

SCORE Study: A “Balanced” Collegiate Experience in Division II

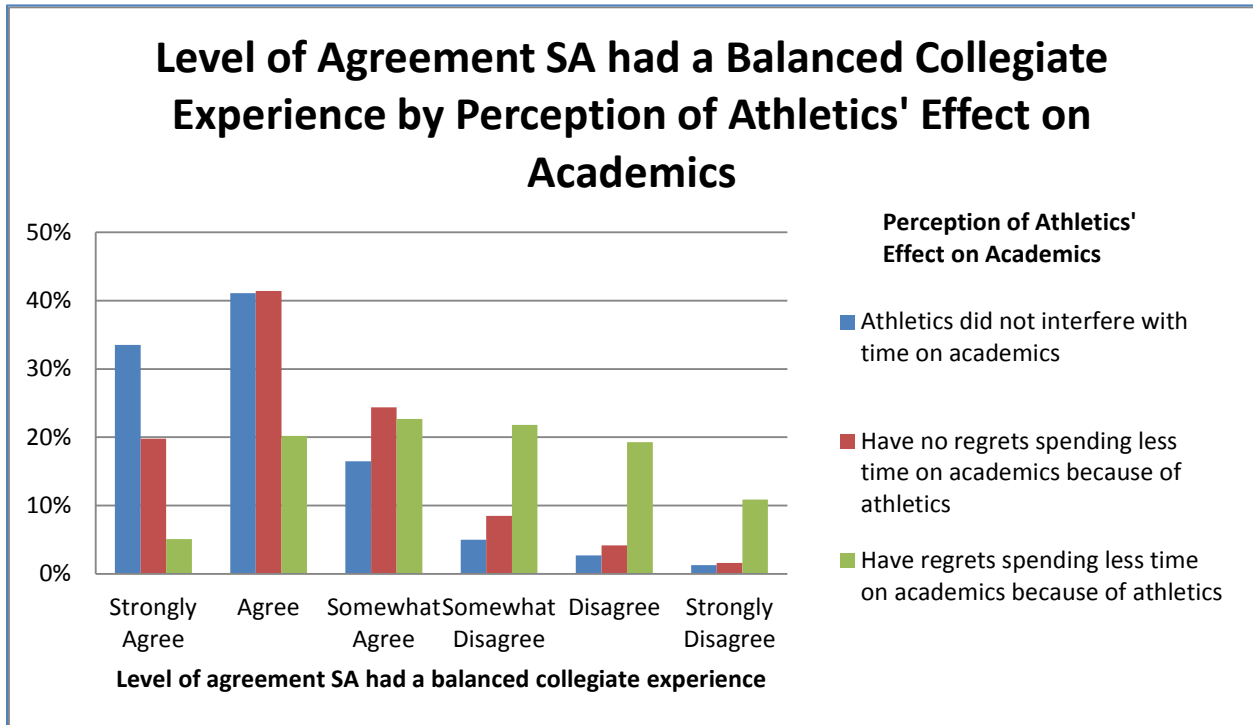
A Balanced Collegiate Experience

Balance is one of the cornerstones of the Division II philosophy. In the Study of College Outcomes and Recent Experiences (SCORE) survey, 5,400 former Division II student-athletes about 30 years of age were asked whether they were able to find an appropriate balance between academics and extracurricular activities (including athletics participation) in college. More than one-quarter felt very strongly that they had found the right balance, and 86 percent felt at least some degree of balance was achieved. Not surprisingly, those who earned a bachelor’s degree were significantly more likely than those who did not earn a degree to report balance (90 percent vs. 60 percent). Females also were more likely to report that they found balance when compared with males (90 percent vs. 84 percent). White student-athletes were more likely than student-athletes from other racial/ethnic groups to report they had a balanced collegiate experience (88 percent vs. 83 percent).

Academic Balance

When asked what role athletics participation had on their academic responsibilities, 42 percent of respondents indicated that, in hindsight, they felt that athletics did cause them to spend less time on their academic work than they wanted. The majority of these respondents (85 percent), however, indicated that they do not regret the sacrifice in academic time because of their athletics commitments. It should be noted, however, that former Division II student-athletes who did not earn a degree were twice as likely to indicate regret over their athletics time commitments as were those who did earn a degree. And, not surprisingly, those who indicated regret over lost time on academics were also more likely to report that they found it difficult to establish a balanced structure between academics and extracurricular activities (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Level of agreement that the student-athlete had a balanced collegiate experience by student-athlete perception of athletics' effect on academics



In addition to athletics affecting time spent on academics, just over one-half of former student-athletes also believe that athletics had a direct impact on their final grade-point average (GPA). Female and white student-athletes were more likely to indicate that their GPA had been unaffected. Interestingly, among those who did feel their GPA was affected, responses were fairly divided on whether this effect was positive or negative. Twenty-nine percent indicated their GPA would have been *higher* if they were not student-athletes, while 25 percent indicated it would have been *lower*. Student-athletes who believe athletics had a negative impact on their GPA were significantly more likely to report that they struggled to find a balance between academics and extracurricular activities.

Athletics Balance

Slightly less than half of respondents (46 percent) stopped participating in athletics before exhausting their eligibility. There was a significant difference among those who exhausted their eligibility and those who did not in reported feelings regarding achieving an appropriate balance in college. Among those who did not exhaust their eligibility, 20 percent *reported not finding* an appropriate balance between academics and extracurricular activities, compared with only nine percent of those who completed their eligibility.

Former student-athletes also were asked if they were satisfied with the amount of time they spent on athletics, or if they wished they had more time or less. Overall, fewer than one-half (45 percent) reported that they were *satisfied* with the amount of time they spent on athletics. Approximately the same proportion (48 percent) actually wanted *more* time for athletics, while

seven percent wish they had had *less* time. There were several differences among various demographic groups that can be seen in Table 1. Gender presented one of the greatest differences, with 55 percent of females reporting they were *satisfied* with the amount of time spent on athletics compared with just 38 percent of males. Males were much more likely to report that they wanted *more* time spent on their sport (56 percent, vs. 36 percent of females). And not surprisingly, those who reported having a balanced collegiate experience were more likely to report being *satisfied* with the amount of time they spend on athletics.

Table 1: Satisfaction with time spent on athletics by various demographic groups

	Satisfied	Wish had <i>more</i> time	Wish had <i>less</i> time
High athletic identity	47%	49%	5%
Low athletic identity	41%	48%	11%
Individual sport	47%	47%	7%
Team sport	44%	49%	7%
M/W Basketball or Football	40%	52%	8%
Other sports	47%	46%	7%
Female	55%	36%	9%
Male	38%	56%	6%
White	47%	46%	7%
Non-white	39%	55%	6%
Earned degree	47%	47%	7%
Did not earn degree	29%	62%	10%
Had balanced collegiate experience	47%	48%	5%
Did not have balanced collegiate experience	30%	49%	21%

All differences statistically significant, chi-square, $p < .01$

Overall, more than one-half (59 percent) of former student-athletes reported they were *satisfied* with the amount of time they spent with their coaches. About one-third (32 percent) wanted *more* time with their coaches, while 10 percent wish they had had *less* time. The general trends noted in Table 1 can also be seen in response to this question. There was, however, one exception to this: While team-sport athletes were more likely than individual-sport athletes to report wanting *more* time on athletics, they were less likely to want *more* time with coaches.

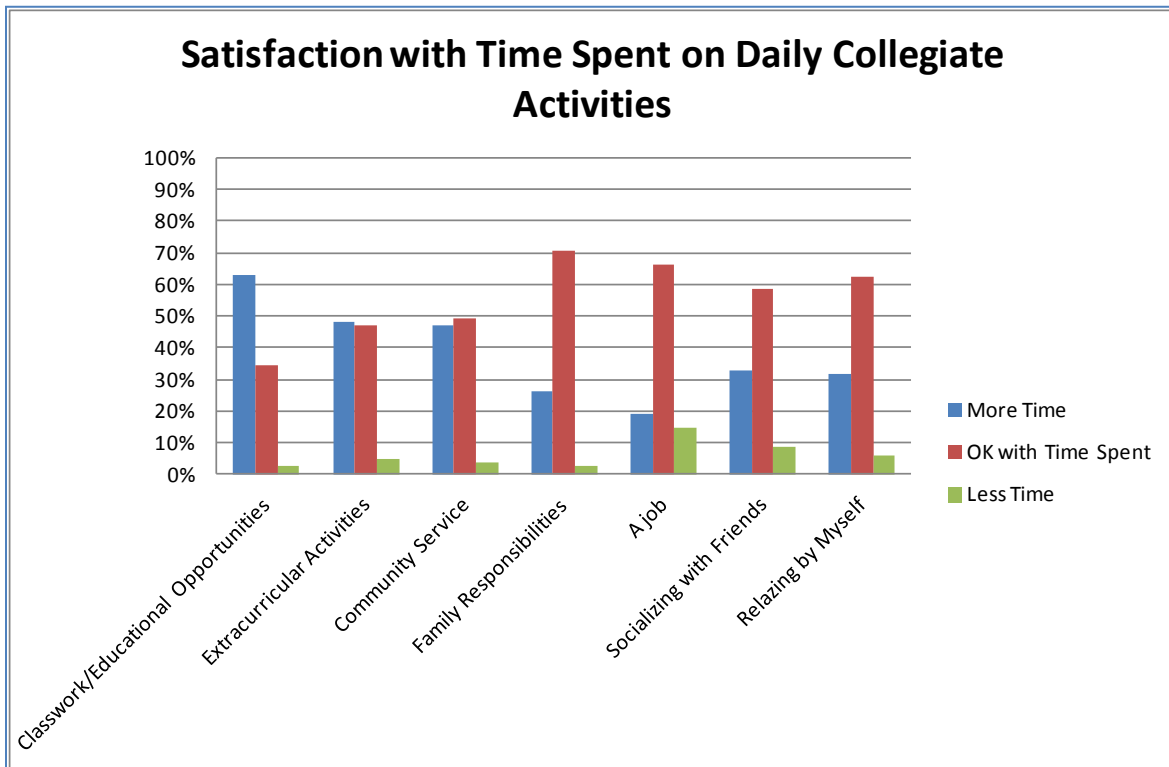
Previous NCAA research (GOALS, 2006) showed that Division II student-athletes spent, on average, approximately 25 to 38 hours each week on athletics activities. Time commitments varied by sport group, and we were interested in learning if there was a relationship between

time demands of the sport and perceptions of balance in the collegiate experience. Interestingly, there were no significant differences in how student-athletes from among the highest time demand sports (baseball, basketball and football for men; basketball, softball and swimming for women) responded to finding an appropriate balance between academics and extracurricular activities and those in some of the lowest time demand sports (soccer and track for men; soccer, tennis and track for women).

Satisfaction with Time Spent on Other Activities while in College

Former student-athletes also were asked how satisfied they were with the amount of time they spent on a variety of activities other than athletics while in college, including, among others, academics, volunteering and socializing (see Figure 2). Very few student-athletes reported wanting to have spent *less* time on activities, and more than one-half were satisfied with the time spent on *family responsibilities, socializing with friends, a job* and *relaxing by myself*. The areas where student-athletes reported really wanting *more* time were *educational opportunities, extracurricular activities, and community service*. Among these, class work/educational opportunities stood out among the others as the one area in which former student-athletes seem to really wish they had *more* time.

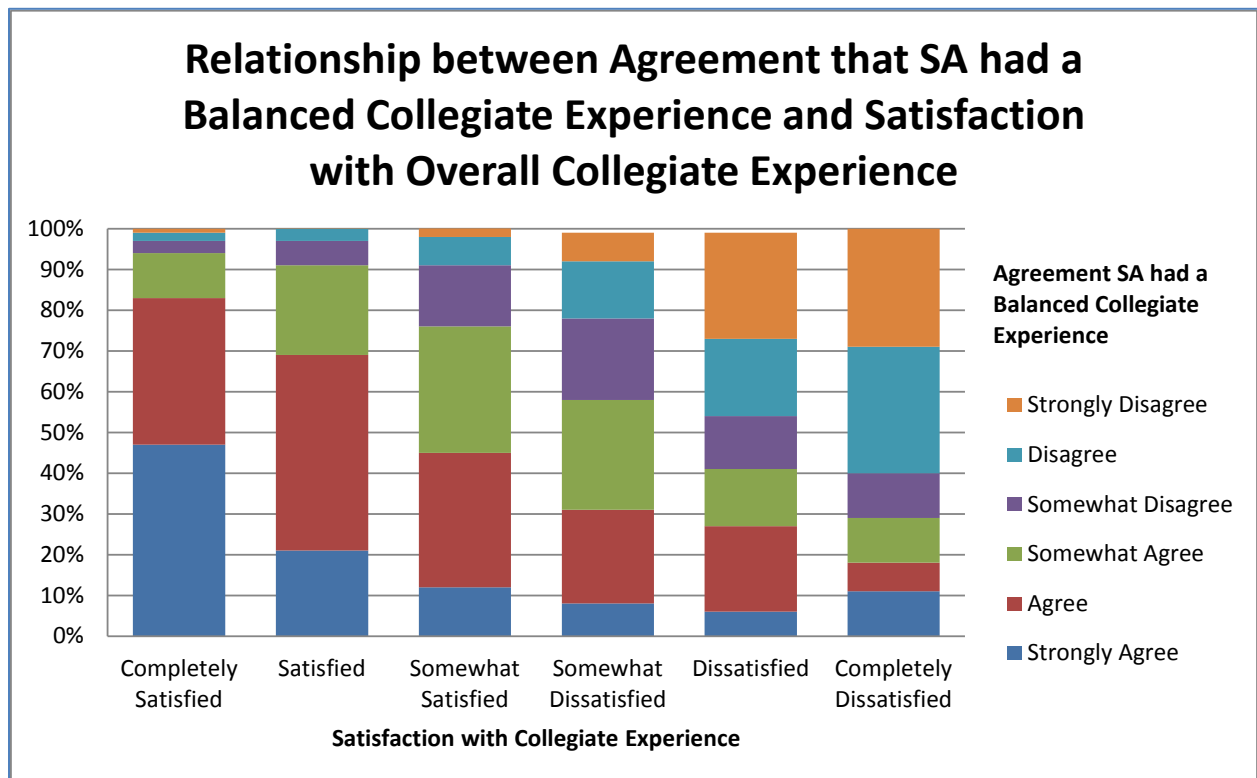
Figure 2. Satisfaction with amount of time spent on daily collegiate activities



Satisfaction with Collegiate Experiences

The overwhelming majority of former Division II student-athletes reported being at least *somewhat satisfied* with their overall collegiate experience (92 percent), as well as with their individual academic (86 percent), athletics (83 percent), and social experiences (92 percent). As can be seen in Figure 3, there is a strong relationship between the student-athletes agreeing that they were able to establish a good balance between academics and other activities and being *satisfied* with the overall collegiate experience.

Figure 3. Satisfaction with amount of time spent on daily collegiate activities



Summary

Overall, student-athletes reported feeling that they were able to strike a good balance between academics and other activities while in college, including athletics. In fact, when given the choice between more or less time on athletics, the majority of student-athletes would choose *more* time. About half of former student-athletes believe that they had to give up time on academics in order to compete in athletics, but the vast majority have no regrets about making this sacrifice. Ensuring that student-athletes have more time for class work, community service and other extracurricular activities could lead to even greater satisfaction with the college experience.