailed-in responses (30.4 percent of the sample), along with about 3,000 (less than 10 percent) returned for incorrect addresses, which resulted in about a 34 percent response rate. Response rates by selected sport groups are provided below.

Number of SCORE Student-Athlete Respondents by Major Sport Group and Division						
	Baseball	Men's Basketball	Football	All Other Men's Sports	Women's Basketball	All Other Women's Sports
Number of Division I Respondents	521	239	1,124	1,385	456	2,314
Number of Division II Respondents	131	50	253	227	126	412
Number of Division III Respondents	32	14	69	70	34	125

(Due to the sampling methodology and responses received, all analyses regarding the SCORE survey in this report focus on former student-athletes who attended a Division I institution.)

As with the GOALS study, a group of outside academic consultants helped the NCAA research staff formulate questions in the SCORE survey. Survey questions probed six related components:

- College sports experiences
- College educational experiences
- Current career and work experiences
- Health and well-being
- Daily life experiences
- Background information

The survey also included an opportunity for open-ended comments.

A database of information was collated by running each returned form through an optical scanner, and the resulting

database was spot-checked for accuracy by hand. Each form contained a five-digit identifier that was linked to the respondent's identifying information. This allowed prior NCAA data, including high school and college academic information, to be merged with the mailed-in questionnaire to form a longitudinal database. These longitudinal data were de-identified to assure confidentiality.

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.

Part 1

Aspirations: What Student-Athletes Want From Their College Experience

The GOALS and SCORE studies seek to identify the "added-value" that college sports participation has on NCAA student-athletes and what factors within the college athletics experience influence a positive outcome.

To that end, the first task is to explore how prospective student-athletes make their college choice and what they expect from their athletics experience upon enrolling.

Previous studies haven't captured the academic motivations and aspirations of student-athletes, but both GOALS and SCORE asked respondents about their degree plans and the importance of education in their lives.

Graduation as a priority

While existing NCAA graduation-rate data confirm that most student-athletes are completing their degrees – and that student-athletes in general graduate at rates equal to or greater than their student-body counterparts – those data do not address student-athletes' motivations for enrolling and if those motivations are primarily academic- or athletics-related in nature.



Data from GOALS show that most student-athletes enter college highly motivated to leave with a degree. Overall, more than 80 percent of the student-athletes in the 2005-06 GOALS study said it was *very important* for them to graduate with a bachelor's degree. Another 16 percent said it was *important* or *somewhat important*.

By division, 83 percent of respondents in Divisions I and III reported that graduation is very important to them, while 78 percent of respondents in Division II felt that way.

Understanding that pursuit of an athletics career is one of the motivators for many student-athletes to enroll in college, the GOALS study examined how responses to the importance of graduation may vary among Division I student-athletes who believe it is likely they will become a professional or Olympic athlete. While those who indicated a likelihood that their athletics career would continue after college placed less importance on graduation, 79 percent still responded that graduation was *very important* to them. This is compared to 85 percent of those who felt it was unlikely that they would be pursuing athletics endeavors after college.

GOALS respondents also were asked how important they believed earning a bachelor's degree was to their families and coaches. The responses regarding their families largely mirrored their responses regarding how important graduation was to them personally.

Their perception of the importance their coaches placed on their graduation, however, was considerably less. Overall, 65 percent of student-athletes believed their graduation was *very important* to their coaches, while another 22 percent believed it was *important*.

A much higher percentage of Division I female student-athletes reported that their coach emphasized graduation when compared with the men's sports. In Division II, student-athletes participating in baseball and men's other sports were considerably less likely to report that their graduation was important to their coaches.

College choice

The GOALS survey also asked student-athletes to identify the primary influence on their college decision from among the following seven choices:

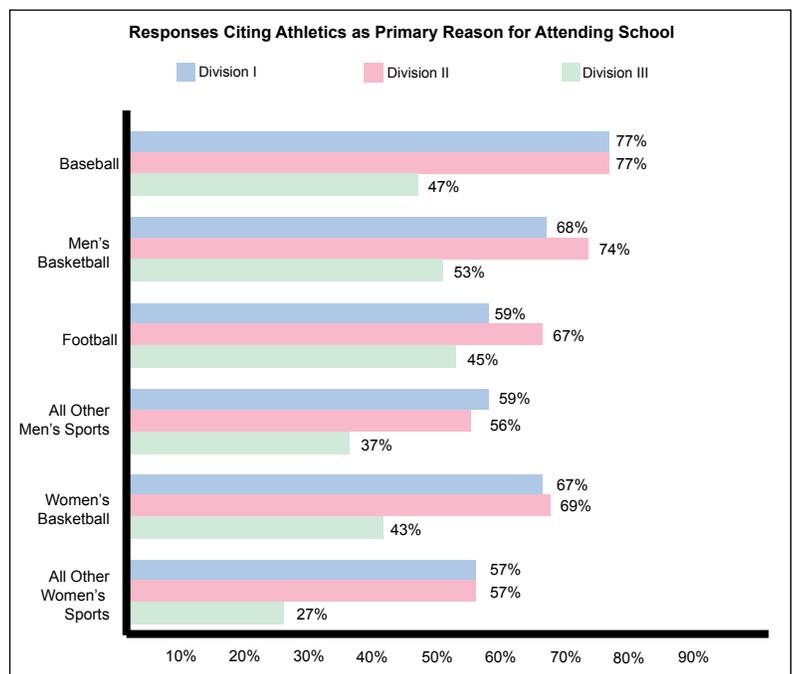
- Academic offerings, academic reputations, etc.
- Athletics participation
- Proximity to home, family, friends
- Proximity to spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend
- Social scene at this school or have friends attending
- Expectations (of parents, teachers, community, etc.)
- Cost or financial reasons

Athletics participation and the academic offerings/reputation of the institution were by far the most popular choices, as more than 80 percent cited one or the other as their primary reason. Most student-ath-

letes in Divisions I and II cited athletics (61 and 65 percent, respectively). While academics was the favored choice among Division III student-athletes, still 36 percent of them selected athletics participation as their main driver.

Differences were seen among sports as well. Across the three divisions, student-athletes in baseball and men's and women's basketball chose athletics at significantly greater rates than student-athletes in football and in the men's and women's other sports categories. Of particular note is the comparatively low percentage of Division I football student-athletes citing athletics as their primary reason. Fifty-nine percent of football student-athletes reported athletics as the most significant factor in choosing their institution compared with more than two-thirds of men's and women's basketball student-athletes and more than three-quarters of baseball student-athletes.

Also of interest are the differences in reported attitudes and behaviors between student-athletes who cite athletics as the primary driver of their college choice and those who cite academics, particularly when it comes to academic engagement and aspirations. Across divisions, student-athletes who choose their institution based on athletics:



- Feel less positive about their choice of academic major;
- Feel less positive about the efforts they have put into class; and
- Generally report lower levels of engagement on several measures, including participating in class, discussing coursework with others and engaging in the academic extras, such as an internship or completing a senior thesis.

Further, those who report basing their decision on athletics also indicated that they view themselves more as athletes than as students, and they report spending, on average, an additional five hours a week on athletics activities and six fewer hours on academics.

Not only are these student-athletes reporting they are less engaged in their academics, they also self-report lower GPAs (0.14 lower for Division I student-athletes who based their decision primarily on athletics, 0.18 lower for Division III and 0.25 lower for Division II). These findings are discussed further in Part 2 of this report (Student-Athlete Experiences).

Aspirations for life after college

In addition to aspirations of obtaining a bachelor's degree, GOALS respondents were asked about their intended plans immediately after leaving school. Response options included: working, graduate school, serving in the military, devoting time to their sport, taking transition time, and homemaker.

Approximately 44 percent in Divisions II and III and 35 percent in Division I believed they would be working in a job related to their major. Another 12 percent across divisions believed they would be working in a job unrelated to their major. Only 5 percent reported having no post-college plans; and military service, staying at home/caregiver and taking some transition time received very little endorsement.

Overall, about 27 percent believed they would be attending graduate school in that first year. However, the overall percentage of student-athletes who indicated that they intend to pursue a graduate or professional degree *at some point in their future* is much higher. When asked how likely it is that they will obtain an advanced degree, 41 percent responded *very likely* and another 24 percent responded *somewhat likely*. Division III student-athletes reported this in higher numbers than either Divisions I or II, and consistent with national trends, females were much more likely to report a strong probability of attending graduate school than males (52 vs. 33 percent overall).

Wanting to go pro

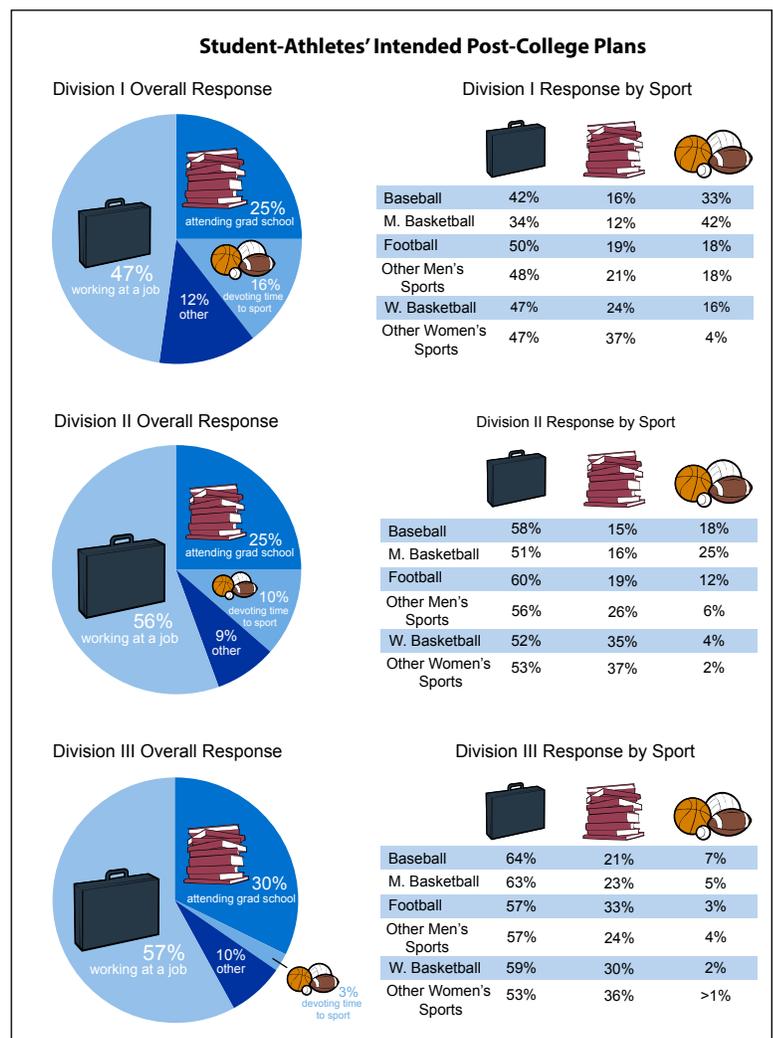
The NCAA has long been concerned about inflated aspirations from young people who believe their likelihood of "going pro" is much higher than it actually is.

Chances of NCAA athletes playing professionally are highest in baseball, but even that is only about 10 percent. The likelihood of it happening in football and men's and women's basketball is just a little over 1 percent.

That hasn't stopped prospective student-athletes from dreaming big. Among responses from all the

"As time passes since my college experience, I realize that playing football in college made me get more out of life. It has helped me to live life with a superior level of passion. I describe myself as NOT a sports person, but one who was attracted to football because of the physical and mental challenge that it offered."

- Former Division I football student-athlete



student-athletes in the GOALS study, about 10 percent reported they would be devoting themselves to their sport during their first year out of college. And, many student-athletes believe it's possible they will continue their athletics careers at the professional level after college. There were, however, significant divisional differences. A higher percentage of Divisions I and II student-athletes (35 percent and 28 percent, respectively) thought it was at least *somewhat likely* they would become a professional or Olympic athlete, while only 9 percent of Division III student-athletes thought so.

The SCORE study on former student-athletes showed a similar percentage (35 percent) of former Division I student-athletes who had believed upon entering college that they would become a professional or Olympian in their sport. At the time of survey administration, though, only 2 percent of former Division I student-athletes reported they were indeed a professional athlete. (However, that doesn't take into account former professional and Olympic athletes who may no longer have been competing at age 30.)

There were some noteworthy differences by sport in the GOALS study as well. Among Division I student-athletes, for instance, almost two thirds of men's basketball players and 55 percent of baseball players reported they believe it is at least *somewhat likely* that they will become professional or Olympic athletes. In Division I football, 46 percent believe that a career in sports is at least *somewhat likely*. Among Division I males in other sports, more than one-third felt they might be able to pursue athletics dreams after college, and 39 percent of female basketball players felt that this was at least *somewhat likely*.

In Division II, 46 percent of men's basketball student-athletes believed that they were at least *somewhat likely* to have a professional or Olympic opportunity. Football and baseball players were slightly less likely to believe this was possible (39 percent).

The Division III group with the highest expectations of professional or Olympic athletics participation was baseball players, 18 percent of whom felt the possibility was at least *somewhat likely*.

Part 2

Experiences: What Student-Athletes Discovered Once They Enrolled

With data in hand on prospective student-athletes' college aspirations, including their emphasis on graduation as a priority, and their college choices based in large part on schools' athletics and academic offerings, the GOALS and SCORE studies also shed light on how well student-athletes' actual experiences lived up to those pre-college desires.

This section of the report focuses on how well student-athletes balanced their athletics and academic demands, and whether their athletics participation helped or hindered their academic goals.

Academic engagement

Both the GOALS and SCORE studies probed student-athletes' thoughts on their "academic engagement." As defined in previous studies on college experiences conducted both by the NCAA and other organizations, "engagement" means active participation, not simply motivation. In that vein, the studies included questions used in other national surveys, 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, which have explored student academic engagement, including student-athletes), in order to maintain a consistent and comparable response base.

GOALS study respondents (current student-athletes in 2005-06) were asked about the likelihood that they would engage in various academic activities, such as independent research with faculty, internships and completing a senior thesis. They also were asked how frequently they participate actively in class, how prepared they were when they came to class, and whether they were willing to discuss issues and ideas from class with faculty and other students afterward. SCORE respondents (former Division I student-athletes) also were asked to reflect upon their undergraduate experience and their level of engagement, including how positively they felt about the effort they put forth in their classes.

Both studies indicate that despite the time demands resulting from their athletics participation, student-athletes are making a concerted effort to be actively engaged in the academic experience.

In the GOALS study, respondents reported a high level of engagement within the classroom, with more than 70 percent saying that they *always* or *often* participated actively in class. GOALS student-athletes also generally came to class pre-

pared, as 87 percent said they *rarely or never* came to class without completed written assignments.

In addition to traditional classroom activities, more than 40 percent of the GOALS respondents reported that they either already had participated or planned to participate in collaborative research with a faculty member. More than three-fourths said they would complete an internship or practicum experience, and almost half said they would complete a senior thesis.

This level of engagement was reflected in their perceptions of their efforts as well. When asked how they felt about the efforts they put forth in their classes, 57 percent responded feeling *very positive* or *positive* about it, and another 28 percent said they felt *somewhat positive*.

SCORE respondents also thought highly of their academic engagement. More than 50 percent of the former Division I student-athletes responding felt *very positive* or *positive*, and another 30 percent felt *somewhat positive*.

These results are telling, since a student's perceived effort in class is known to be an important predictor of academic success. (The results also lend credence to the fact that student-athletes, in general, graduate at rates higher than those of their student-body counterparts.)

The balancing act

Another telling component of the GOALS and SCORE studies is the surveys' probe into whether the college experience was befitting of the term "student-athlete." The NCAA was quite intentional in establishing that term in the 1960s as a cornerstone of the NCAA's mission to treat athletics participation as "an integral part" of the college experience.

Since then, that balancing act has become part and parcel of the Association's work. Even in some past branding efforts, Division II has purported a "Life in the Balance" mantra for its student-athletes, while Division III advocates a similar "proportioned" approach that emphasizes a well-rounded experience for athletes who also want to excel in the classroom and in other activities the college has to offer.

The GOALS and SCORE studies put it directly to the student-athletes: During their college experience, did they identify themselves more as athletes than as students? And how did that affect their satisfaction with the experience?

Their answers are important, since data show that the way in which student-athletes perceive themselves has far-reaching implications for many aspects of their lives outside of athletics, including the level of engagement in their academic careers. But the increasing popularity of college sports brings some cache for the participants, too – there's a lot of pride in saying "I'm a college athlete," particularly when the student is on an athletics scholarship.

There's also the issue of the time athletics demands from its participants, particularly at the Division I level. Many stu-

Equally engaged?

While data on the levels of academic engagement of student-athletes compared to a non-athlete population are limited, they do reveal similar engagement between both cohorts. Using National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data as the comparison, for example, GOALS results showed student-athletes reporting greater levels of conducting independent research with faculty and participating in class discussions, and slightly lower levels of participating in a culminating senior project or an internship. Data from Your First College Year (YFCY) shows that student-athletes and non-athletes at NCAA institutions are participating actively in class at similar rates.

Not surprisingly, the data indicate that while student-athletes report being engaged in their academic careers, the type and level of engagement varies by division, sport and gender. For example, the GOALS study showed that student-athletes competing in Division III were more likely to report engagement in the out-of-classroom activities, such as independent research with a faculty member, senior thesis and internship or practicum.

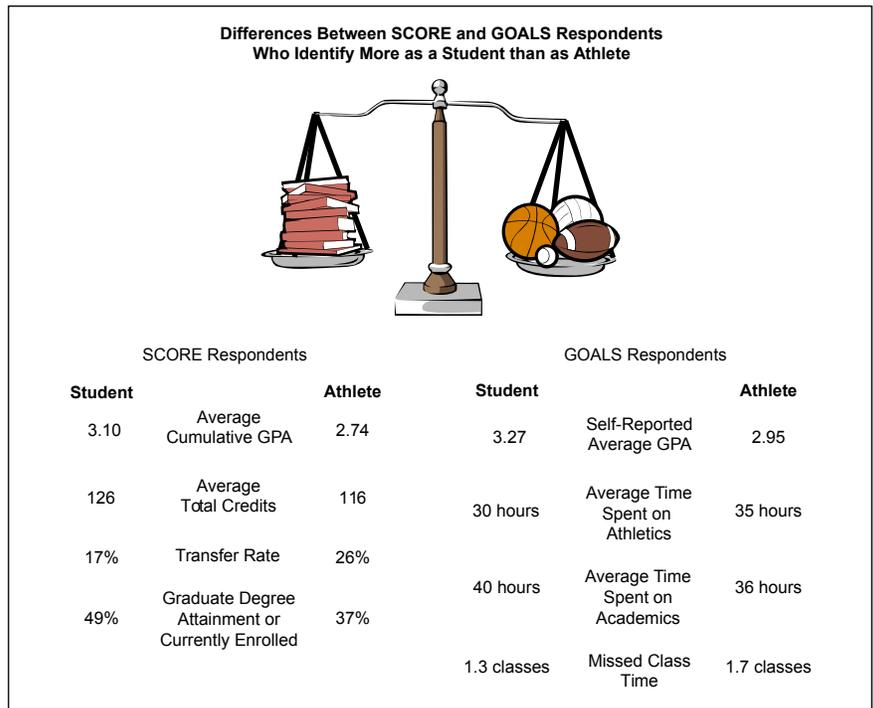
And differences in the level of engagement are related to the factors affecting college choice. Those who choose their institution primarily for academic reasons are more likely to report higher levels of engagement than those who choose their institution primarily for athletics.

The data also suggest that the difference in the rate of participation between student-athletes in Division III compared to those in Divisions I and II is due not only to a lack of time but also to a lack of interest. Per the table below, more Division I and II student-athletes reported choosing not to complete a senior thesis because of a lack of interest as opposed to just not having the available time to do so.

	Division I	Division II	Division III
Current or Future Involvement	42%	47%	60%
No Time	18%	18%	14%
No Interest	40%	35%	27%

dent-athletes are spending as much or more time on their sport as they are on academics or other activities the college offers. In fact, the GOALS and SCORE studies show that when student-athletes are asked what they'd do if they had more discretionary time, many said they'd devote it to athletics.

Given all of that, it is not surprising that 69 percent of Division I and II and even 53 percent of Division III respondents in the GOALS study (current student-athletes in 2005-06) said they perceive themselves more as athletes than as students. The athlete identifier was also more prevalent among males, particularly baseball players. It is important to note that in subsequent iterations of the survey, the question was worded differently to allow student-athletes to indicate how strongly they identify as athletes and as students. Findings from the 2010 study (which can be seen in greater detail [here](#)) show that student-athletes really have a dual identity – both as students and as athletes.



As noted earlier, the two studies indicate that a high percentage of student-athletes in all three divisions are committed to their academic work and hold graduation as the ultimate priority. But because self-perception has such a significant relationship with the students' level of academic engagement, it's interesting to dig deeper into how students who see themselves more as athletes are affected.

Again, while the data show that all student-athletes are actively engaged in their academics, those who identify more as an athlete report lower levels of academic engagement on all measures studied and across the three divisions. That includes participating in an internship, discussing coursework with professors and other students, and completing written assignments on time. For example, 83 percent of those who identify more as an athlete report completing written assignments on time compared to 94 percent of student-athletes who identify more as a student. Granted, 83 percent is quite high, but the statistical difference is significant.

Student-athletes who identify more as athletes also report, on average, spending five additional hours each week on athletics and four fewer hours on academics, as well as missing almost one-half class more per week than those who identify more as students.

They also self-report a lower GPA and acknowledge that they are not putting forth as much effort into their coursework as they perhaps are able. When asked how positively they felt about the effort they put forth in their classes, 70 percent of GOALS respondents who identify more as students reported they felt *very positive* or *positive* compared with 50 percent of those who identify more as athletes. This shows in the percentage of those who report they are confident in their abilities to succeed academically. Seventy-nine percent of student-athletes who identify more as a student indicated that they are *very positive* or *positive* about their abilities to succeed academically versus 61 percent of those who identify more as an athlete.

The SCORE study (former student-athletes) revealed similar differences in levels of academic engagement as a function of self-perception. Former student-athletes in Division I who reported identifying more as a student while in college consistently reported greater levels of engagement on all measures. For example, 91 percent of them reported participating actively in class at least *some of the time* as compared to 79 percent of those who identified more as an athlete.

Similar to the current student-athletes, these greater levels of engagement were reflected in how the former student-athletes reported feeling about their efforts in class, as well as how positively they felt about the overall education they received. While less than half (41 percent) of former Division I student-athletes who identified more as an athlete said they felt *very positive* or *positive* about their efforts in classes, 65 percent of those who identified more as a student felt *very positive* or *positive*. Although most respondents in both groups reported *very positive* or *positive* feelings about their overall education, those who identified more as a student reported greater levels of positive feelings (84 percent) than

those who identified more as an athlete (65 percent).

Using a subset of student-athletes for whom in-college academic records existed, in addition to their survey data, differences also were seen in reported academic attainment. Former student-athletes who identified more as a student while in college achieved a greater final GPA and had earned, on average, 10 additional credits. They also were less likely to transfer and were more likely to have earned a postgraduate degree or be currently enrolled in a graduate program.

Both studies asked respondents what effect they believe their athletics participation had on their academic performance, as well as their academic choices. Seventy percent of the GOALS respondents said their grades were affected by their athletics participation, but not all thought that effect was negative. Just over half (52 percent) believe their GPA would have been *higher* had they not been a student-athlete, while 18 percent thought it actually would have been lower.

In the SCORE study, more respondents (40 percent) said their GPA was unaffected by athletics, and a similar proportion to the GOALS respondents (19 percent) felt their GPA was positively affected.

Importantly, though, 53 percent of the former Division I student-athletes reported that their athletics participation caused them to spend less time on their academic work than they wanted. Not surprisingly, there is a significant relationship between feeling athletics commitments cut into time spent on academics and perceptions that athletics participation affected a student-athlete's GPA. Most of those who reported that athletics did not affect their time spent on academics also reported that their GPA was unaffected by athletics participation.

In regard to academic choices, a group of respondents in both studies (about one-third in GOALS and a little more than half in SCORE) reported that athletics participation prevented them from taking courses they wanted. In a separate question, student-athletes in GOALS were asked specifically if a coach had discouraged them from taking a certain class. Overall, 22 percent said that it had happened *once or twice* while 3 percent reported it happened *often*.

In light of the various academic sacrifices student-athletes report they make directly because of their athletics participation, it may not be surprising that almost two-thirds (64 percent) say they would be willing to sacrifice their athletics participation for academics – if forced to make such a decision.

By sport, football student-athletes in all three divisions were most likely to report their willingness to sacrifice athletics. This is an interesting finding and one that likely deserves more attention. It could be due to football student-athletes having among the greatest pressure on their time when compared with the other sport groups – both academically and athletically. The combined stress on time could be contributing to their willingness to sacrifice one of the activities.

Baseball student-athletes, across division, were least likely to indicate they would sacrifice athletics for academics if they had to choose one activity over the other. Interestingly, they report among the greatest time spent on their sport but among the lowest on academics across division. In the time they choose to devote to each activity, they are making their priorities known, so it is not surprising that they would be least likely to indicate a willingness to sacrifice their sport for academics.

Social balance

As indicated earlier, the balancing act isn't between just athletics and academics, but offering student-athletes the chance to participate fully in all the college has to offer. While a great deal of time and energy is focused on academic and athletics activities, student-athletes still are part of a greater whole, including the campus and the community in which their institution resides.

The GOALS survey asked the current student-athletes in 2005-06 about their level of involvement with these communities. The study first probed how much time student-athletes were spending away from the campus during the season because of athletics. On average,

“During college I was never the most talented on my team, but I would attempt to make up for my lack of talent with spending many extra hours training and working harder than my teammates. This taught me perseverance and that an individual can gain a multitude of skills (leadership, emotional, etc.) through these types of activities. I learned a great deal in these years that have helped me achieve many goals.”

- Former Division I wrestler

“My participation in Division I athletics for four years was key to my academic and career success as well as learning time-management skills. During my fifth year of college (not swimming), my GPA actually declined due to not having to manage my study time around the 20-hour-per-week athletics schedule.

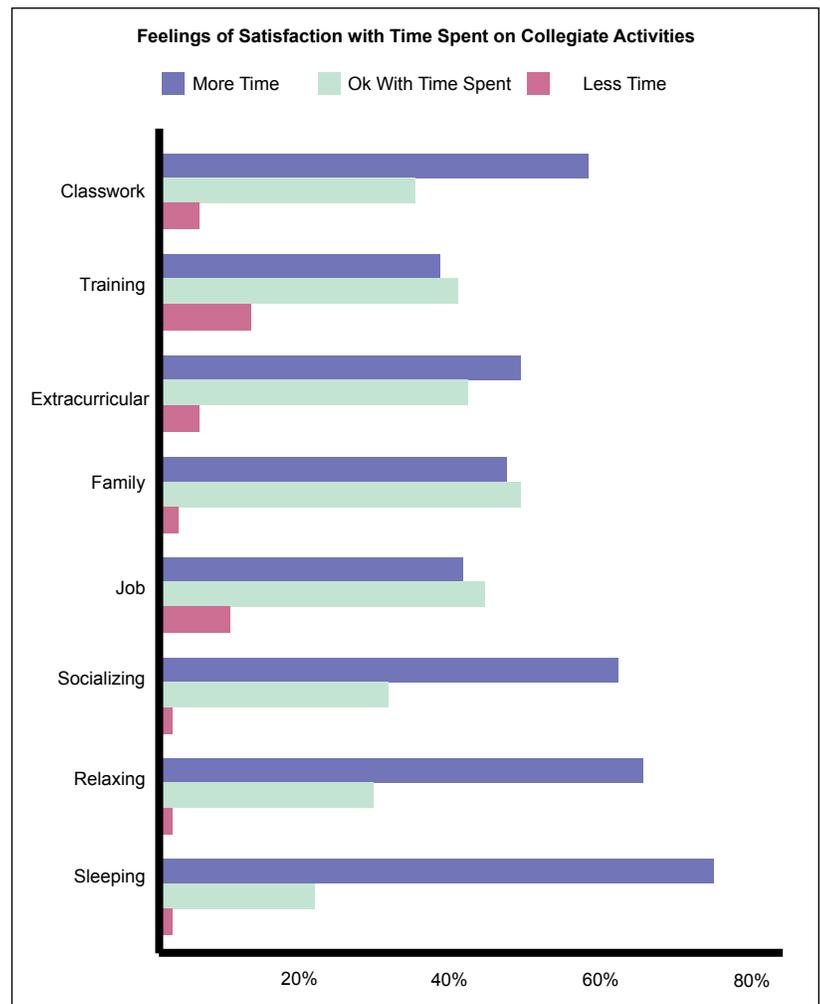
-Former Division I women's swimmer

student-athletes reported spending 1.6 days away (including weekends). Female student-athletes and baseball student-athletes reported the greatest time away at almost two days (1.8) per week on average. In spite of the time away from campus, though, more than 80 percent of GOALS respondents said their athletics participation benefited them socially.

The GOALS study also sheds light on how student-athletes would prefer to spend their discretionary time. While there are very few things student-athletes wish they could spend less time on; there are a few for which they feel they could use more time.

The areas student-athletes report really needing more time are academics and general “down time,” including socializing, relaxing and sleeping. In general, female student-athletes were more likely to want more time on academics when compared with their male counterparts. Football and men’s and women’s basketball players were more likely than the other groups to want more time with family.

Divisionally, Divisions I and II student-athletes were more likely than Division III to want more time for coursework, while Divisions II and III student-athletes were significantly more likely to report wanting more time for a job.



Sidebar: The use of academic support services

The GOALS study (current student-athletes in 2005-06) questioned student-athletes regarding the extent to which they were aware of available academic support services offered through the athletics department and the extent to which they used them.

GOALS asked about access to six different services offered through the athletics department: (1) academic advisors who assist with course selection, scheduling and registration; (2) academic advisors who monitor degree progress and help with career options; (3) tutors who review class material or help prepare for exams; (4) tutors who assist in writing assignments; (5) study hall; and (6) faculty mentors.

The student-athletes were asked if they use these services frequently, occasionally or not at all. In general, most student-athletes reported awareness and use of these services.

Access to services

In the GOALS study, student-athletes in Division I reported access to the various services in much greater numbers than Division II or III student-athletes, though the rates were pretty high in all three.

One of the stronger differences in response was to the question of having access to tutors who could review course material. While 86 percent of Division I student-athletes said they had such access, 76 percent of Division II and 66 percent of Division III student-athletes reported it.

Sport group and class-year differences also emerged. Across divisions, football student-athletes were most likely to report access to services. Regarding class year, while there were notable differences within Divisions I and II, the strongest differences were within III, particularly among the freshmen. For example, 71 percent of first-year Division III respondents reported access to tutors to review course materials, compared with 59 percent of seniors.

Access to Academic Support Services by Sport Group in Division I						
	Baseball	Men's Basketball	Football	All Other Men's Sports	Women's Basketball	All Other Women's Sports
Advisors - Degree Progress	92%	95%	95%	92%	95%	92%
Tutors - Review Course Material	80%	86%	88%	84%	90%	88%
Access to Academic Support Services by Sport Group in Division II						
	Baseball	Men's Basketball	Football	All Other Men's Sports	Women's Basketball	All Other Women's Sports
Advisors - Degree Progress	90%	89%	90%	84%	82%	81%
Tutors - Review Course Material	76%	80%	81%	71%	72%	74%
Access to Academic Support Services by Sport Group in Division III						
	Baseball	Men's Basketball	Football	All Other Men's Sports	Women's Basketball	All Other Women's Sports
Advisors - Degree Progress	82%	80%	86%	76%	77%	67%
Tutors - Review Course Material	72%	67%	77%	65%	65%	61%

Use of services

When student-athletes were aware of available services, most took advantage of them. As with the issue of awareness and access, Division I student-athletes in the GOALS study were more likely than their counterparts in Divisions II and III to report using the services frequently as opposed to occasionally.

In general, Division I student-athletes in men's and women's basketball and football were more likely to report use of academic support services than other student-athletes within the division. Student-athletes competing in men's and women's Olympic sports, while reporting less frequent use of available academic services, also report in large numbers benefitting from what is made available, particularly advisors who help guide their academic careers. More than 80 percent of both groups reported using advisors to assist with course selection and nearly three-quarters report using advisors to help monitor their degree progress.

Influence of services

Across division and sport group, most student-athletes believe their academic advisors and coaches had a positive influence on their academic careers.

GOALS respondents also reported, though, that in spite of these services, their GPAs might have been higher had it not been for the demands of their athletics participation. Almost two-thirds of Division I student-athletes, one-half of Division II and 40 percent of Division III student-athletes felt that way, in fact.

A few of the students' comments help point this out. For example, a Division II female swimmer said, "I didn't like how much (athletics) affected my class work. I feel like I could have done better (academically) had I more time." On the other hand, a Division III female track student-athlete thought being part of a team that had high academic expectations was an asset. "My athletics experience has made me a better student," she said. "I was never in great academic standing in high school, but one of our team goals was to have the highest team GPA in the department. So it makes you want it even more when your team is counting on you and now I have a 4.0!"

Interestingly, just over 40 percent of the Division I respondents in the SCORE study (former student-athletes) said they believed their GPA would have been higher if they had not been student-athletes. That's significantly less than in the GOALS study (about two-thirds of Division I student-athletes). Comments among the SCORE respondents generally emphasized one of two themes: They either felt their grades suffered due to the time constraints of athletics but they felt the lessons learned on the playing field were worth it, or they thought their grades were actually better during the season as a result of an enhanced need for time management.

A former Division I female swimmer wrote, "My participation in Division I athletics for four years was key to my academic and career success as well as learning time management skills. During my fifth year of college (not swimming), my GPA actually declined due to not having to manage my study time around the 20-hour-per-week athletics schedule."

Sidebar: How athletics affects choice of curriculum

When it comes to discussions regarding athletics' impact on academics, perhaps nothing generates more conversation than student-athletes' choice of major.

Colleges and universities offer vast academic menus to their students, and they offer dozens of extracurricular activities as well. From the institution's perspective, the goal is for the student to participate fully in that menu in order to develop the contributing leader/citizen the college experience aims to produce. But the institution doesn't (and shouldn't) dictate how the student engages in that experience.

It stands to reason that a student who attends a Division I institution with athletics as his or her primary focus will spend more time in that pursuit and perhaps be limited in how he or she participates in other activities the college has to offer. In that instance, the student may have to make various sacrifices to achieve his or her primary goal. Even so, from the NCAA's perspective, students having to sacrifice academic pursuits for athletics participation is not an intended outcome. The obvious goal is structuring athletics participation so that the student has a balanced educational experience (with athletics as a contributing factor).

Using GOALS and SCORE to examine the "choice of major" concern can inform the discussion on whether the time demands of athletics participation at various competitive levels and in different sports overly restrict student-athletes in being able to broadly experience all college life has to offer.

No more so than in Division I has the "choice of major" issue been scrutinized. Academic reforms in that division over time have placed a premium on student-athlete eligibility and retention (via the Academic Progress Rate), and ramped up the progress-toward-degree path by requiring student-athletes to complete 40 percent of their degree requirements by the end of their second year (the previous rule required only 25 percent to be completed by that time). That has heightened the choice-of-major conversation, since student-athletes are having to choose an academic path more quickly than in the past, and they are more dramatically (and negatively) affected if they decide to change that path in mid-stream.

The GOALS and SCORE studies help by examining not only what the student-athletes are choosing to study but also what influenced their choices and how they feel about their selection of majors.

When it comes to choice of major, overall responses (all three divisions combined) in GOALS showed the top two majors were business (27 percent) and social sciences (13 percent).

Gender differences among the student-athletes mirror what is generally seen in larger student populations. To better understand the differences between student-athletes and non-athletes, the data for the former student-athletes were checked against the national Monitoring the Future (MTF) sample and disaggregated by gender. Male respondents in the SCORE study were more likely to be business or social science majors, which corresponds generally with the male population in MTF. Male respondents in SCORE and MTF were equally likely to have majored in education, and the male former athletes were 5 percent less likely to have majored in the physical sciences, math or engineering (excluding those athletes who were exercise science/kinesiology majors).

Among females, student-athletes were more likely to choose the social sciences but were much less likely to major in education than the females in the general student body.

Whether these choices were made from aptitudes and interests or from some direct effect of the student-athlete experience cannot directly be judged from these data. Observed differences in selection of major between student-athletes and non-athletes also could be related to other factors on which the student-athlete population differs from the student body, such as ethnicity proportions, family socioeconomic status, percent of first generation college students, etc.

In addition to athletics participation affecting academic outcomes, student-athletes report that it also affects academic

Academic Majors of Former Student-Athletes and Former Students (Non-Athletes)				
	Former Student-Athletes (Male)	Former Students (Male Non-Athletes)	Former Student-Athletes (Female)	Former Students (Female Non-Athletes)
Biological Sciences	7%	5%	11%	7%
Business	30%	24%	15%	17%
Communications	6%	--	7%	--
Education	11%	11%	16%	25%
Engineering	7%	11%	2%	1%
Exercise, Sports, Kinesiology	6%	--	9%	--
Humanities/ Fine Arts	5%	9%	7%	6%
Physical Sciences and Mathematics	4%	5%	3%3	%
Social Sciences	13%	7%	16%	9%
Vocational Fields	1%	7%	<1%	6%
Other	11%	19%	14%	21%

choices, including choice of major and coursework. Overall, 16 percent of respondents in the GOALS study said athletics participation in general affected their choice of major

While most respondents across the three divisions disagree that athletics affected their major decision, Division I student-athletes were most likely to report that it did. And by sport, that response was more likely from men's and women's basketball and football players.

Ten percent of Division I student-athletes also reported that a coach did discourage a specific major, compared to 6 and 3 percent, respectively, of Divisions II and III student-athletes. (It is not known, though, whether these respondents heeded the coach's advice.)

In terms of attitudes toward their choice of majors, the current and former student-athlete groups both were very positive. More than 90 percent of the current student-athletes across the three divisions reported positive feelings about their choice of academic major – less than 5 percent in fact felt negatively about it. Similarly, among the former student-athletes, 89 percent reported positive feelings regarding their eventual choice of academic major.

A key component in the “choice of major” debate is whether student-athletes choose less-rigorous academic paths to better ensure athletics eligibility. However, when GOALS asked the current student-athletes in 2005-06 about their primary reason for choosing their majors, fewer than 4 percent gave *ease of major* as the reason. The most frequently cited reasons for choosing a major in fact were *preparation for a career* (47 percent) and *personal interest* (40 percent). The other possible option was *preparation for graduate school* (9 percent).

Also of interest here is the significant relationship by statistical standards between the cited reason for choosing a major and feelings regarding that choice. Those who indicated choosing their field of study primarily to prepare for a career or

graduate school reported more positive feelings about their choice than those who based the decision on the perceived ease of the major or because of personal interest.

The most pronounced difference was among those student-athletes who indicated that they chose their major primarily because of its perceived ease. Only 63 percent of this group reported positive feelings about their major, while more than 90 percent reported positive feelings if they made this decision for any other reason.

The choice-of-major discussion shows that athletes have to ask themselves whether the athletics scholarship and the subsequent benefit of participation in sports are worth not having the full array of academic choices. According to the GOALS data, most say it is.

That answer affirms that the 40-60-80 progression of academic requirements is not as much of a deterrent to choice of major as some people suspected when the new standards were adopted with the entering class of 2003.

In particular, opponents at the time were concerned that requiring athletes to have completed 40 percent of their degree requirements before their third year was too much to ask. While the escalated progression might cause athletes to choose a major more quickly, it has not tainted academic success.

The new rules were not intended to restrict the choice of a major, or to force the major choice too rapidly. On the contrary, they were based specifically on requiring athletes to pattern their academic choices on the existing academic profile of most college graduates at the time, 95 percent of which would have met the new standards had they been in place.

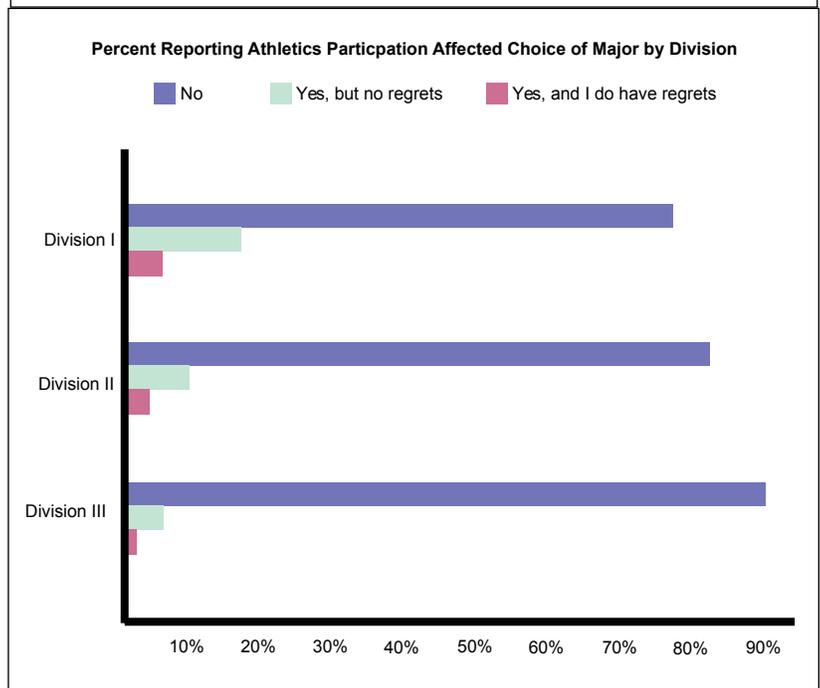
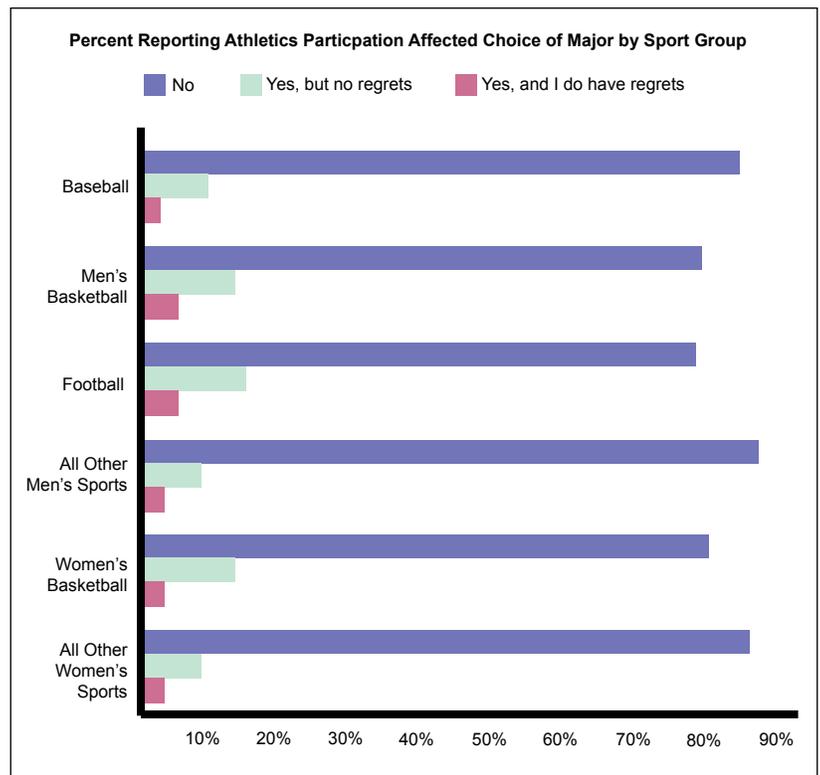
Sidebar: How student-athletes feel about time demands

Student-athletes have significant and competing pressures for their time. In addition to maintaining a “typical” college student’s life complete with time for socializing and engaging in campus and community activities, student-athletes also are expected to carry full-time academic loads, and then on top of that practice, train and compete at the highest levels of collegiate athletics.

The GOALS study asked current student-athletes in 2005-06 to provide an accounting of a typical in-season week day and weekend day. They self-reported hours spent in academics and athletics, as well as other extracurricular activities; plus socializing, working and sleeping.

By far, the most time is devoted to academics and athletics. In Division I, the academics/athletics breakdown is 37.3 hours per week and 35.4 hours per week, respectively. The averages are 35.9 and 33.5 in Division II, and 39.1 and 30.3 in Division III.

That’s more than twice the time student-athletes spent on everything else (other than sleeping), including working at a job,



socializing with friends and family, time spent relaxing, and time spent on other extracurricular activities.

Academic hours were defined as all class activities, including labs and discussion groups, as well as time spent studying and on academic work done outside of class. Athletics hours were defined as time spent on physical activity (such as practicing, training and competing) and non-physical activities (such as meetings and film study). It is important to note that students were not asked to do any accounting toward the 20-hour rule as written at the time of survey administration.

Not surprisingly, time demands differ greatly by sport group and division. In general, student-athletes in Division I reported a greater in-season athletics time commitment than student-athletes in Divisions II and III. For example, football players in the Division I Football Bowl Subdivision spent more time on athletics than any other group (44.8 mean weekly hours), followed by men's golf (40.8 mean weekly hours). In contrast, the highest time-demand sports for men in Divisions II and III reported significantly fewer hours. Division II baseball student-athletes spent, on average, 37.6 hours per week on their sport during the season. In Division III, men's ice hockey was the leader with 35.1 hours per week.

While female student-athletes reported, on average, spending less time on their sport than men, the divisional differences were similar. In both Divisions I and II, softball student-athletes reported the greatest amount of in-season time spent on their sport. Division I student-athletes, however, reported significantly greater hours than Division II (37.1 and 34.8 mean weekly hours, respectively). In Division III, volleyball student-athletes reported the greatest amount of time spent on their sport at 31.7 mean weekly hours.

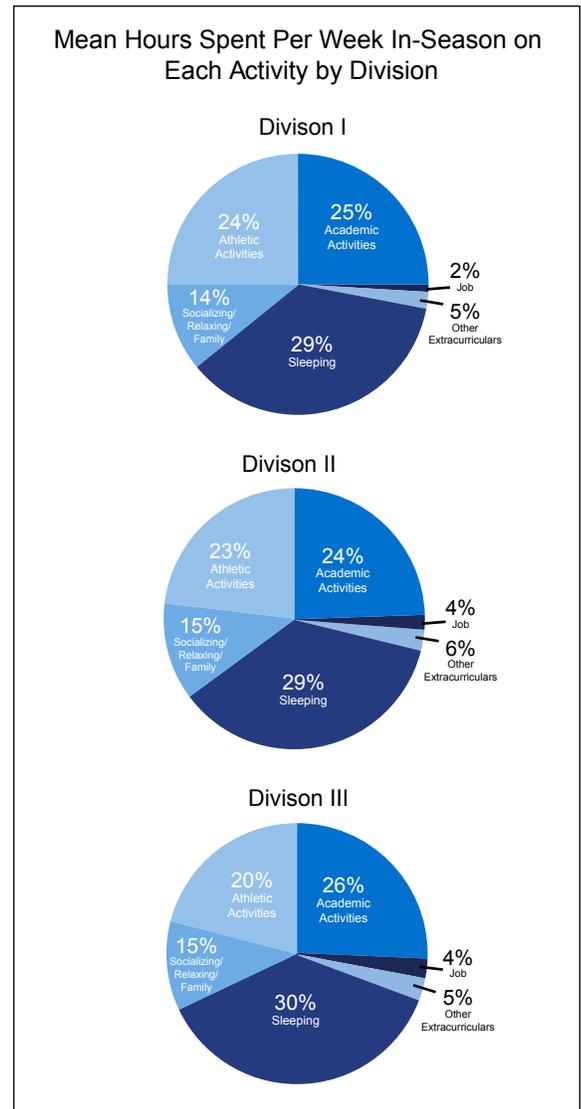
Looking more closely within sports, it's interesting to note that Division I FBS football student-athletes in the GOALS study reported spending, on average, almost 10 additional hours on their sport during the season than did their football-playing counterparts in the Division I Football Championship Subdivision. Divisions II and III football players reported spending a comparable amount of time on their sport as FCS football student-athletes.

While there were divisional differences in athletics time commitments for men's and women's basketball, the devotion was just slightly more for men than women in each division (less than an hour's difference in Divisions I and III and less than three hours in Division II).

The differences across division with regards to time reported on golf were the greatest of any of the sports and particularly focused on the difference between Division I and the other two divisions. Division I male and female golfers self-reported spending 40.8 and 32.4 hours per week, respectively, during the season on their sport. That contrasted with Division II men and women at 28.9 and 24.9, respectively, and Division III at 26.7 and 23.9, respectively – a weekly 14-hour difference between Division I male golfers and Division III male golfers and an almost nine-hour difference between Division I female golfers and Division III female golfers on average.

Examining the differential in time spent on academics versus athletics by gender, sport group and division reveals that female student-athletes in every sport group and in each division reported a greater amount of time spent on academics than athletics. Overall, these differences were greater in Divisions II and III than in Division I. Association-wide, the greatest differential between time spent on academics vs. athletics was among Division III female track/cross country student-athletes who self-reported spending 18.2 hours more per week, on average, on academics compared to athletics.

For the men, the story is a bit more complicated. Within Division II, football and baseball student-athletes report committing more time to their sports than their academics. In Division I, student-athletes in five sports (baseball, basketball, FBS football, golf and ice hockey) report greater athletics time investment than time spent on academics. Within Division III, however, men's ice hockey student-athletes were the only ones to report spending more time on athletics than academics.



In Division III, the differences ranged from an extra 1.5 hours on academics (baseball) to more than 14 (swimming). With an average of almost 42 hours per week, Division III male swimmers, in fact, self-reported the greatest number of in-season academic hours of all male sports across all three divisions. Interestingly, though, just behind DIII men's swimming in reported number of hours spent on academics is Division I FBS football. These student-athletes reported spending, on average, nearly 40 hours per week on academics. Couple this with the nearly 45 hours spent on athletics, and these student-athletes have a combined time commitment of 85 hours per week. Their weekly academic time commitment, however, is about five hours short of their weekly athletics commitment.

“Even though managing my time as a student-athlete and student was exhausting, I am glad that I had the opportunity to do so and will encourage my children to be involved in sports when they get older. There were times when my grades suffered because there just wasn't enough time in the day for both practice and studying, but my memories from swimming matter more now than the fact that I didn't always get straight A's.”

-Former Division I women's swimmer

Also of note are Division I baseball student-athletes, who report the greatest negative time differential with eight more hours per week, on average, spent on their sport when compared with academics.

The stress on time does not decline during the off-season for most student-athletes. Both Divisions I and II student-athletes reported spending as much or more time on their sport, including both physical activities (training, for example) and non-physical activities (such as team meetings), in the off-season as compared to in-season. Just under half of Division III student-athletes (49 percent) reported spending as much or more time on physical activities, and just over half (54 percent) reported spending as much or more time on non-physical activities.

Across division, student-athletes consistently reported focusing their time on three activities in particular during the off-season: studying, relaxing/socializing/time with family, and sleeping. One interesting item of note is the percentage of student-athletes who report spending more time on a job during the off-season. Between one-quarter to one-third of student-athletes, depending on division, reported using the extra time in their off-season for work.

Part 3

Student-Athlete Outcomes: Did Experiences Meet Expectations?

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.



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

	Baseball	Men's Basketball	Football	All Other Men's Sports	Women's Basketball	All Other Women's Sports
Division I	77%	68%	64%	73%	62%	68%
Division II	76%	64%	69%	66%	62%	69%
Division III	71%	66%	72%	71%	72%	73%

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.

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 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

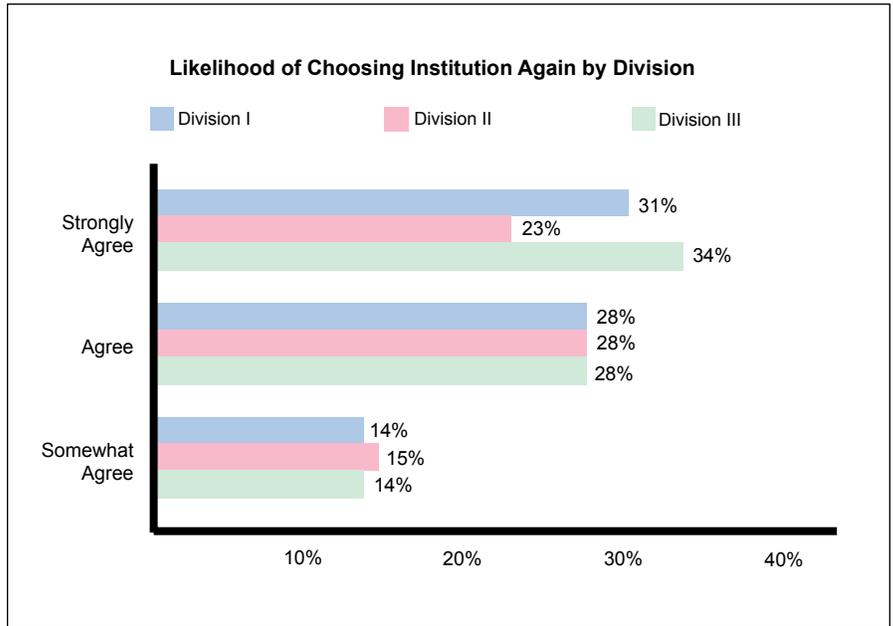
“I believe fully that the skills I learned in athletics are the life skills that have molded me and contributed to my current personal, social and work successes. From teamwork, leadership, time management, motivation, respect for others, ownership of accomplishments and failures, commitment, selflessness, and so much more, I am better because of my involvement in team athletics.”

- Former Division II women's soccer student-athlete

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

Education Outcomes of NCAA Division I Student-Athletes Entering in 1994							
	Total Sample	White Male Revenue	White Male Olympic	White Females	Black Male Revenue	Black Male Olympic	Black Females
Dropout Rate	12.3%	18.2%	12.0%	9.3%	13.7%	19.9%	14.3%
Transfer Rate	26.3%	25.9%	27.8%	25.3%	25.2%	30.4%	27.4%
BA Degree Rate	87.9%	82.5%	86.6%	92.7%	81.8%	80.6%	83.1%
% with Grad Degree	26.5%	19.9%	22.2%	33.2%	17.9%	27.3%	30.6%

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.

Influence of College Athletics on Former Student-Athletes						
	Leadership Skills	Teamwork	Racial Sensitivity	Study Skills	Time Management	Work Ethic
Very Positive	49%	59%	50%	26%	48%	62%
Positive	35%	30%	36%	32%	32%	29%
Somewhat Positive	14%	8%	12%	29%	16%	7%

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.

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.

Sidebar: Athletics participation as contributing to social well-being

Overall, data from GOALS and SCORE suggest that students are generally well-adjusted and satisfied with their lives. When asked to rate their overall happiness on a four-point scale of *very happy* to *not happy at all*, an overwhelming majority in both studies reported being at least somewhat happy (89 percent in GOALS and 98 percent in SCORE). Additionally, 81 percent of former student-athletes are reportedly *satisfied* or *completely satisfied* with their lives.

A similarly high level of satisfaction is attributed to their education as well. Overall, 73 percent of former Division I student-athletes reported they were *satisfied* or *completely satisfied* with their educational experiences. Also, former student-athletes who reported graduating from college were more likely to report being *very happy* than those students who did not graduate. Specifically, 74 percent of college graduates reported being very happy compared to 61 percent of non-graduates.

“Participating in college sports helped me test the limits of my physical and mental abilities, which I continue to do today. College sports taught me through hard work and perseverance that I can succeed beyond what I thought possible. The teamwork skills I learned through athletics have been invaluable to the success I’ve gained in my career. The positive experiences I had in athletics will benefit me the rest of my life.”

- Former Division I women's volleyball student-athlete

The former Division I student-athletes also tended to report high self-esteem. In fact, 96 percent reported being satisfied with themselves compared to 87 percent of the general population in the Monitoring the Future study.

There is evidence of college athletics having a positive effect on mental and physical health. Respondents in both the GOALS and SCORE studies reported being more physically active than the general population. Former student-athletes have a lower prevalence of tobacco use compared to the general population. There also is a very low incidence of reported drug use among former student-athletes, with marijuana being the most common drug used. And, former student-athletes tend to be happy and exhibit higher self-esteem than other groups within the population.

Both the GOALS and SCORE surveys also questioned student-athletes on how their athletics experiences, as well as their college experiences in general, affected their relationships with members of racial and ethnic groups different from their

Self-Esteem Percentages of Former Student-Athletes (Bold) and Non Student-Athletes (Parentheses)

	Agree	Mostly Agree	Mostly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know
I take a positive attitude toward myself	55 (40)%	40 (50)%	3 (5)%	1 (2)%	1 %
I feel I am a person of worth, on an equal plane with others	69 (55)%	28 (38)%	2 (3)%	1 (<1)%	<1 %
I am able to do things as well as most other people	69 (55)%	29 (30)%	1 (1)%	<1 (1)%	<1 %
I feel I do not have much to be proud of *	3 (3)%	3 (4)%	9 (25)%	84 (65)%	2 %
On the whole, I'm satisfied with myself	64 (47)%	32 (40)%	3 (7)%	1 (2)%	<1 %

* worded negatively, reversed coded

own. Student-athletes said that their teams in general presented a more open, respectful environment than even their universities did overall.

In general, male and female student-athletes reported similar attitudes regarding the atmosphere at the school; however, on a few items regarding the team atmosphere, gender differences emerged.

One area in which males and females differed significantly was in how they perceived the institution recruits toward diversity compared with how the team does so. Females reported stronger agreement that the institution recruits with a focus on diversity more so than the team, while men leaned more toward the team being the frontrunner in this category.

While males and females agreed that both the atmosphere at the school and the atmosphere on the team are respectful of members of the opposite sex, both groups reported that the team atmosphere generally is more respectful of the opposite sex when compared with the general school atmosphere. Females in particular reported much higher levels of agreement that the team atmosphere is respectful of the opposite sex. Females also reported much higher levels of agreement that the team atmosphere is respectful of other racial ethnic groups than males.

Another interesting finding – both respondents from the “majority group” (defined in this case as white, non-Hispanic) and the “minority group” (defined as any other race/ethnicity or multi-racial) viewed the team as a more inclusive, respectful environment when compared with the institution.

The GOALS and SCORE studies also focused on idea of “campus integration,” which is important given the notion some people have that athletics inhibits participants’ opportunities to engage in other campus activities. GOALS and SCORE asked the student-athletes if they believed that was true.

The GOALS data were particularly illuminating. The level of campus integration was measured using two scales – one that questioned the level of interest among student-athletes in participating in a variety of college activities, including performance groups, media, student government, religious clubs, academic groups, intramural sports, cultural clubs or organizations focused on a particular hobby like a sewing club.

Among GOALS respondents, most student-athletes said they were actively involved in their campus community outside of athletics and also reported their athletics participation benefited them socially. When asked about a variety of college clubs and organizations, 75 percent of student-athletes reported either current involvement or plans to participate in the future. The most popular was intramural sports, with 50 percent claiming current or intended future involvement. Other popular options included religious groups (35 percent) and academic and hobby groups (just over one-fourth).

“Athletics are a great way to shape people’s confidence and work ethic, and create lifelong healthy exercise and eating habits. I can honestly say participating in sports is one of the most positive experiences I have had in my life.”

-Former Division I women’s soccer student-athlete

The student-athletes were asked not only to respond with their current participation or intentions to participate, but also whether their *not* planning on participating was due to a lack of *interest* or a lack of *time*. Most reported a lack of interest with the exception of intramural sports. Of the 50 percent of student-athletes who report not participating in intramurals, more than half claimed lack of time as the reason.