



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.

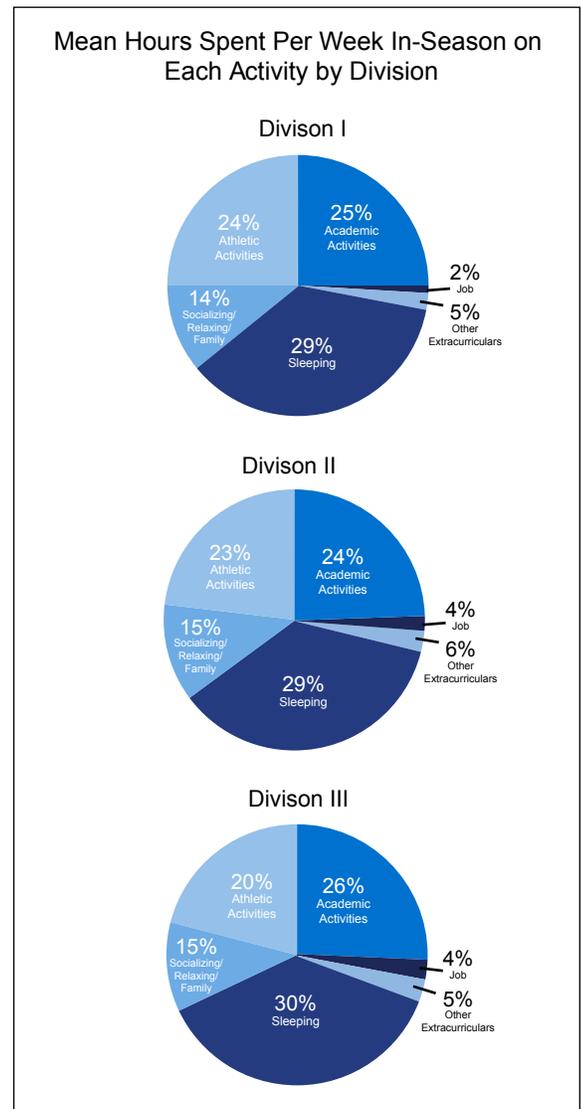
Academic hours were defined as all class activities, including labs and discussion groups, as well as time spent studying and on academic work done outside of class. Athletics hours were defined as time spent on physical activity (such as practicing, training and competing) and non-physical activities (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 Division III 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.