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Academic support of student-athletes: A cross-conference comparison

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Academic Support of Student-Athletes: A Cross-Conference Comparison

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Abstract

A study was conducted to examine the type of academic support provided to student-athletes at the Division 1 level. Although the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) requires all academic institutions to provide academic advising services to student-athletes, universities have a great deal of autonomy in deciding how to provide these services. At the present, little research exists on how universities provide academic support to student-athletes. A mixed-methods online survey was sent to academic support staff members at 47 institutions affiliated with the American Athletic Conference (AAC), Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big South Conference, and the Colonial Athletic Association (CAA). This survey aimed to better understand: 1) the demographics of academic support staff, 2) the challenges academic support staff face in promoting academic integrity, 3) the characteristics of the student-athletes they support, 4) the attitudes of faculty and staff they work alongside, and 5) how often incidences of academic fraud are reported to universities' compliance departments. Results indicated that the majority of respondents felt that student-athletes were both academically prepared for higher education and committed to their academic pursuits. They also reported that faculty and staff view the work ethic of student-athletic favorably and are willing to provide assistance to student-athletes who may miss class due to athletic obligations. Not surprisingly, disparities exist by conference in the resources available for academic support and the satisfaction with these resources, and reported cases of academic fraud are relatively small (25%). Future research should focus on the student-athletes and/or faculty and staff at these same institutions to determine if these findings are consistent among all groups.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Academics and athletics in the collegiate sector work collaboratively to influence and nurture their concerted cornerstone, the student-athlete. For nearly half a century, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has stressed the universal usage of the term student-athlete rather than referring to individuals solely as athletes (McCormick & McCormick, 2006). This hyphenated term implies that the two characteristics go hand in hand, and that separation of the two will no longer accurately represent the individual in discussion. Documentation published by the NCAA Division I presents several all encompassing and clear standards that govern the academic and athletic interactions among all 1,200 plus institutions that voluntarily associate themselves with the NCAA (McCormick & McCormick, 2006). In doing so, the NCAA seeks to ensure that the term "student", when referencing student-athletes, is used in manner that represents honest academic commitment among all affiliated student-athletes (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2014).

While the NCAA attempts to maintain a balance between the duality of a student-athlete's athletic and academic responsibilities, the association lacks the internal institutional control that would allow it to fully regulate the daily practices of its member institutions (Matthews, 2011). This gap in undisputed control can lead to discrepancies between the NCAA's established polices and the reality of an institution's practices. One widely cited rationale for discrepancies across the implementation of recruitment regulations is the competitiveness of the university (Njororai, 2012). The desire to create a winning athletic program may lead the university's athletic administrative staff to recruit individuals who are underprepared for the academic rigor that they will face at the

collegiate level (Njororai, 2012). This tendency to initially prioritize athletic skill while deemphasizing scholastic abilities can create challenges for the student-athlete that may reverberate throughout their college career.

Regardless of a student-athlete's academic abilities, they will inevitably face challenges in keeping up with their course work and maintaining their eligibility at some point in their college career. Beyond the typical adjustment issues that many new college enrollees face, the student-athlete must deal with additional physical and psychological stresses that can make academic success exponentially more difficult (Matthews, 2011). In order to maintain their eligibility, student-athletes may turn to compensatory, yet ultimately academically fraudulent practices (Njororai, 2012). Taking a student-athlete who may not initially be on par with the academic expectations of a particular institution, and placing them in a physically and psychologically challenging environment, puts the student-athlete in a situation where maintaining eligibility may be extremely difficult.

In order to address the ongoing needs of student-athletes, the NCAA mandated in 1991 that member institutions must make counseling and tutoring services available to all student-athletes (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015). The NCAA states that while these services are mandatory, they need not be directly affiliated with an institution's athletic department, and may be offered through non-athletic support services provided by the institution. This broad set of standards leaves the logistics of implementing this mandate up to the individual institutions. The responsibility of fulfilling this NCAA mandate, particularly at the Division I level, often falls to the individuals classified as academic support staff members. It is the job of these academic support staff members to assist student-athletes in their progression towards graduation.

Ensuring that the integrity of this process is upheld, while concurrently maintaining a student-athlete's academic eligibility, is paramount in order to avoid NCAA sanctions. This research aims to investigate the role and function of these academic support staff members at the following Division I conferences: American Athletic Association (AAC), Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big South Conference (Big South), and the Colonial Athletic Association (CAA).

Problem Statement

While standards of student-athlete academic eligibility are uniform among all NCAA Division I institutions, not all Division I institutions are created equal. Each Division I institution has its own respective athletic and academic culture that influences the expectations and responsibilities of its student-athletes. An institution's unique academic culture is often a reflection of overall athletic competitiveness and funding available, which varies greatly among Division I institutions (Fulks, 2015). The effect of these cultural environments on the student-athlete may only be amplified if the student-athlete enters into a university at an academic disadvantage as compared to the institution's regular student body. These factors and challenges also have a direct influence on the job duties of professionals charged with the academic support of student-athletes. This study is primarily focused on gaining a better understanding of these factors, and how they may differ among the levels of Division I athletics. Thus, the purpose of this research is to assess if academic support staff members feel as though they are still capable of carrying out their job responsibilities despite the challenges they may face.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to better understand the work of the individuals who support the academic endeavors of student-athletes, and to illuminate any differences that exist among these individuals at varying of Division I athletic conferences. While much media attention is given to the negative stories surrounding the overlap between collegiate athletics and academic achievement of student-athletes, little research exists regarding the individuals who help to promote academic balance and integrity for student-athletes. Additionally, this study aims to identify relevant characteristics of these individuals, such as their discipline(s) of study, years of experience, and conference of affiliation. This study also hopes to gain an understanding of the number of student-athletes these professionals support, as well as the type of support and resources that they provide. In addition to gaining a better understanding of the work of these individuals, this study also aims to understand the challenges and pressures these professionals face in the completion of their job duties.

Research Questions

The questions this study aims to address are as follows:

1. What resources are available to student-athletes within AAC, ACC, CAA, and Big South Conference institutions to ensure that student-athletes maintain their eligibility and successfully complete their degree?

2. What specific challenges exist in the advisement of student-athletes at AAC, ACC, CAA, and Big South Conference member institutions?

3. What are some general characteristics (including years of experience and discipline of study) of student-athlete academic support staff members?

4. What differences exist in the field of academic support for student-athletes within varying Division I conferences?

Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope

The scope of this research is limited to the conferences targeted in this study. Therefore, any conclusions made based on data collected must consider this limited scope. Data collected from this survey will not reflect upon all individuals working in the Division I setting, nor does it reflect upon all professionals working within collegiate athletics. Additionally, the limited scope of this study is not intended to reflect upon the academic qualifications of all recruited student-athletes at any NCAA level. Finally, the feedback provided regarding a university's faculty and staff is not representative of the feelings of all individuals working at a particular institution; rather it reflects only the feedback provided by respondents.

Assumptions were made regarding the population sampled. The main assumption made about these individuals is that they have direct contact and influence on the student-athletes and other members of the university community. Positional rank of respondents may effect the relationship a respondent has with the student-athletes at their given institution. For example, a respondent with a positional title of Associate Director may have a more administrative role that could potentially limit their direct interaction with student-athletes. Conversely, an individual who serves as a Graduate Assistant may not be granted direct access with university's administrative staff, but may have more one-on-one contact with student-athletes than those holding Director level positions.

Key Term Definitions

Table 1.

Key Terms and Definitions

Key Term	Definition
Academically eligible	At the Division I level, academic eligibility is dependent on the number of years a student-athlete has been enrolled at a given institution and is a factor of the minimum overall grade point average (GPA) necessary to graduate from their respective institution. By the beginning of a student-athlete's second year they must achieve 90% of the minimum GPA, by the beginning of year three they must achieve 95% of the minimum GPA, and by the beginning of year four they must meet the minimum GPA requirement. Additionally, all Division I student-athletes must earn at least six credit hours each term. Eligibility is also dependent on progress of course work toward a degree. A student-athlete must complete 40%, 60% and 80% of the coursework required for their degree by the end of their second, third, and four years respectively (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d-c).
Academic support staff members	Unique field requiring professionals to act as mentors, guides, confidants, and teachers (Hinson, 2013). These professionals are typically employed by a university's Athletic Department and are challenged with addressing the academic requirements established by both the NCAA and the individual institution in which they are employed. These professionals additionally provide general advisement to help a student-athlete progress towards completing their degree. Commonly used job titles for these individual include: Academic Advisor, Learning Specialist, Academic Counselor, Associate Director, Assistant/Associate Dean of University Advisement, Assistant/Associate Athlete Director (AD), Academic Coordinator, Assistant Athletic Academic Counselor, Director of Academics, and Director of Student-Athlete Services/Academic Achievement.
AAC	American Athletic Conference. NCAA Division I conference consisting of twelve member institutions: University of Central Florida (Orlando, FL), University of Cincinnati (Cincinnati, OH), University of Connecticut (Storrs, CT), East Carolina University (Greenville, NC), University of Houston (Houston, TX),

	University of Memphis (Memphis, TN), United States Naval Academy (Annapolis, MD), University of South Florida (Tampa, FL), Southern Methodist University (Dallas, TX), Temple University (Philadelphia, PA), Tulane University (New Orleans, LA), and University of Tulsa (Tulsa, OK) (American Athletic Conference, 2016).
ACC	Atlantic Coast Conference. NCAA Division I conference consisting of fourteen member institutions: Boston College (Boston, Mass.), Clemson University (Clemson, SC), Duke University (Durham, NC), Florida State University (Tallahassee, FL), Georgia Institute of Technology (Atlanta, GA), Louisville University (Louisville, KY), University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, NC), University of Notre Dame (Notre Dame IN), University of Pittsburg (Pittsburg, PA), Syracuse University (Syracuse, NY), University of Virginia (Charlottesville, VA), Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Blacksburg, VA), and Wake Forest University (Winston-Salem, NC) (Atlantic Coast Conference, 2014).
Big South Conference	Big South. NCAA Division I conference consisting of eleven member institutions: Campbell University (Buies Creek, NC), Charleston Southern University (North Charleston, SC), Coastal Carolina University (Conway, SC), Gardner-Webb University (Boiling Springs, NC), High Point University (High Point, NC), Liberty University (Lynchburg, VA), Longwood University (Farmville, VA), Presbyterian College (Clinton, SC), Radford University (Radford, VA), University of North Carolina-Ashville (Ashville, NC), and Winthrop University (Rock Hill, SC) (Coastal Carolina University, 2015).
CAA	Colonial Athletic Association. NCAA Division I conference consisting of ten member institutions: College of Charleston (Charleston, SC), Drexel University (Philadelphia, PA), Hofstra University (Hempstead, NY), Northeastern University (Boston, MA), University of North Carolina-Wilmington (Wilmington, NC), University of Delaware (Newark, DE), Elon University (Elon, NC), James Madison University (Harrisonburg, VA), Towson University (Towson, MD), and the College of William and Mary (Williamsburg, VA) (Colonial Athletic Association, 2013).
Division I	One of three NCAA divisions. Division I school

	"generally have the biggest student-bodies, manage the largest athletics budgets and offer the most generous number of scholarships (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.-a).
Football Bowl Subdivision	Also known as Division I-A. Subdivision of the NCAA Division I athletics including the following conferences: Atlantic Coast Conference, Big Ten Conference, Big 12 Conference, Pac-12 Conference, Southeastern Conference, American Athletic Conference, Conference USA, Mid-American Conference, Mountain West Conference, and the Sun Belt Conference (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015).
Football Championship Subdivision	Also known as Division I-AA, and referred to by some sources as "mid-majors". Subdivision of the NCAA Division I athletics including the following conferences: Big Sky Conference, Big South Conference, Colonial Athletic Association, Ivy League, Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference, Missouri Valley Conference, Northeast Conference, Ohio Valley Conference, Patriot League, Pioneer League, Southern Conference, Southland Conference, and the Southwestern Athletic Conference (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015).
Initial academic eligibility	In order to be eligible to participate in Division I athletics and/or receive an athletic scholarship of any kind beginning in August of 2016, a high school student-athlete must meet the following requirements (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015): • Earn a 2.3 GPA in core courses • Complete ten core-course prior to the start of their seventh semester (at least seven of these core classes must be English, math, and science courses) • Earn a combined SAT or ACT score that matches a pre-established sliding scale of core-course GPA • Complete 16 specific core-course requirements in eight semesters
NCAA	The National Collegiate Athletic Association. "A membership-driven organization dedicated to safeguarding the well-being of student-athletes and equipping them with the skills to succeed on the playing filed, in the classroom and throughout life" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.-b)
Revenue producing sports	Athletic programs who produce more money for the university than the university pays to support their endeavors. Traditionally refers to the sports of men's

	basketball and football. (Njororai, 2012)
Student-athlete	Amateurs in an intercollegiate sport. Student-athlete participation should be motivated by education and by the physical, mental and social benefits to be derived (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2014)
The "Big Five"	Also known as the "Power Five". A group of five conferences within the NCAA Division I level who are given autonomy within the NCAA. These conferences are seen to be the most powerful and wealthiest in collegiate athletics. These conferences are as follows: Southeastern Conference, Big 12 Conference, Big Ten Conference, Pacific-12 Conference, and the Atlantic Coast Conference (Babb, 2014).

Significance

The information collected from this survey is intended to add to the existing literature on the academic support of student-athletes. By selecting four Division I conferences of varying levels of athletic competitiveness, this study aims to provide insight into potential differences that may exist in the extent of support given to student-athletes. This study also aims to provide insight into academic-support at AAC, ACC, Big South, and CAA institutions, a subset of conferences not currently addressed in the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

A review of the literature was completed to explore the overlap of academics and athletes at the Division I level. Some topics of interest included the field of athletic academic advising, admission gaps between student-athletes and regularly admitted students, student-athletes and faculty interactions, and academically fraudulent practices.

Google Scholar and the James Madison University library online databases were used to complete this review. The literature review included both recent and historical literature in order to better understand progress in the field. Key words included in the searches were: academics, support staff, athletics, available resources, Division I, National Collegiate Athletic Association, and athletic recruitment.

Conceptual Framework

The focus of this research was to understand the relationship between academic support staff members and each of the following areas: the unique needs of student-athletes, the challenges and pressures asserted by external sources, and available resources at AAC, ACC, Big South, and CAA institutions. This research also investigated whether academic support staff members can realistically address the unique needs of student-athletes with the resources available to them, regardless of the challenges they face from athletic administration, coaching staff, and university faculty. Finally, this review explored whether any of these three factors had more or less influence on an academic support staff member's ability to promote academic achievement and integrity for student-athletes. It is believed that the available resources, external challenges and pressures, and unique needs of student-athletes all influence the role of academic support

staff members at their respective institutions. The relationship between these factors is visually represented in Figure 1.
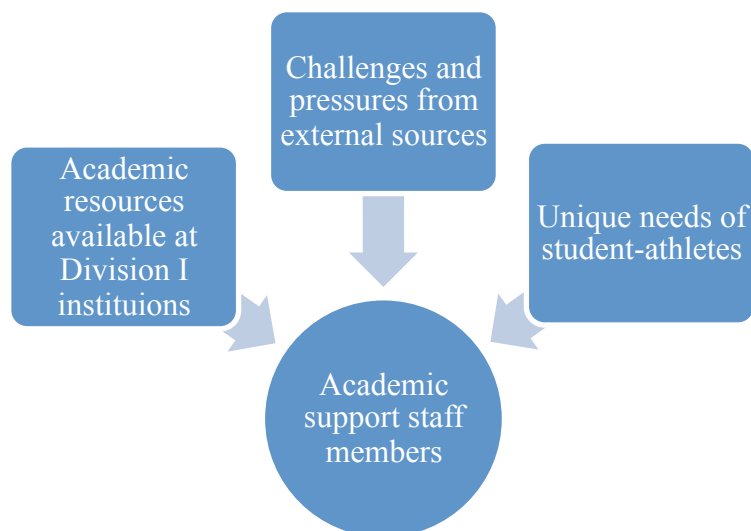
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Theoretical Framework

The principal theoretical framework for this research was Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. Specifically, this research focused on Bandura's concepts of self-regulation and self-efficacy. While the two terms are related, they have a few key differences. Self-regulation refers to the way external factors influence an individual's behavior (Bandura, 1997). An individual self-regulates by managing their own thoughts, behaviors, and surroundings in order to reach the goals they have set for themselves (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). The process of self-regulation requires an individual to observe and judge him or herself in order to evaluate how their surroundings, thoughts, and behaviors affect their ability to achieve their goals.

While self-regulation is centered on self-reflection and management of factors that influence goal achievement, self-efficacy is more focused on internal perception of one's ability. The term self-efficacy refers to how one internally, either positively or

negatively, perceives his or her ability to complete a task (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2006). Self-efficacy is a key factor in successful goal achievement, regardless of actual ability. These concepts have been applied over time to explain how people learn from their environment, and particularly from their social interactions. This research is focused on how these concepts apply to academic support staff members at AAC, ACC, Big South, and CAA institutions.

To better understand the concept of self-regulation and how it can relate to academic support staff members, this research investigated what, if any, influence external factors had on academic support staff members' targeted behavior—the ability to successfully provide meaningful guidance to student-athletes. The effect of the following factors on academic support staff members were of particular interest to this research: resources available, university faculty and staff members' attitudes towards student-athletes, pressures implied from athletic administration, and admission criteria implemented for student-athletes. Another aspect of self-regulation is the concept of anticipatory forethought. Anticipatory forethought revolves around the idea that individuals can plan their actions around potential consequences in order to achieve a desired outcome. Through survey research, I sought to better understand how academic support staff professionals self-regulate in order to anticipate and adapt to the challenges they face. The challenges of particular interest to this research were the academic preparedness of student-athletes and the pressures placed on them by coaching staff, other Athletic Department employees, and members of the university community.

The second of these concepts, self-efficacy, refers to what one believes he or she is capable of doing (Bandura, 1977a, 1977b, 1986, 1993, 1997). This belief in one's own

ability to carry out a task is independent of actually knowing how to complete the process. Therefore, an individual may be proficient in a certain task, but if this individual has negative feelings of self-efficacy, he or she may not be able to successfully complete the task. This concept of self-efficacy can relate to academic support staff members' internal perceptions of their ability to support student-athletes' academic endeavors. So while these professionals may be highly qualified and educated, they may internally feel as though they are not capable of meeting the needs of the student-athletes with whom they work.

This survey research aims to, in part, evaluate academic support staff member's self-efficacy by asking if they believe they have all the resources they need to successfully do their job. If members of an institution's academic support staff do not feel that they have adequate resources to support their student-athletes, they may not have confidence in their ability to help a student-athlete overcome any perceived scholastic shortcomings. This potential issue could be especially problematic for AAC, CAA, and Big South schools that may not have the same resources and funding as professionals working at "Big Five" member institutions. This lack of satisfaction with resources could effect an individual's perception of their ability to carry out their job responsibilities, despite receiving the necessary academic preparation to work within this field.

The Role of Academic Support Staff Members

Understanding the field of academic support is crucial to this research. Broughton and Neyer (2001) highlighted the development of the field of academic support for student-athletes. The authors discussed how the field emerged in the 1970s primarily to help student-athletes schedule classes, provide tutoring services, and help

promote beneficial time management skills. During the 1970s and 1980s, athletic administrators became more aware of the unique needs student-athlete's faced in balancing his or her responsibilities, which led to marked growth and development of the field. It was also during this time period that the field's primary professional society; the National Association of Advisors for Athletics (N4A) was established. The establishment of N4A in 1975 helped to significantly increase interest in the advising needs of student-athletes during this period of overall growth.

To more clearly identify these academic support staff, Brooks, Etzel, and Ostrow (1987) explored demographic information of over 130 academic advisors and counselors working at the Division I level across the nation. Their results concluded that the majority of individuals working in this field at the time were male, former athletes who held master's degrees. These individuals were employed primarily through the university's Athletic Department and focused mainly on the academic advisement of student-athlete's on the men's basketball and football teams. This study is reflective of the narrow focus of the field of student-athlete academic support during its developmental stage.

Gruber (2003) provided guidance for individuals charged with the academic advisement of student-athletes. Gruber acknowledged that student-athletes are a unique population who present challenges beyond those observed within the normal student body. This article described a variety of issues that members of an Athletic Department's academic support staff may face. The author recognized that the department of academic support does not exist in isolation, but that it is instead interwoven into the climate of the university as a whole. One of the largest university influences is the ebb and flow of the Athletic Department itself. In a year of marked with athletic success, academic support

staff members may find themselves with budget bonuses and may benefit from administrators' increased willingness to support their efforts. Conversely, in a year in which athletic programs struggle to be successful, academic support programs may experience financial difficulties when resources are allocated to different areas within an Athletic Department, or when budget cuts are imposed across the board.

According to Gruber (2003), the university's established hierarchy is another place where the structure of the university affects academic support staff members. Commonly, fewer lines of communication between an academic support unit and the Athletic Director result in increased pressure placed upon academic advisors. Staff members who work more closely with their respective Athletic Directors are more likely to feel pressure to show how their programs and services directly benefit the Athletic Department. This perceived lack of control for academic support staff could lead to challenges in carrying out their required daily job tasks and duties.

Gruber (2003) also suggested that academic advisors must stay abreast of the ever-changing pressures faced by the student-athletes. Understanding that a tough loss or decreased playing time may affect a student-athlete's academic performance is critical for these professionals. Additionally, these professionals need to recognize that the advisement of student-athletes is not a one-size-fits-all process. Knowing the specific requirements of each team, both in-season and out-of-season, is crucial in adjusting to the evolving needs of the student-athlete. While Gruber's review aids in understanding the expectations and challenges associated with this profession, it is anecdotally based, rather than the product of empirical research.

Ferris, Finster, and McDonald (2004) credited academic support staff members with the academic success achieved by the student-athletes they studied. The authors claimed that academic mentors, tutors, academic advisors, and learning specialists were able to create a highly sophisticated network to help support academic success for student-athletes, which in turn created, a homogenous group of student-athletes who were successful in maintaining the minimum GPA requirement established by the NCAA. These authors also noted that the actions of these individuals had an especially profound impact on the lowest performing and least academically prepared student-athletes.

While all individuals who work in the field of student-athlete academic support are charged with very similar responsibilities, these responsibilities may be more challenging for professionals working with revenue producing athletic programs. Gatmen's (2011) provided several examples of the challenges faced by individuals who support these student-athletes. His review explored the effects of athletic participation on minority student-athlete's academic performance, and acknowledged the role student-athletes play in the entertainment aspect of college athletics. In his research, Gatmen used the term "Entertainment Product" to describe student-athletes. In his discussion of the so called Entertainment Product, Gatmen quoted Phil Hughes, the Associate Director for Student Services at Kansas State University, who explained how academic support staff members function when a student-athlete is considered to be an Entertainment Product: "My job is to protect The Entertainment Product. My job is to make sure that The Entertainment Product goes to class. My job is to make sure that The Entertainment Product studies. My job is to make sure that The Entertainment Product makes adequate academic progress according to the NCAA guidelines (p.509)." Hughes' terminology,

Entertainment Product, clearly shows that not all sectors of college athletics use the hyphenated term, student-athlete, as outlined in the NCAA policies.

Brewing, Svensson, Huml, and Chung (2014) described a program founded by the NCAA in 1991 known as *Challenging Athlete's Minds for Personal Success* (referred to as CHAMPS/Life Skills). Launched concurrently with the NCAA's mandates for academic resources, this program continues to address the five commitments that influence the development of student-athletes at all NCAA affiliated institutions: academic, career, personal development, athletics, and service. Academic support staff members deal most specifically with the academic commitment of the CHAMPS/Life Skills program, although the nature of their position may call for their involvement in other programs as well. Academic commitment is defined as "providing the student-athlete with necessary support for academic achievement" (Andrassy et al., 2014, p. 218). The development of this NCAA initiative provided an opportunity to expand the involvement of academic support staff members at the college level.

According to Leach (2015), the NCAA will turn over institutional control of the CHAMPS/Life Skills program to the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics (N4A) over a three-year period provisional period beginning with the 2016-2017 school year. The driving force behind this partnership is to provide a more synergistic collaboration of academics and the overall life skills portion of the current program. This change of administrative control provides the opportunity to expand the reach and impact academic support staff members have on student-athletes throughout the NCAA.

Faculty and Student-Athlete Interactions

This review of literature showed that university faculty and staff may not always have a favorable view of the motivation and academic potential of student-athletes (Aries et al., 2004; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995; Gruber, 2003; Njororai, 2012; Stone, 2012), which may create potential challenges for academic support staff members who serve as liaisons between these two parties. It was found that faculty often expect student-athletes to exhibit lower academic achievement than their non-athlete counterparts (Aries et al., 2004; Gruber, 2003; Stone, 2012). Student-athletes discussed in this literature were frequently pinned with the negative term of "dumb jock" or assumed to be over privileged but academically under motivated (Gruber, 2003, p.46). These negative stereotypes were found to be especially prevalent for minority student-athletes participating in revenue producing sports (Njororai, 2012; Stone, 2012).

Engstrom et al. (1995) showed discrepancies between male and female faculty members and their attitudes towards student-athletes. They reported that male faculty members were less sensitive and empathic towards the needs of student-athletes than their female counterparts. Additionally, they stated that faculty members in their study reported strong feelings of anger when presented with statements that student-athletes received full scholarships, or that student-athletes were admitted with lower SAT scores than the regular student body. Faculty members also reported feeling surprised when student-athletes earned an "A" in their course. These authors did not find significant differences in their results when they compared student-athletes competing in revenue producing sports to those who competed in non-revenue producing sports. While these findings are helpful in understanding stereotypes held by faculty, it should be noted that

they are only represent 201 faculty members from one large, east coast Division I-A university.

A literature review completed by Wycliffe W.S. Njororai (2012) showed that stereotypes were exacerbated when the student-athlete identified himself or herself as African-American. African-American student-athletes reported having a difficult time receiving outside help from faculty, and felt as though they were given lower grades and were accused of cheating more frequently than their non-student-athlete counterparts. Many African-American student-athletes stated that they responded to these feelings of being stereotyped by decreasing their participation in class, not attending the class, or dropping the class all together. A study completed by Comeaux and Harrison (2006) further discussed the interactions between African-American student-athletes and university faculty. Their research concluded that white Division I student-athletes who received mentoring from faculty were more likely to be academically successful. However, no such relationship was found in data from African-American Division I student-athletes.

Comeaux and Harrison (2007) studied the interactions between football and men's basketball student-athletes and their professors. Results showed that African-American student-athletes were more reluctant to informally interact with white faculty members because they had no exposure to white adults in their youth. These authors found that when a student-athlete's education was devoid of a positive faculty influence, the student-athlete tended to turn to members of his coaching staff for guidance, which consequently prioritized his focus toward athletic pursuits, rather than academic endeavors. While the data collected in this study came from a large sample, participants

in the survey were exclusively football and basketball student-athletes. Although this study provides meaningful information about student-athletes who participate in revenue producing sports, the findings cannot speak to faculty and student-athlete interactions as they may have applied to student-athletes who participated in other sports at their institution of investigation.

Aries, McCarthy, Salovey, and Banaji (2004) found that student-athletes reported that they were not "taken seriously" by their professors and that these feelings affected their academic achievement negatively (p. 590). These authors also found that, compared to non-student-athletes, a greater number of student-athletes reported having these feelings. Although these authors acknowledged that their study could not be used to determine that actual attitudes of professors at these institutions, they stated that way student-athletes perceive their professors may still negatively affect classroom performance.

Stone (2012) further explored these feelings of student-athletes not being taken seriously and examined stereotypes that student-athletes faced, specifically the concept of a being referred to as a "dumb jock". Stone reported that student-athletes were acutely aware of the stereotypes they faced in the classroom setting. The student-athletes reported that they had witnessed professors make negative remarks about the student-athletes in their classes. African-American student-athletes reported feeling stereotyped in this manner more frequently than their white counterparts. Stone went on to further assert that student-athletes who felt as though they were subjected to negative stereotypes might have performed worse on academic measures than if they would have been in an environment free of these stereotypes. Based on this research, understanding the

stereotypes and challenges that face student-athletes in the classroom, is critical for academic support staff members in order to most effectively interact with both student-athletes and university faculty and staff.

Harrison, Comeaux, and Plecha (2006) assessed how faculty interactions, beyond those that occurred within a normal classroom setting, affected the academic success of student-athletes who participated in revenue producing sports. These authors found that meaningful interactions with faculty members were shown to have beneficial effects on the academic success of student-athletes. These results were based on a survey conducted with 693 football and basketball players at institutions considered to be predominantly white. From these data, the authors concluded that meaningful interactions between university faculty and staff and student-athletes promoted an effective balance between a student-athlete's academic and athletic commitments. These results indicate that mandatory academic and social activities between student-athletes and university faculty and staff should be encouraged. Furthermore, these authors suggested that increased interactions between these two parties might be especially beneficial to male student-athletes and those who "enter an institution with differing educational characteristics" (p.282). These differing educational characteristics referred specifically to the lower academic standards, such a lower GPA and/or SAT standards, that some universities have set for student-athletes as compared to their non-student athlete peers. Results from this study provide evidence of the value of increased interactions between faculty and staff and student-athletes. Based on these results, academic support staff members may wish to encourage these types of interactions at their own institutions.

Discrepancies in Admission Criteria

This review of literature found that one driving force behind the dumb jock stereotype faced by student-athletes was the perception that student-athletes were admitted to their respective universities under different admission criteria than that of the regular student body. Current literature presented mixed results as to the accuracy of this assumption and the prevalence of these admission practices. The following is a discussion of the prevalence of these discrepancies in admission criteria as reported in the literature, as well as the rationale for admission policies used for student-athletes.

Gatmen (2011) described the possible reasoning behind the preferential treatment given to student-athletes during the admissions process. This author claimed that an institution's desire to be athletically successful frequently led their admissions committee to admit an incoming student-athlete over a regular applicant who may be better qualified academically. Given the fact that all universities have a pre-established admission quota, this preferential treatment of student-athletes could have jeopardized the admission of seemingly more qualified non-student-athletes. However, Gatmen noted that inequalities in the admission process might be impossible to prove because this process is innately subjective.

Fried (2007) discovered several discrepancies in the admissions process between student-athletes and the rest of the student body. She estimated that some institutions allocated between 10-25% of their admission slots to recruited student-athletes. This prioritization was often justified with the notion of "many forms of excellence," defined as the admission staff's willingness to supplement a student-athlete's academic achievement with non-academic factors such as extracurricular activities and

involvement in community service (p.7). Frequently, these academically independent factors have been used to justify the admittance of a student whose scores on the SAT/ACT and/or GPA may fall below an institution's average admission threshold. While these practices were found to be commonplace across the higher education landscape, they were seen as problematic when athletic achievement was given exponentially more clout than other forms of excellence. Defenders of this admissions practice have stated that positive characteristics developed through athletic participation, such as discipline and teamwork benefited the student in a way that warranted additional consideration in the admission process.

Shulman and Bowen (2000) echoed this emphasis on athletic abilities in the admission process. These authors stated that the subset of academically selective universities they reviewed favored athletic abilities over academic achievement. Specifically, these authors noted this emphasis at universities that competed at the Division I-A level. These authors suggested that athletic ability was weighted more heavily in the admission process at these universities in order to accept and retain student-athletes who possessed the athletic skill to compete at the elite level.

Espenshade, Chung, and Walling (2004) examined factors that typically influenced admittance at elite colleges and universities. The factors of particular interest were race, high SAT scores (defined as scores above 1500), athletic ability, and legacy status. Based on a review of 124,374 applicants, these authors found that athletic status does carry substantial weight in the admission process. Athletes represented only 6% of the sample studied; yet this group had a 49.1% acceptance rate. This group acceptance

rate was second only to that of legacy applicants whose acceptance rate was that of 49.7%.

Espenshade et al. (2004) also evaluated the value of certain characteristics in the admission process over time. The authors included four classifications of applicants in a cross-decade comparison: African-American students, Hispanic students, legacy students, and students who participated in athletics. Results indicated that in the 1980s, 1993, and 1997 changes in relative importance of athletes were 25%, 32%, and 35% respectively. Of the four classifications reviewed in this manner, a preference for athletes was the only classification that increased in relative importance over time. While the importance of athletic status was evident from these results, it should be noted that the athletic status here was determined by high school participation, and therefore recruited student-athletes were not considered independently for the purposes of this review. Additionally, the results of this study were based on data collected from the 1980s-1997 from a small subset of elite colleges and universities. Therefore, any conclusions gathered from these data should be done so by considering this limited scope.

While the examples provided thus far do not provide evidence that these admission practices are done so in order to compensate for egregious gaps in intellectual ability, some anecdotal evidence does show the existence of such behaviors. Njororai (2012) stated that an institution's desire to win could go as far as the recruitment of talented high school players who were functionally illiterate. Bambel and Chen (2014) noted that both men's basketball and football student-athletes were the most likely groups to enter into an institution at an academic level below their non-athlete counterparts. Evidence of these extreme gaps in intellectual ability of football student-athletes were

found in reports from the 2009 NCAA ruling against Florida State University (Gatman, 2011). Gatman reported that this NCAA investigation at Florida State University found that former head football coach, Bobby Bowden, recruited student-athletes who were described as being able to read only at, "an elementary school level" (p.552), Furthermore, Gatman stated that student-athletes recruited by Bowden's staff were "so academically deficient, they couldn't do college work on their own" (p.552). These select student-athletes from Florida State University provide examples of the extremely low admission standards found at some institutions.

Ferris et al. (2004) suggested that the admission of student-athletes might have been based on more homogenous criteria than the regular student body. Specifically, this referred to the fact that across universities, the academic achievement of all student-athletes was seen to be less polarized than that of the student body as a whole. The primary reason for the similarities that existed in academic achievement, as cited by these authors was, the low baseline admission criteria set for student-athletes by the NCAA. These authors asserted that the admission gap between the regular student body and the student-athlete population existed to some extent across all sports. This admission gap was displayed by the disproportionally small number of student-athletes whose academic credentials paralleled those of the highest achieving members of a given admitted class of students. So while a given group of student-athletes may have been admitted on similar criteria, this group's average academic achievement was not similar to the cohort of highest achieving students at a given university.

Aries et al. (2004) found that student-athletes identified as high-commitment athletes (those who self-reported committing ten or more hours to their academic

endeavors) at a sample of highly selective institutions were also subjected to this pre-admission academic achievement gap. Survey data collected from high-commitment student-athletes, found that these individuals were cognizant of this achievement gap and identified themselves as less academically skilled than their non-athlete counterparts. These student-athletes indicated that they lacked skills in the areas of writing, foreign language ability, and analytic aptitude. Furthermore a greater number of student-athletes indicated that they lacked these skills than did the rest of the student population. This perceived lack of academic abilities may be one of the driving forces behind the compensatory, yet ultimately fraudulent practices, some student-athletes utilize in order to close these professed skill gaps. A discussion of academic fraud as examined within the literature is to follow.

Prevalence of Academically Fraudulent Practices

Njororai (2012) asserted that the inadequate academic preparation of a student-athlete combined with the stereotypes they face, made these individuals increasingly susceptible to participation in practices that compromised the integrity of their academic pursuits. This author used the term "academically fraudulent" to define and encompass many compensatory practices that were found elsewhere in the literature. Academic fraudulence was often associated with gaining unfair assistance in completing assignments, such as student-athletes who hired surrogate test takers or cheated on exams (Etizen, 2006). Institutions have also been found to participate in academically fraudulent behavior by encouraging professors to create an easier curriculum targeted toward student-athletes in order provide extra assistance that helped the student-athlete remain eligible (Zimbalist, 1999).

Fountain and Finley (2011) discussed another type of academic fraud that occurred when administrative professionals encouraged student-athletes to declare majors that were perceived to be easier and/or were made up of professors who traditionally provided additional assistance to student-athletes. This practice was referred to as "academic clustering", and occurred when 25% or more members of a particular athletic team declared a single major, in order to find an academic "path of least resistance" (p.38). By doing this, the administrators were able to ensure that student-athletes produced grades above the level that would be of concern to the NCAA. These authors reported the existence of academic clustering at one Division I institution and found that student-athletes migrated towards this predetermined cluster as they progressed in their academic and athletic careers.

Cullen, Latessa, and Jonson (2012) investigated the extent and nature of NCAA violations as self-reported by 648 Division I football and men's basketball players. The survey asked football and basketball student-athletes who participated in collegiate athletics during the 1993-1994 season to report practices they experienced during recruitment and throughout their college experience that were considered to be NCAA violations. Results indicated that a small percentage of student-athletes participated in practices, both during the recruitment process and while in college, that would be considered NCAA academic violations. These practices include falsifying grades and having others take their SAT/ACT tests. However, the results of this study must be considered within the context that evaluative measures of this research were based on NCAA regulations that have undergone significant reform since this article's publication.

Gatmen (2011) discussed the publicity that academically fraudulent practices (referred to as "academic misconduct" by the author) have received from the media. Gatmen noted that while the NCAA has found a small number of institutions guilty of academic violations, these types of violations have come to be expected within collegiate athletics. While these violations have indeed yielded NCAA sanctions, the promise of success has led some institutions to disregard the rules established by the NCAA and proceed with academically fraudulent practices (Zimbalist, 1999). Another driving force behind the prevalence of academic fraud has been cited as institutional peer pressure. This can be summarized by a quote by Andrew Zimbalist (1999): "when one school cheats, others feel compelled to do the same" (p.4). One cited reason for these academically fraudulent practices was the need to make up for perceived gaps in academic achievement that some student-athletes may carry with them when entering college. A discussion of these academic achievement related pre-college factors is to follow.

Pre-College Factors that Influence Academic Achievement of Student-Athletes

Comeaux and Harrison (2011) created a unique conceptual model, entitled the *Model for College Student-Athlete Success,* which represented factors influential to the academic success of student-athletes. Precollege factors, varying levels of commitment, and social system influences were taken into account in the creation of this model. These authors stated that precollege factors might directly or indirectly influence academic success of student-athletes. Of these precollege factors, Comeaux and Harrison focused on family background, educational experiences and preparation, and individual characteristics. Based on a comprehensive literature review, these authors found that

family background characteristics, which included parents' socioeconomic status, parents' level of education, and degree of parental support had the greatest effect on a student-athlete's academic achievement.

In regard to educational experiences and preparation, Comeaux and Harrison (2011) found that GPA, student motivation and aspiration, and an expectation of college attendance had the largest influence on student-athlete educational success. They also found "access to qualified teachers, culturally relevant curricula, clean and safe facilities, advanced placement classes, honors courses, and other college preparatory services" were some of the most influential variables that effected a student's preparation for college (p.239). Of particular interest here were the inequalities that existed in the types of learning opportunities available to high school students in low-income communities (Kozol, 1995, 2005). Traditionally, students who receive their education within low-income communities tend to be subjected to the negative effects of structural inequalities in higher rates than those students who were not educated in such communities (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed based on the literature reviewed, that these inequalities may have an important influence on a student's attitude toward a college education.

Comeaux and Harrison (2011) stated that the individual characteristics of the student-athlete should also be considered a pre-college factor for academic success. These characteristics were shown to influence an individual's attitude toward learning beyond their measured cognitive abilities, and included characteristics such as academic motivation, academic self-concept, mental health, and educational goals. In addition to these factors, demographic characteristics such as a student-athlete's race, ethnicity, and

gender were also seen to influence academic success at the college level. Finally, the individual's sport of participation and level of competition (i.e. Division I, II, or III) have also been shown to influence academic success.

Eitzen (1988) provided examples of the influence of demographic characteristics, non-cognitive factors, and sport participation in his review of 22 Division I men's basketball and football programs. This author found that, when using grades and graduation rates as evaluative measures, male athletes in these revenue producing sports performed less well academically than their other student-athlete peers. Although this study was completed nearly thirty years ago, these findings have permeated the literature since its publication. Comeaux and Harrison (2011) also found that football and men's basketball student-athletes were less academically successful than other student-athletes. Additionally these authors found that, African-American student-athletes during this time were the most likely to come from poor backgrounds, and were the least academically prepared of all groups evaluated.

Factors that Influence the Academic Commitment of Student-Athletes

While much research has been conducted on the effect of background characteristics on academic success, Gaston-Gayles and Hu (2009) suggested that engagement activities have a more influential impact on student-athlete academic success. Engagement activities, as defined by these authors, were any activities that incorporated: "(a) interaction with faculty, (b) interaction with student groups, organizations, and other service activities, (c) participation in student groups, organizations, and other service activities, and (d) participation in academic related activities" (p.320). These authors administered three surveys, the *Basic Academic Skills*

Study, *Progress in College Subscale*, and the *Social and Group Experience Subscale* to a total of 410 freshmen student-athletes at 21 Division I institutions. The researchers found that these engagement activities significantly impacted learning and communication skills, and had a positive effect on a student-athlete's self-concept. However, these engagement activities were found to be less beneficial for student-athletes participating in high profile sports than for those who participated in low profile sports. Based on these findings, Gaston-Gayle and Hu (2009) recommended that athletic administrators encourage these meaningful engagement opportunities between student-athletes and non-athletes, as they proved to have strong educational benefits. Athletic administrators were encouraged to look for ways to help student-athletes interact with their non-student-athlete peers, rather than focusing solely on a student-athlete's athletic pursuits.

Comeaux and Harrison (2011) found that a student-athlete's commitment to academic success was closely correlated with the short-term and long-term academic goals that he/she set for himself/herself. The most important of these goals was determined to be the student-athlete's plan for life after graduation. For example, a student-athlete who had a goal of obtaining a degree higher than that of a bachelor's degree proved to be more likely to commit to graduation than a student-athlete who had not set academic goals beyond undergraduate pursuits. These authors noted that more research is needed in this area.

Academic Resources Available to Student-Athletes

While much evidence was found regarding the factors that contributed to the challenges faced by student-athletes in their pursuit of academic success, less data existed concerning the resources available to academic support professionals to help student-

athletes overcome these challenges. However, tutoring systems received a great deal of attention in the reviewed literature. Johnson, Harris, and Peters (2013) completed a comprehensive review of 1,297 student-athlete tutoring cases over a three-year period at a large mid-western university. The tutors in this study were employed through the university's learning center, and their resources were available to both student-athletes and non-student-athletes. The study found that female student-athletes saw fewer tutors overall, and that student-athletes from revenue producing sports saw tutors more frequently than student-athletes from non-revenue producing sports.

Thompson (2008) also reviewed tutors who worked with student-athletes. While many institutions provided tutoring services that were available to the regular student body, he stated that the student-athlete's dual role made his or her need for the tutors particularly important. Thompson highlighted the need for tutors to help student-athletes adapt to the difficulties they faced in balancing their academic and athletic responsibilities. Of particular interest within this study was the evaluation of tutoring techniques that were viewed most favorably by student-athletes. Based on survey data collected from sixty-two student-athletes at one mid-western institution, tutors who were best able to understand sports and use sport analogies in their tutoring sessions were viewed most favorably by student-athletes surveyed. The small sample size and narrow focus of this study limits its generalizability, however.

Comeaux and Harrison (2011) stated that while many institutions provided academic resources that were student-athlete specific, the effectiveness of these resources were cause for concern. Often the goal of providing these support services was simply to keep student-athletes academically eligible for participation. It was argued that this goal

of just maintaining academic eligibility set the bar low for overall academic achievement.

When academic support staff members focused their efforts on achieving this baseline

goal, they were less likely to help a student-athlete excel academically.

Bambel and Chen (2014) completed a review of the academic resources available

to student-athletes at the twelve member institutions of the Ohio Valley Conference

(OVC). They compared and contrasted the academic services provided to student-athletes

at each of the universities in this conference. These authors found that all institutions in

the OVC employed between two and four full time staff members, but the majority of

institutions had only two full-time employees. Some of these member institutions

employed graduate assistants and/or interns, but no institution employed more than two

of these types of employees. The low number of employees at these institutions was used

to, in part, show the disparities that existed between the resources available at "mid-

major" schools as compared to those at larger Division I institutions.

Student-Athlete Academic Achievement as Compared to Regular Student Body

Graduation rates have typically been used to compare student-athletes' academic

achievement with the achievement of the rest of the university's student body (Eitzen,

2006; Ferris et al., 2004). With the passing of the federal government's *Students Right-to-*

Know Act in 1990, all universities were required to report their overall graduation rates as

well as the graduation rates of their student-athletes (Ferris et al., 2004). Traditionally

student-athletes participating in revenue producing sports were found to have the lowest

graduation rates of any other subgroup of student-athletes (Etizen, 2006). The lower

graduation rates of these student-athletes' is often believed to be a consequence of their

desire to seek a career in professional sports, rather than pursuing a career path that

requires a college degree. While the percentage of student-athletes who continue their careers at the professional level is low, many student-athletes have been found to view their college experience purely as preparation to continue play at the next level (Etizen, 2006). This motivation was found to lead student-athletes to become disinterested in obtaining a degree at the conclusion of their eligibility (Etizen, 2006).

Ferris et al. (2004) completed a ten-year review of the differences in graduation rates among student-athletes and non-student-athletes between the years of 1992-2002 at Division I-A institutions. The review of these statistics found that the overall graduation rates only differed by 1.1%, favoring the regular student body. A second review of these graduation rates completed by Ferris et al. (2004) and accounted for what the authors referred to as the "university's profile". This university profile included factors such as the university's constituents, mission, student body characteristics, wealth, and prestige and was used to analyze how these variables affected a student's desire to obtain a four-year degree. It was found that when the university's profile was taken into consideration, there was no difference in graduation rate between student-athletes and the regular student body.

Another area in which graduation rates were found to be equivalent was between student-athletes and non-student-athletes at elite institutions (Ferris et al., 2004). Research suggested that the overall high graduation rates at these institutions could be attributed to the decreased transfer rate, the desire of student-athletes to remain at a prestigious university, and the associated socioeconomic benefits of graduating from a university with a well-established "brand-name" (Ferris et al., 2004, p. 561). These elite universities not only admitted student-athletes who were better academically prepared,

but they also provided increased resources to support the academic endeavors of their student-athletes and placed increased emphasis on graduation.

When student-athletes' academic achievement was compared to that of the regular student body, Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, and Hannah (2006) found favorable results for student-athletes. The researchers administered *The National Survey of Student Engagement* to a total of 7,821 student-athletes and 49,407 non-student athletes. The institutions in the sample, by division included: 107 NCAA Division I, 93 NCAA Division II, 145 NCAA Division III, and 50 NAIA schools. This study found that female student-athletes were as academically challenged, interacted with faculty as frequently, and were as active in collaborative learning activities as their non-student-athlete counterparts. Male student-athletes showed similar equality in most areas with the exception of earning slightly lower grades than non-student-athletes. This slight discrepancy in grades earned was found to be more prevalent at the Division III and NAIA levels. Results of this study demonstrated that student-athletes had similar or perhaps better educational experiences than their non-student-athlete counterparts. These authors suggested that this rating of educational experience and engagement should be taken into account when reviewing the academic success of student-athletes. They also concluded that the results of their research contradicted negative media portrayal of student-athletes' academic achievements. However, the vastly different sample size between these two cohorts should be noted and considered a limitation to any conclusions gathered from these data.

Eitzen (1988) presented contrasting evidence and found that student-athletes' academic performance differed from that of the institution's student body on the whole.

He pointed out two variables that may affect the comparison of academic success of student-athletes and non-student-athletes: gender and level of competition. His findings indicated that female student-athletes were as equally prepared for the academic rigor of universities as their non-student-athlete peers. Eitzen also found that female student-athletes were more similar in academic preparedness to non-student athletes, than were male student-athletes. This research indicated that level of competiveness also had an effect on academic success when student-athletes and non-student-athletes were compared. Therefore it was concluded that Division I student-athletes were the least likely of all NCAA student-athletes to be as academically successful as their non-student-athlete counterparts.

While the literature reviewed comprehensively addressed the academic disadvantages of some student-athletes and the academically fraudulent practices that are sometimes used to some to compensate for the unique needs of student-athletes, a clear gap exists in the literature pertaining to the academic support staff members who work to promote academic integrity of the student-athletes with whom they work. The most comprehensive study reviewed focused on the demographic information of academic support staff member was completed nearly 30 years ago, and therefore this information that may not be reflective of the current professionals working in this field (Brooks et al., 1987). This research aims to add to the current literature in this area, as well as to fill the aforementioned gaps within these areas of interest. In the following section a discussion of the methods used in the development, implementation, and analysis of the survey distributed to academic support staff members at AAC, ACC, Big South, and CAA institutions can be found.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study sought feedback form academic support staff members at AAC, ACC, Big South, and CAA institutions in order to better understand the interactions between academics and collegiate athletics. In this chapter, I will discuss the research design of this study including the sample, population, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis, limitations, threats, and protection of human subjects. This study aims to answer the following research questions as mentioned above:

1. What resources are available to student-athletes within AAC, ACC, CAA, and Big South Conference institutions to ensure that student-athletes maintain their eligibility and successfully complete their degree?

2. What specific challenges exist in the advisement of student-athletes at AAC, ACC, CAA, and Big South Conference member institutions?

3. What are some general characteristics (including years of experience and discipline of study) of student-athlete academic support staff members?

4. What differences exist in the field of academic support for student-athletes within varying Division I conferences?

Research Design

This study was based on a mixed-method survey design. While this survey design was mixed-method in nature, the design heavily favored a quantitative question design. The choice to design the survey to include more quantitative questions was done to be considerate of the time constraints facing academic support staff members. These individuals have a variety of responsibilities at their institutions, and therefore their workloads needed to be considered when designing this survey instrument.

While much of the information of interest in this survey was collected through closed-ended Likert-scale type questions, there were a few instances where Likert-scale questions would have provided an incomplete representation of the target information. In order to address these instances, open-ended questions were included. These questions were designed to obtain responses that could vary widely among respondents, primarily when collecting demographic information. Questions that utilized a qualitative design examined the following areas of interest: individual's job titles, the discipline in which the individuals earned their respective degree(s), the number of co-workers an individual has within their given departments, and the number of student-athletes they support.

Sample and Population

The target population included individuals who were employed as academic support staff members for student-athletes at AAC, ACC, Big South, and CAA institutions. The sampling technique chosen for this study was a purposive sampling technique due to the fact that the population of interest was very narrow in focus (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). This sampling technique was also chosen because demographic information, such as job titles of the sampled individuals, was of primary interest (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Job titles for these positions varied widely among the institutions, however each school's Athletic Department staff directory provided the specific titles given to all members of their respective academic support department. Job titles for these individuals included, but were not limited to: Academic Advisor, Learning Specialist, Academic Counselor, Associate Director, Assistant/Associate Dean of University Advisement, Assistant/Associate Athlete Director (AD), and Director of Student-Athlete Services/Academic Achievement.

In order to be included in this sample, the institutions needed to be full members of the four conferences targeted in this study. These four conferences were chosen for this study based, in part, on their geographic similarities. Figures 2 (Nolephin, 2013), 3 (Stanton49, 2015), 4 (Connormah, 2009), and 5 (Connormah, 2016) show the states in which each of the four conferences have member institutions. Given these geographic similarities, institutions from these conferences tend to recruit student-athletes from similar areas. Therefore the student-athletes at these institutions can be perceived to come from a relatively homogenous group.
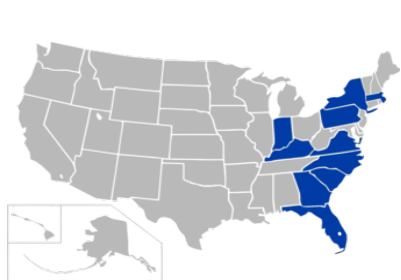
Figure 2. Atlantic Coast Conference   *Figure 3*. American Athletic Conference
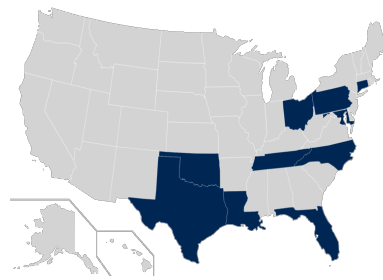
Figure 4. Colonial Athletic Association   *Figure 5*. Big South Conference

It is also import to consider some demographic characteristics of these universities when evaluating their overall place in the Division I athletics landscape.

Table 2 shows the average student body size, the number of sports offered, and whether the conference is affiliated considered to be a Division I-A or Division I-AA institutions (American Athletic Conference, 2016; Atlantic Coast Conference, 2014; Coastal Carolina University, 2015; Colonial Athletic Association, 2013). Note that the average student body size for the Big South was calculated excluding Liberty University, which cites a total enrollment of over 110,000 (Liberty University, 2016).

Table 2.

Conference Characteristics

Conference	Average Student Body Size	Number of Sports Offered	Subdivision
AAC	31,145	21	Division I-A
ACC	22,000	27	Division I-A
Big South	5,838	19	Division I-AA
CAA	16,360	21	Division I-AA

Additionally, the sample chosen was done so in order to include two higher profile conferences and two lower profile conferences within the broader classification within Division I athletics. The ACC and AAC were those considered to be higher profile based on their Division I-A classification, while the Big South and CAA were considered lower profile based on their Division I-AA classification. The primary reason for this distinction between conferences is the budgetary differences that exist among institutions at the Division I-A and Division I-AA levels. Data presented within the *NCAA Revenues/Expenses Report*: *2004-2014* shows several ways in which financial disparities exist within these NCAA subdivisions (Fulks, 2015). One way in which these disparities were expressed was through the median generated revenue reported. This review found

that in 2014 the median generated revenue for Division I-A institutions was $44,455,000

while the median generated revenue for Division I-AA institutions was $4,137,000.

Furthermore the largest generated revenue found at the Division I-AA level in 2014 was

$20,911,000, less than half the median generated revenue of the higher profile Division I-

A subdivision. These financial differences are important within this context in that the

academic support staff departments at the center of this study are primarily funded

through the Athletic Departments at their respective institutions. Therefore, it can be

reasonably assumed that the institutions that operate with larger Athletic Department

budgets can afford to allocate more funds to the efforts of academic support for student-

athletes.

While the financial disparities between Division I-A and Division I-AA are clear,

not all institutions within the Division I-A are equally as affluent (Fulks, 2015). Fulks

(2015) found that the Division I-A institution with the largest generated revenue grossed

$193,875,000 in 2014, more than four times the median generated revenue produced by

all Division I-A institutions. In order to reflect the disparities that exist within Division I-

A athletics two high profile conferences were chosen, one from the "Big Five" and one

considered to have less influence within Division I athletics. The ACC is one of five

conferences considered to be part of the "Big Five", those Division I-A conferences that

are seen to be the most powerful and influential within collegiate athletics. The AAC is

also a conference affiliated with the Division I-A, but is not a conference considered to be

part of the "Big Five" While the AAC is not allotted autonomy within the NCAA, its

power within Division I athletic is still respected and some sources consider this

conference to be the sixth power conference (Russo, 2014). Although the AAC is not

given autonomy within the NCAA, the conference is perceived to be very powerful within Division I athletics.

The Big South and CAA were chosen in order to provide a point of comparison to Division I-A cultures found at AAC and ACC institutions. While the Big South and CAA are the most geographically similar of the four conferences, the conferences have several differences. Most notably is the overall size of the institutions, which is reflected in Table 2 above.

Based on these standards for inclusion, this survey was distributed to a total of 47 intuitions. A comprehensive review of each of the 47 institutions' Athletic Department webpages was completed to retrieve the email addresses of all individuals identified as working within departments dedicated to the academic support of student-athletes. The University of Notre Dame's Athletic Department webpage did not provide identifiable information for the academic support staff members they employ, and therefore was not included in this study. These email addresses were then entered into an Excel spreadsheet and categorized by institution and conference of affiliation. At the time of collection, each of the four conferences employed the following number of academic support staff members: AAC 115, ACC 150, Big South 26, and CAA 50; yielding a total sample size of 341.

An initial email was sent on November 11, 2015 via Microsoft Outlook software, available to me through James Madison University. After this initial distribution, 22 emails were returned as undeliverable. The emails that were returned were then compared to the each of the institution's staff directories in order to determine if any errors were made in entering the email addresses into the Excel database. Corrections to these email

addresses were made and a second wave of emails was sent on November 15, 2015, to

those individuals whose email addresses were proven to be incorrect in the original

distribution. Of this second round of emails, 12 were returned yet again. Based on this

information, a total of 328 individuals received the survey. In order to adhere to

acceptable survey research practices, a minimum sample size of 33 of was set to reflect a

10% survey response rate (Fraenkel et al., 2012). The maximum sample size for the study

was set as 328.

Instrumentation

The survey created for the purposes of this research was mixed-methods in nature

and delivered through the online survey software, Qualtrics. This survey consisted of

sixteen total questions. Question types included in this survey were true/false, Likert

scale, single select, multiple select, fill-in-the-blank, open response, and sliding scale.

The survey instrument used for this research can be found in Appendix B.

Four questions were designed to collect demographic information from the

respondents, including: specific job title, years of experience both in this field and at their

current institution of employment, the degree(s) they have earned, and the disciplines

from which they earned their respective degree(s). Respondents were asked to provide

information about which sports they support by selecting 'all that apply' from a

comprehensive list of sports offered at the Division I level. A fill-in-the-blank question

was included to determine specifically how many student-athletes the respondents

supported. Several questions were included to gain a better understanding of the

respondent's institution of employment, and the characteristics of that institution's

academic support services. Questions in this category addressed: the institution's

conference of affiliation, the number of employees employed within their respective departments, and the availability of academic resources. Three questions were also included to identify any practices that may be considered academically fraudulent, including a specific question that addresses whether they have had to report a student-athlete to the institution's compliance department for these behaviors. Two questions were designed to evaluate the respondent's perception of the academic commitment and the capabilities of the student-athletes they support, as well as their perception of the faculty's attitudes. Finally, questions were included to assess the degree to which respondents felt pressure from members of the university community to ensure that student-athletes maintain their eligibility.

Data Collection Procedures

All members of the sample received an email with a brief description of the study, consent form, and link to the Qualtrics survey. The survey remained opened for a total of two weeks. After one week, a reminder email was sent to the sample asking the respondents to please take the survey, if they had not already done so. At the end of two weeks, the survey was closed and all data were downloaded from Qualtrics. All data collected from Qualtrics were downloaded to an Excel spreadsheet and saved on a password protected personal laptop.

Data Analysis

Given the mixed-methods nature of this survey, both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques were required. Much of data analysis was completed based on information gathered through the analysis tools available within the Qualtrics software.

Data collected from Qualtrics was then imported into Excel in order to create graphic representations that were consistent with the qualitative data analysis.

All questions that were classified by conference of affiliation and/or job category were completed using the data analysis tools within Excel. Due to the open-ended nature of questions inquiring into conference of affiliation and job title, Qualtrics was unable to sort these variables. Therefore, all unfiltered data were downloaded from Qualtrics into Excel to complete the data analysis. All statistical analyses, including calculation of mean, standard deviation, standard error, and range were completed within Excel using the data calculation tools available within the software.

Limitations

The overall low sample size, 328, is a limitation of this study. Another sample-size related limitation of this study is the distribution of the sample among the four conferences. Of the total 328 recipients 111 were affiliated with the AAC, 143 with the ACC, 26 with the Big South, and 48 with the CAA. Of these 328 distributed surveys, 92 were completed. Among these 92 surveys not all individuals provided a conference of affiliation. The distribution of individuals who provided a conference of affiliation are as follows: 28 were from individuals affiliated with the AAC, 28 with the AAC, 9 with the Big South, and 23 with the CAA. Another limitation that exists is the conferences reached in this survey. This survey was distributed to only four Division I conferences, and therefore any conclusions made should not serve to be representative of all Division I institutions.

Threats

The types of threats to internal validity that are of primary concern within this research are as follows: mortality, subject characteristics, subject attitudes, data collector characteristics, data collector bias, and instrumentation. Since the nature of this research was dependent of voluntary return of the distributed survey, mortality was considered to be a threat (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Mortality in this case presented itself in the form of survey non-response rates (Fraenkel et al., 2012). The emails returned during the survey distribution are also indicative of the mortality threat of this research. When the survey was first distributed, 22 emails were returned as undeliverable. One individual indicated that the email had reached the wrong person, and two individuals indicated that they were out of the office when the email was delivered. One individual indicated that he was no longer employed at the institution, despite being listed as an employee on the institution's Athletic Department staff directory.

While the sample in this study consists of individuals from a single field, their job responsibilities within this discipline may vary widely. These variations may manifest themselves in a threat to validity in the form of subject characteristic (Fraenkel et al., 2012). For example, an individual with the title of Associate Dean of University Advisement may have access to different resources and may have increased interactions with athletic administrative staff than an individual who holds a title such as Learning Specialist. These different levels of responsibilities may also influence a respondent's perception of the pressures from external sources, as evaluated by this survey.

In addition to subject characteristics, respondent's attitudes may pose a threat to internal validity. The way in which a participant views a study and participates in data

collection may threaten internal validity (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Respondents'
interpretation of the survey questions may skew the results, and the truthfulness of their
responses may jeopardize the validity of conclusions made.

Given the fact that the survey was created solely for this study, instrumentation
also poses a potential threat to validity. The threat exists that questions were designed to
yield the desired responses in order to support my hypotheses. In order to minimize this
threat, all questions were subjected to several rounds of peer review. Classmates and
members of the thesis committee reviewed survey questions to ensure that objectivity
was maintained.

Data collection and analysis may pose to be an additional threat to internal
validity. My affiliation with James Madison University, A CAA member institution, may
pose a threat. This data collector characteristic may pose a threat to the responses
provided. Surveys were distributed from a JMU affiliated email system. The connection
to JMU may have made certain respondents more or less inclined to respond, or may
have effected the truthfulness of their responses. Given that I completed all data analysis
independently, the threat of data collector bias also exists. This bias exists when the
collector unconsciously distorts the data to make certain responses more likely (Fraenkel
et al., 2012). This bias may have occurred when entering quantitative data into Excel, and
when coding qualitative data.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained on November 6, 2015. A
copy of this IRB approval can be found in Appendix A. All survey recipients were
informed that the study received IRB approval and were provided with the informed
consent within the body of the email. Approval from the IRB indicated that the survey

posed minimal risk to participants, meaning that risks did not exceed those which exist in

daily life. Individuals were assured anonymity for themselves and also for their

institution of employment. The only identifiable information collected was the

conference of affiliation associated the individual's respective institution of employment.

The target audience was informed that all information collected from the survey data

would be stored on a password-protected laptop computer. Academic support staff

members reached through this survey distribution were encouraged to contact me with

any questions. In the section to follow, I will present the findings from this research.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter will discuss the results of the survey instrument administered through Qualtrics software. This survey was available to respondents for a total of two weeks beginning on November 11, 2015. On the first day the survey was open, 51 responses were recorded and a few surveys a day were returned until a reminder email was sent out on November 20, 2015. After this reminder email was sent another 24 surveys before the survey was made inactive on November 25, 2015.

A total of 96 surveys were returned, with 92 at least partially completed. Ninety-two surveys reflect of an overall 28.05% response rate from the 328 surveys distributed. Survey response rates varied by question, while the questions that asked respondents to enter in their own responses had the lowest response rates. In order to accurately reflect this varying number of respondents, the total responses are provided along with their respective question. A full discussion of the results for each question is to follow.

Q1. What is your job title?

The 84 responses from this question were used as a basis to categorize information provided by other survey questions. Respondents who did not provide their job titles were not eliminated from the data analysis as a whole, but were excluded from analysis that used as a basis for comparison. One respondent reported that they held a job title of Information System Manager, and was excluded from analysis because the survey apparently reached this respondent by error. The remaining job titles provided by respondents were separated into four categories: Academic, Assistant, Associate, and Director. Those individuals categorized as Academics most commonly had the job titles of Learning Specialist, Academic Advisor, Academic Coordinator, and Academic

Counselor. Respondents categorized as Assistants were those who indicated that they held an Assistant Director or Assistant Athletic Director level position. The category of Associate was comprised of respondents with indicative of an Associate Director or Associate Athletic Director level position. Directors are those who indicated that they held a Director level position in their respective departments for student-athlete academic support. A complete list of all the job titles provided by respondents, and the respective categories to which they were assigned can be found in Appendix C.

Q2. How many years of experience do you have in this field?

This question was included to determine the respondents' level of experience within the field of academic support of student-athletes. Ninety-two respondents provided a response to this question. Figure 6 displays the distribution of years of experience in the field of academic support of student-athletes among respondents. Twenty-six percent of respondents indicated that they had six to ten years of experience in the field. Twenty-two percent of respondents indicated that they had three to five years, and an identical percentage also indicated that they had 11 to 15 years of experience in the field respectively. Seventeen percent of respondents indicated that they had between zero and two years of experience, while those individuals with twenty or more years of experience were the least represented in the sample with only 4% of respondents.
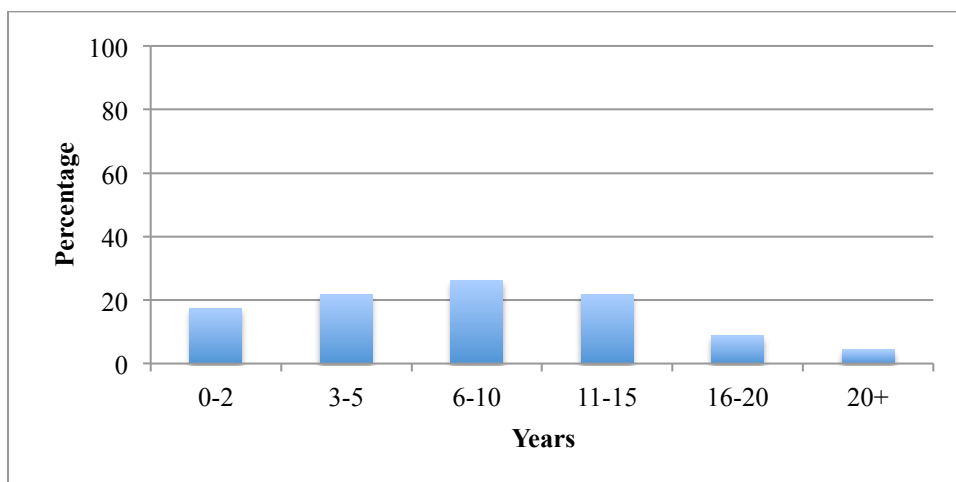
Figure 6. Years of Experience in the Field of Academic Support for Student-Athletes

Q3. How many years of experience do you have in this field at your current institution?

This question was included to determine the length of time respondents have spent at their current institution. Again, 92 respondents provided answers to this question. Results from questions two and three indicate that respondents have more experience in the field of academic support than they do at their current institutions of employment. Figure 7 displays the reported years of experiences respondents have at their current institution of employment. Forty-seven percent of respondents indicated that they had between zero and two years of experience at their current institution of employment. The next most popular response was three to five years of experience, with 23% of respondents, followed by six to ten years of experience, with 17% of respondents. Seven percent of respondents indicated that they had 11-15 years of experience. Respondents with 16-20 years and 20 or more years of experience were the least represented category with 2% and 3% respectively.
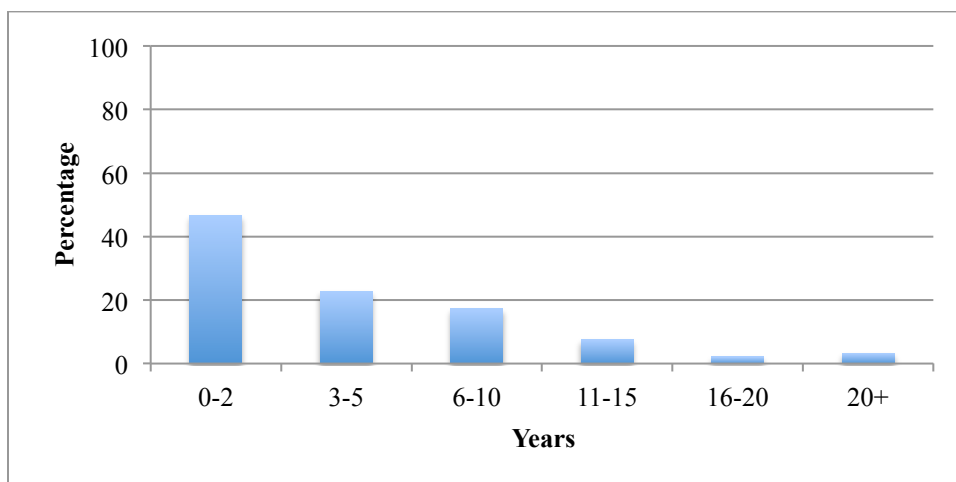
Figure 7. Years of Experience at Institution of Current Employment

Q4 and Q5. Please indicate the degrees you have earned from the list below. If you have earned a particular degree, please provide the discipline of study in which you earned each of your respective degrees.

These questions were designed to better understand the educational backgrounds of these individuals. Of interest in this subsection were the degrees held by the respondents. A total of 83 respondents indicated that they had earned a bachelor's degree, although not all respondents provided the discipline of study for their respective bachelor's degrees. Some individuals indicated that they had earned bachelor's degrees in multiple disciplines, such as those who double majored as undergraduate students. The responses for each of these disciplines were counted independently in order to adequately give credit to each discipline of study. Psychology was the field of study most commonly represented among bachelor's degrees, followed by Sports Management and/or Sports Administration, and Education (including Physical Education and Special Education). Other bachelor's degrees were represented in decreased proportions of the overall sample. All 83 bachelor's degrees reported can be found in Table 3.1

Table 3.1

Discipline Associated with Bachelor's Degrees Earned

Discipline of Study	Frequency of Degrees
Psychology	19
Sport Management and/or Sport Administration	13
Education	9
Sociology	5
History	5
Kinesiology	4
Political Science	4
Accounting	3
English	3
Athletic Training	2
Finance	2
Advertising	1
Criminology	1
Business	1
Communication	1
Dietetics	1
Engineering	1
Exercise Physiology	1
Health Promotion and Behavior	1
Liberal Studies	1
Management	1
Marketing	1
Recreational Therapy	1
Social Sciences	1

Eighty-six respondents indicated that they have earned a master's degree. Similar to those who indicated that they had earned a bachelor's degree, not all respondents provided the discipline of study in which they earned their master's degree. Additionally, some respondents indicated that they had earned multiple master's degrees in different disciplines of study, and therefore these responses were counted independently. The most commonly represented disciplines were Higher Education and Education (including those in Special Education and Secondary Education Administration). Master's degrees in the areas of Sport Management, Counseling (including those specific to college student counseling and development), and Sports, Fitness, Recreation, and/or Fitness

Administration were also well represented in the degrees reported. Table 3.2 shows the

master's degrees by frequency of disciplines, as indicated by 83 respondents.

Table 3.2

Discipline Associated with Master's Degrees Earned

Discipline of Study	Frequency
Higher Education	13
Education	12
Sport Management	11
Athletic, Fitness, Recreation, and/or Sport Administration	10
Counseling	9
History	3
Psychology	3
Academic Advising	2
College Student Personnel	2
English/English Literature	2
Exercise, Leisure, & Sport	2
Sport Business/Business	2
Exercise Science	1
Health Care Administration	1
Human Services	1
Kinesiology, Applied Sport Science	1
Political Science	1
Public Administration	1
Public Health	1
Social Work	1
Sociology	1
Sport and Recreation Leadership	1
Student Affairs	1

Based on the number of respondents who indicated that they earned a bachelor's

versus a master's degree, it is apparent that the question was not interpreted the way in

which it was intended. This question aimed to have respondents indicate the discipline

from which they earned each of their respective degrees. However, it is apparent that

some respondents indicated the discipline of study of only their highest degree earned.

This is evidenced by the fact that more respondents indicated that they earned a master's

degree than those who earned a bachelor's degree. If respondents had indicted all degrees

earned, the number of respondents with bachelor's degrees would be expected to exceed

the number of respondents with master's degrees, as bachelor's degrees are prerequisites to master's level studies.

Fourteen respondents indicated that they had earned, or were in the process of earning, a doctoral degree. Disciplines within Higher Education, including Higher Education Administration, were represented in the greatest proportion. All doctoral degree disciplines reported can be found in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Discipline Associated with Doctoral Degrees Earned

Discipline of Study	Frequency
Higher Education	6
Education	3
English Literature	1
Global Sports Leadership	1
Interdisciplinary Studies	1
Psychology	1
Sport Management	1

Q6. How many people are employed in your department for academic support for student-athletes?

Responses to this question were analyzed using the conference of affiliation provided in question seven. All responses to this question will be organized based on this conference affiliation. A total of 89 respondents indicated both the size of their department, as well as their institution's conference of affiliation. The staff sizes provided were averaged in order to compare department sizes across the four conferences. All full-time employees, part-time employees, interns, and graduate assistants were included in these calculations. A few individuals wrote in the number of tutors employed in these departments, however these employees were excluded from calculations because it could not be determined if these tutors worked exclusively with student-athletes. Mentors, class monitors, administrative assistants, undergraduate (work study) students, and study hall

attendants were also excluded from these calculations. One respondent affiliated with the

CAA indicated that his or her institution employed 145 individuals. Based on the staff

sizes reported by other CAA respondents, this number was determined to be an outlier

and was therefore excluded from calculations of average staff size. Using similar criteria,

a respondent from the ACC who indicated a staff size of 300 was also excluded. The

average staff sizes reported by conference are represented in Figure 8. Respondents from

the ACC indicated that their departments had the largest average number of employees of

14.4. The AAC had the next largest average staff size of 11.2 employees. The Big South

and the CAA both had smaller average department sizes of 4.7 and 6.9 employees

respectively.
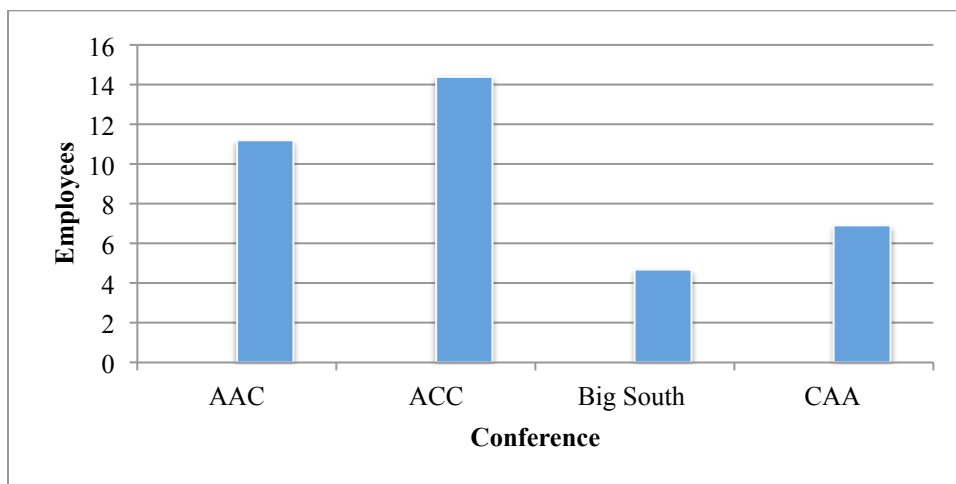
Figure 8. Average Staff Size by Conference

Q7. Please provide the conference in which your university is considered to be a full member institution.

Reponses for this question were used to sort responses for comparative purposes.

Respondents were offered a text box to provide their own responses to this question. The

conferences were then categorized by abbreviation as follows: AAC (American Athletic

Conference), ACC (Athletic Coast Conference), Big South (Big South Conference), and

CAA (Colonial Athletic Association). One respondent from the CAA indicated that his or her hockey program is affiliated with the Hockey East, as the CAA does not provide support to hockey programs at the conference level. Another respondent indicated that his or her institution was affiliated with "AAC for Football only, Patriot League for all other sports", and therefore data from this respondent were grouped with other AAC respondents. Additionally, one respondent indicated that his or her institution was affiliated with "NACDA/N4A", the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics/National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics, indicating that the individual interpreted the question as asking for the professional organization to which they belong, rather than their institution's conference of affiliation. Data collected from this respondent were not considered when analyzing results by conference of affiliation, but were included when responses were analyzed independent of conference affiliation.

Figure 9 displays the total number of responses for each of the conferences. The total number of participants from each conference is not consistent throughout the survey, as not all participants from each conference provided responses for all survey questions. In order to address this issue, the total number of respondents per conference will be provided for questions in which conference affiliation is pertinent.
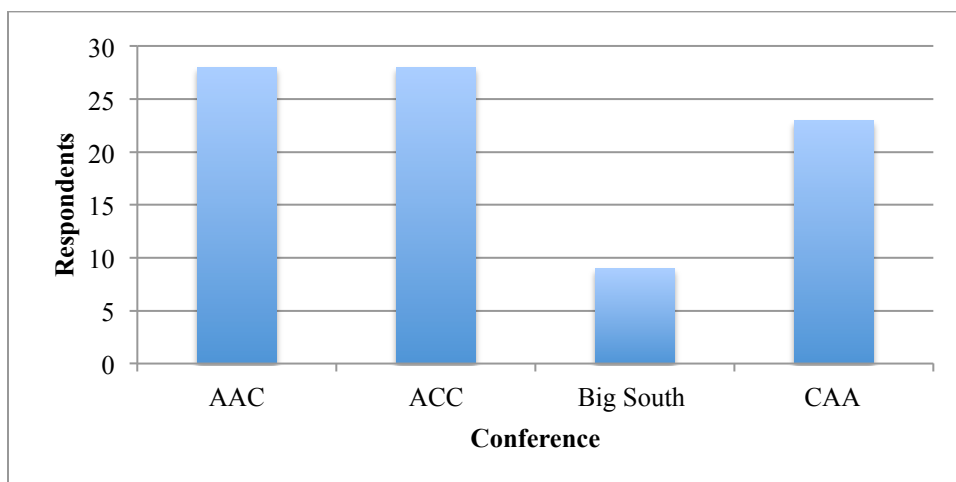
Figure 9. Total Survey Responses by Conference

Q8. Please indicate the sport programs you work with from the list below.

Eighty-six respondents indicated the sport(s) they support at their respective institutions. Eight-three of the 86 respondents indicated that they worked with at least two sport programs. The three respondents who indicated that they only worked with one sport, all held a position that exclusively supports football at CAA institutions. The majority of the 86 respondents (57%) are at least partially responsible for supporting football. Fifty-two percent indicated that they supported men's basketball, while 47% supported women's basketball. Figure 10 depicts the sports programs supported by respondents.

Respondents were able to indicate other sports they support that may have been omitted from the list provided. Two individuals indicated that they worked with sailing: one with mixed sailing, and one with both intercollegiate and offshore sailing. Two respondents indicated they worked with squash. One individual supported men's rowing, and one worked with sprint football. These responses were so few in number that they were omitted form Figure 10.
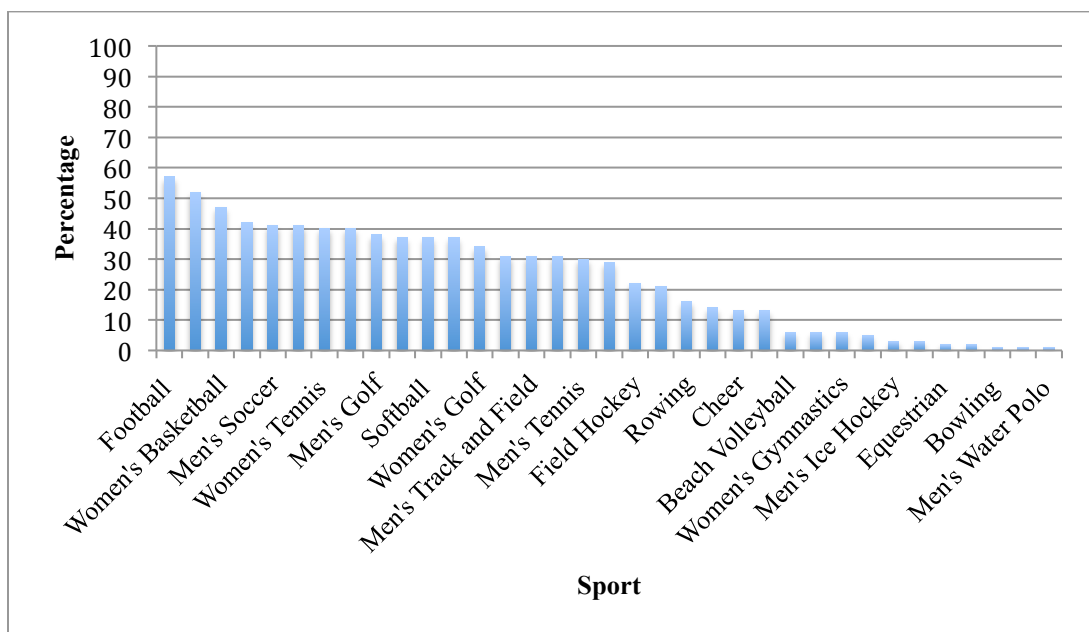
Figure 10. Sport Programs Supported by Respondents

Q9. Approximately how many student-athletes do you support?

Respondents were asked estimate the total number of student-athletes they support, in order to better understand the workloads of professionals working within each conference. A total of 85 respondents provided the total number of student-athletes they support, however one respondent was excluded from analysis for not providing a conference of affiliation, leaving 84 responses. One respondent from the AAC wrote in the number of teams he or she supports, rather than the number of student-athletes, and therefore was excluded from analysis. The results of these calculations can be found in Figure 11. Academic support staff members in the ACC reported working with the largest average number of student-athletes – 224.6, followed by Big South with 209, AAC with 202.1, and CAA with 171.8 student-athletes.
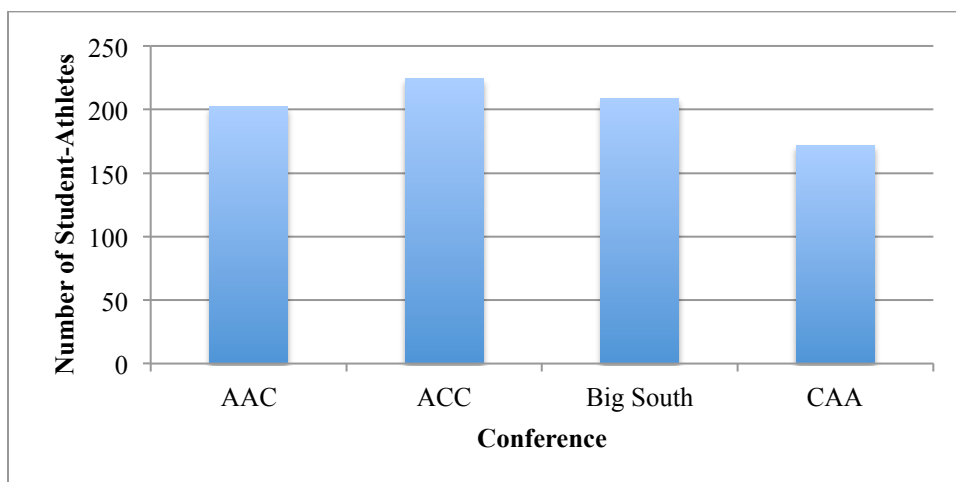
Figure 11. Average Number of Student-Athletes Supported by Respondents by Conference

To gain a more in depth understanding of student-athletes supported by these professionals, responses were further divided into job categories within conference affiliations. Results of this categorization can be found in Figure 12. The data points used within Figure 12 can be found in Table 3.4. Visual inspection of this figure indicates that those individuals with job titles classified as Academic work with the fewest number of student-athletes, with the exception of the one Assistant from the Big South who supported far fewer student-athletes than any other respondent. Thus, s/he was treated as an outlier. Individuals who hold jobs categorized as academics also represent the highest proportion of employees in any given conference. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that at any institution, smaller numbers of student-athletes may be assigned to those working in an academic capacity. This decreased number of student-athletes supported by individuals who were categorized as academics may also allow an individual working in this academic capacity to form a more personalized relationship with the student-athletes they support.
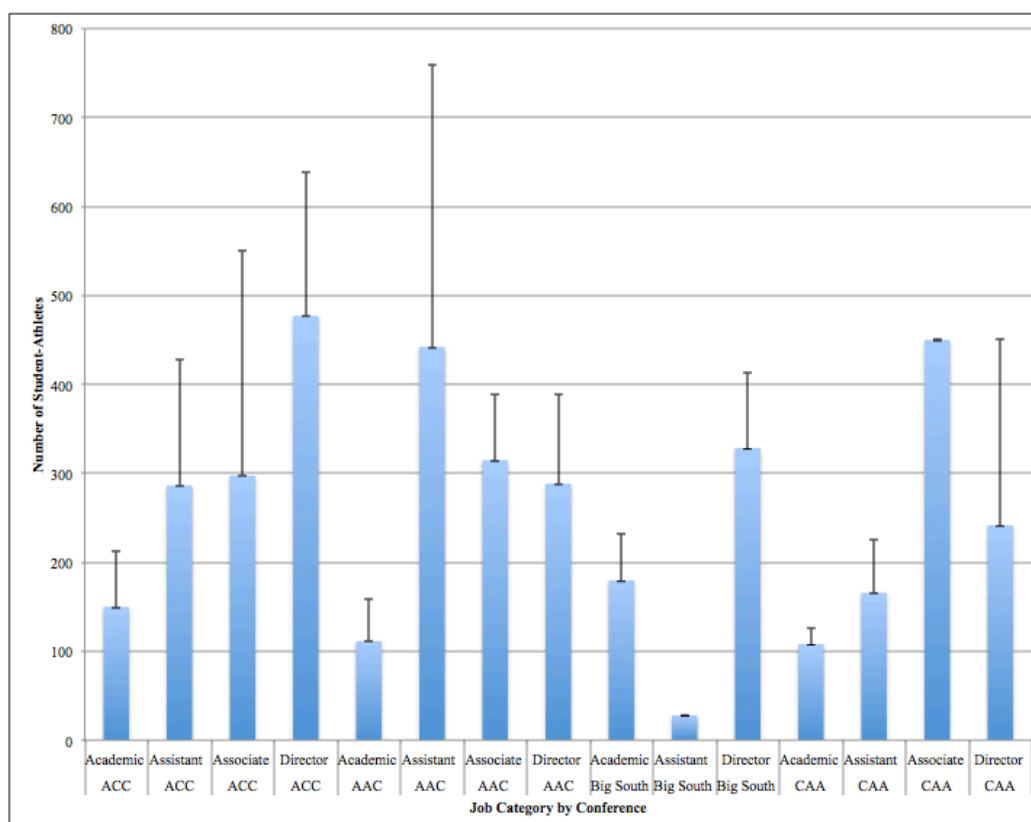
Figure 12. Average Number of Student-Athletes Supported by Conference and Job

Category

Table 3.4

Number of Student-Athletes Supported by Conference and Job Category

Conference	Job Title	Mean	SD	SE
ACC	Academic	149.8	215.28	62.15
ACC	Assistant	286.2	316.4	141.5
ACC	Associate	297.5	357.01	252.5
ACC	Director	477	322.28	161.14
AAC	Academic	111.4	167.06	46.33
AAC	Assistant	442	635.98	317.99
AAC	Associate	314.7	126.77	73.19
AAC	Director	288.3	173.52	100.18
Big South	Academic	179.5	103.65	51.83
Big South	Assistant	28	n/a	n/a
Big South	Director	328.3	147.51	85.16
CAA	Academic	108.1	54.78	17.32
CAA	Assistant	165.7	148	60.42
CAA	Associate	450	n/a	n/a
CAA	Director	241.5	294.86	208.5

Q10. Does your institution have a dedicated space for student-athlete study?

A total of 85 respondents responded to the question regarding a dedicated space for student-athlete study. One individual's response was excluded from analysis for not providing a conference of affiliation, leaving a total of 84 respondents. Of these respondents, 96% indicated that their institution provided a space dedicated to student-athlete study. When these responses were examined by conference of affiliation, all respondents from the ACC indicated that their institutions have dedicated space for student-athlete study, while one respondent each from the AAC, CAA, and Big South conferences indicated that their institutions do not provide such a space. Figure 13 displays the percentage of respondents from each conference who indicated that their institution did indeed have a dedicated space for student-athlete study. Table 3.5 provides the respondents by conference used to determine the percentages expressed in Figure 13. Results from this question indicate that the majority of institutions surveyed in this study, regardless of conference of affiliation, provide their student-athletes with a study space that is separate from the regular student body.
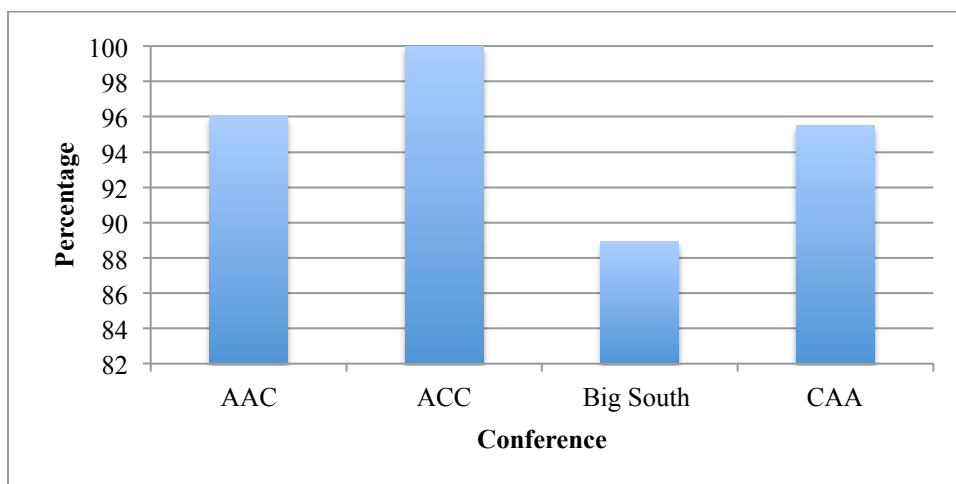
Figure 13. Percentage of Institutions that have a Dedicated Space for Student-Athlete Study by Conference

Table 3.5

Respondents who indicated that they had a Dedicated Space for Student-Athlete Study by

Conference

Conference	n	Have Dedicated Space	% of Respondents
AAC	26	25	96
ACC	27	27	100
Big South	9	8	88.9
CAA	22	21	95.5

Q11. Does your institution have a network of tutors dedicated specifically for student-athletes?

Respondents were asked to indicate whether their institution employs a network of tutors who dedicate their services specifically to student-athletes. Eighty-three responses were obtained after excluding one respondent who did not provide a conference of affiliation. Seventy-three respondents, or 88%, indicated that a dedicated network of tutors is available to student-athletes at their institutions. However 10 individuals indicated that no such exclusive network of tutors existed at their institutions. Of these 10 respondents, five were affiliated with the CAA, four with the Big South, and one with the AAC. Figure 14 displays the percentage of respondents from each conference who indicated that their institution provides such a dedicated network of tutors. Table 3.6 shows the distribution of respondents by conference used to create Figure 14.
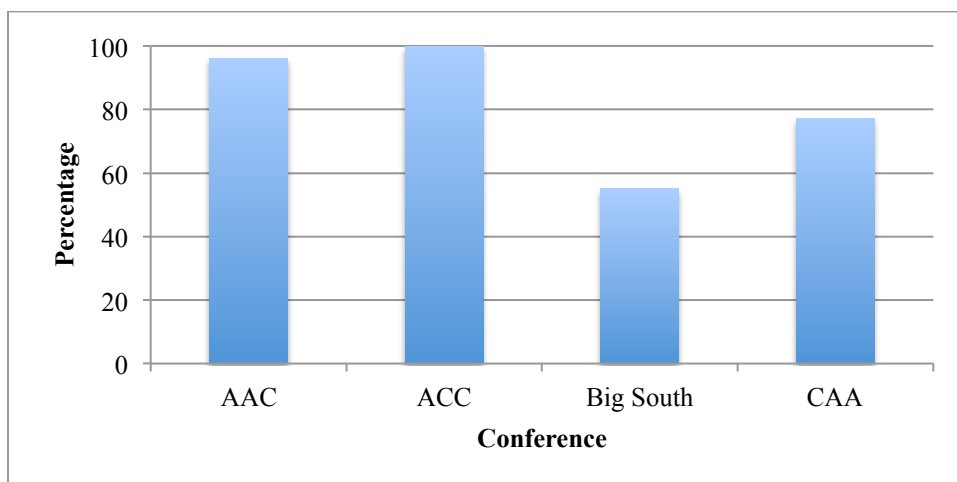
Figure 14. Percentage of Institutions that have a Dedicated Network of Tutors for Student-Athletes by Conference

Table 3.6

Respondents who indicated they had a Dedicated Network of Tutors for Student-Athletes

Conference	n	Have Dedicated Space	% of Respondents
AAC	26	25	96.2
ACC	26	26	100
Big South	9	5	55.1
CAA	22	17	77.3

While the majority of respondents within each conference indicated that their institutions did indeed provide a dedicated network of tutors for their student-athletes, there appears to be a difference in the number of institutions who provide this resource when comparing the AAC and ACC to the Big South and CAA. Of the total 52 respondents from the AAC and the ACC, only one indicated that his or her institution did not provide a student-athlete specific tutoring network. When examining the Big South and CAA, nine of the 33 respondents indicated that no such network exists at their institution. Based on these results, it can be concluded that dedicated networks of tutors

are more frequently available to student-athletes at the higher tiered Division I

conferences targeted in this study.

Q12. Please indicate below how study hall hours are assigned for the student-athletes you support.

Question 12 was excluded from analysis due to an error in the survey instrument. The

question was intended to be structured as a select all that apply question. However, the

question was inadvertently submitted as a single select question. This error did not give

respondents the appropriate means to adequately report the way study hall hours were assigned

at their respective institutions. For this reason, this question was omitted in the data analysis.

Q13. Question 13 was a multiple part question in which respondents were asked to rate several

statements in relation to their institutional employer using a five-point Likert-scale ranging

from strongly agree to strongly disagree. For this reason, responses for each statement are

presented individually in the following section.

"On the whole I feel as though I have all the resources I need to adequately do my job."

The results of this question can be found within Table 3.7. The majority of respondents

from the AAC, ACC, and CAA indicated that they either strongly agreed or agreed that they

had the resources they needed to adequately do their jobs. No respondents from either the AAC

or ACC indicated that they strongly disagreed to this statement, while three respondents from

the Big South and CAA indicated a strong level of disagreement. However, the majority of

respondents from the Big South indicated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed that

the resources available to them were adequate. These disparities in levels of agreement among

the conferences may be indicative of unequal distributions of resources among the conferences,

however the low response rates prevent definitive conclusions. There were very few

individuals who indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, with no one conference having more than two respondents indicate this level of agreement.

Table 3.7

"On the whole I feel I have all the resources I need to adequately do my job"

Conference	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A	Total
AAC	4 15.40%	14 53.80%	2 7.70%	6 23.10%	0 0.00%	0	26
ACC	3 11.54%	19 73.08%	2 7.69%	2 7.70%	0 0.00%	0	26
Big South	1 11.11%	2 22.22%	0 0%	3 33.33%	3 33.33%	0	9
CAA	1 4.55%	8 36.36%	2 9.09%	8 36.36%	3 13.64%	0	22

"On the whole I feel pressured to encourage student-athletes to declare majors that have a lighter workload."

Responses to this question can be found below in Table 3.8. The majority of respondents from all conferences indicated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. A higher percentage of individuals affiliated with the Big South indicated that they strongly disagreed with this statement as compared to respondents from the other three conferences. No respondents from any conference strongly agreed with this statement, however three respondents from both the AAC and CAA indicated that they did agree with this statement. Those individuals affiliated with the ACC represented the highest percentage of respondents that indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.

Table 3.8

"On the whole I feel pressured to encourage student-athletes to declare majors that have a lighter workload"

Conference	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A	Total
AAC	0 0.00%	3 13.64%	2 9.09%	9 40.91%	8 36.36%	4	22
ACC	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	4 16.00%	8 32.00%	13 52.00%	1	25
Big South	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	8 88.89%	0	9
CAA	0 0.00%	3 13.64%	2 9.09%	11 50.00%	6 27.27%	0	22

"On the whole I feel pressured to encourage student-athletes to enroll in classes taught by professors who understand the challenges student-athletes face in their academic pursuits."

A substantial percentage of respondents from each conference answered that they neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. Compared with the other conferences, an increased percentage of respondents from the ACC indicated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Respondents from the AAC had the second highest percentage of individuals who disagreed with the statement. While half of the respondents from the CAA indicated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, the greatest percentage of respondents from this conference stated that they either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Table 3.9 displays all responses to this question when organized by conference affiliation.

Table 3.9

"On the whole I feel pressured to encourage student-athletes to enroll in classes taught by

professors who understand the challenges student-athletes face in their academic pursuits"

Conference	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A	Total
AAC	0	5	5	6	7	3	23
	0.00%	21.74%	21.74%	26.09%	31.82%	13.04%	
ACC	0	1	6	7	11	1	25
	0.00%	4.00%	24.00%	28.00%	44.00%	72.00%	
Big South	0	2	3	2	2	0	9
	0.00%	22.22%	33.33%	22.22%	22.22%	44.40%	
CAA	1	4	6	10	1	0	22
	4.55%	18.18%	27.27%	45.45%	4.55%	50.00%	

"On the whole the faculty and staff I have interacted with are willing to provide

additional resources to student-athletes who may miss class due to athletic obligations"

Respondents' levels of agreement to this statement are presented in Table 3.10. The majority of respondents from all conferences either strongly agreed or agreed that the faculty and staff at their institutions are willing to provide additional resources to student-athletes who miss class due to athletic obligations. Respondents from the Big South agreed with this statement in the highest percentage. The highest percentages of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed were from the CAA, however respondents from this conference represented the lowest percentage that agreed with this statement. Additionally, a substantial percentage of respondents from each conference indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.

Table 3.10

"On the whole the faculty and staff I have interacted with are willing to provide additional

resources to student-athletes who may miss class due to athletic obligations"

Conference	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A	Total
AAC	1 4.17%	14 58.33%	5 20.83%	4 16.67%	0 0.00%	2	24
ACC	0 0%	13 50%	10 38.46%	2 7.69%	1 3.85%	0	26
Big South	0 0%	7 77.78%	2 22.22%	0 0%	0 0%	0	9
CAA	1 4.55%	8 36.36%	8 36.36%	5 22.72%	0 0%	0	22

"On the whole the faculty and staff I have interacted with view the work ethic and academic ability of student-athletes positively."

The majority of respondents from all conferences indicated that they either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. The Big South had the highest percentage of respondents who agreed with this statement. It was also the only group to have no respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. All responses to this question are displayed in Table 3.11.

Table 3.11

"On the whole the faculty and staff I have interacted with view the work ethic and academic ability of student-athletes positively"

Conference	Strongly Agree	Agree	Nether Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A	Total
AAC	3 11.54%	14 53.85%	7 26.92%	2 7.69%	0 0.00%	0	26
ACC	1 3.85%	12 46.15%	10 38.46%	2 7.69%	1 3.85%	0	26
Big South	0 0%	8 88.89%	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0	9
CAA	2 9.09%	11 50.00%	7 31.81%	2 9.09%	0 0.00%	0	22

Q14. As with Question 13, Question 14 was a multiple part question. Each portion of this question asked respondents to use a sliding scale provided to indicate the percentage of student-athletes they felt reflected the following statements.

"The student-athletes I work with are as prepared for the academic rigor of university studies as the regular student body at my institution of current employment."

When responses were analyzed by conference of affiliation, all conferences reported similar percentages of student-athletes who were as equally prepared for the academic rigor of university as their non-student-athlete counterparts. Average percentages as reported by conference can be found in Figure 15. This figure shows that all conferences reported that they felt, on average, between 60% and 70% of their student-athletes are as prepared for the academic rigor of university studies when compared to the regular student body. Responses from the AAC and ACC were nearly identical, reporting average percentages of 60% and 60.4% respectively. Respondents from the Big South and CAA conferences reported increased levels of preparedness as compared to respondents from the AAC and ACC. Those individuals affiliated with the CAA indicated that 66.2% of their student-athletes were academically prepared. Respondents from the Big South indicated the greatest percentage of academic preparedness at 69.3%.
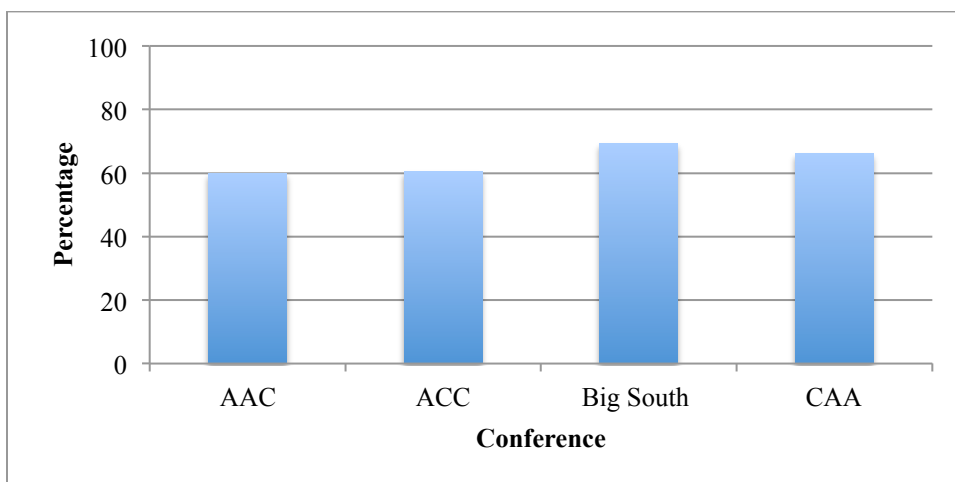
Figure 15. Percentage of Student-Athletes who are prepared for the Academic Rigor of College

This question was analyzed using the job category assigned to respondents. Results are displayed in Figure 16. The data set used to construct Figure 16 can be found in Table 3.12. While the information in this figure does not differ greatly from that reported in the overall average percentages, there are a few observations worth noting. First, the lowest average responses reported were by three respondents considered to hold Associate level positions within the AAC. These respondents indicated that they felt only 45% of the student-athletes they support were prepared for the academic rigor of university studies when compared to the regular student body. The greatest average responses came from three individuals who hold Director level positions in the Big South conference. These individuals indicated that they felt 76.7% of student-athletes they support were prepared for the academic rigor of university studies.
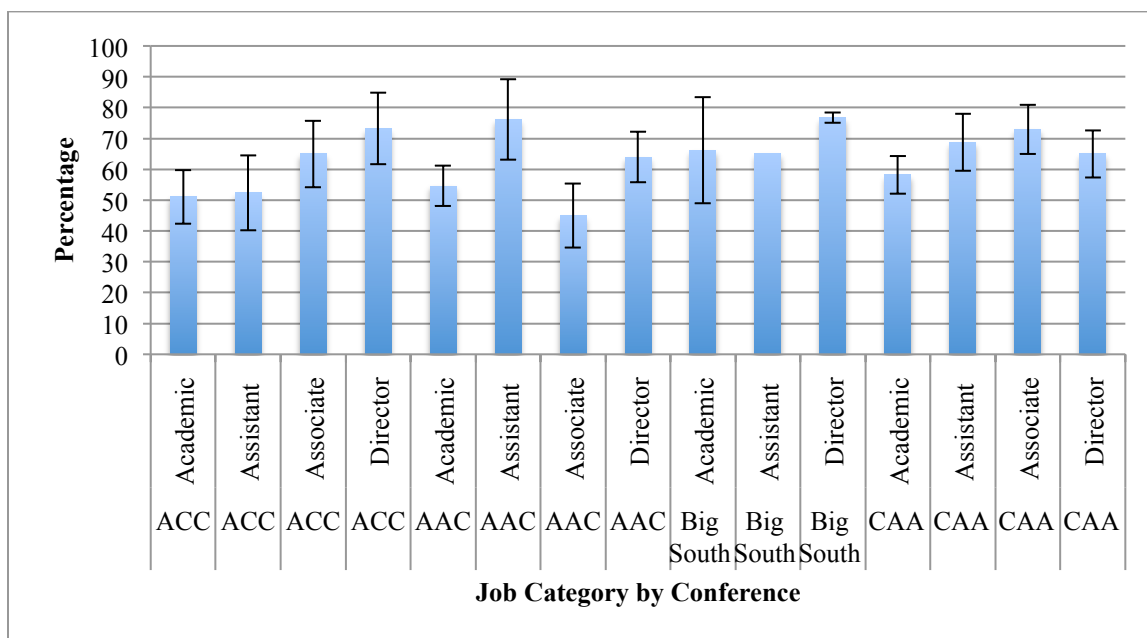
Figure 16. Percentage of Student-Athletes who are prepared for the Academic Rigor of College by Conference and Job Category

Table 3.12

Percentage of Student-Athletes who are prepared for the Academic Rigor of College by Conference and Job Category

Conference	Job Category	Mean	SD	SE
ACC	Academic	51.1	27.61	8.73
	Assistant	52.4	27.27	12.20
	Associate	65	15.28	10.80
	Director	73.3	23.14	11.57
AAC	Academic	54.6	24.58	6.57
	Assistant	76.2	29.19	13.06
	Associate	45	18.03	10.41
	Director	64	16.35	8.18
Big South	Academic	66.3	34.49	17.25
	Assistant	65	n/a	n/a
	Director	76.7	2.89	1.67
CAA	Academic	58.2	19.27	6.09
	Assistant	68.7	22.64	9.24
	Associate	73	11.31	8.00
	Director	65	13.23	7.64

"The student-athletes I work with keep a healthy balance between their academic and athletic commitments."

The responses to this question were averaged and analyzed by conference as a whole, and by job category of the respondents. When responses are reviewed by conference as whole, respondents indicated they felt that between 57.1% and 63.4% of student-athletes they support keep a healthy balance between their athletics and academics responsibilities. Responses to this question are provided in Figure 17. Respondents from CAA indicated that their student-athletes do a better job maintaining a balance between these obligations (63.4%) compared to the other conferences. Respondents from the ACC indicated that, on average 60.2% of student-athletes they support maintain a balance between academics and athletics. Respondents from the Big South and ACC indicated that on average less than 60% of student-athletes they support keep a healthy balance reporting 57.1% and 59.1% respectively.
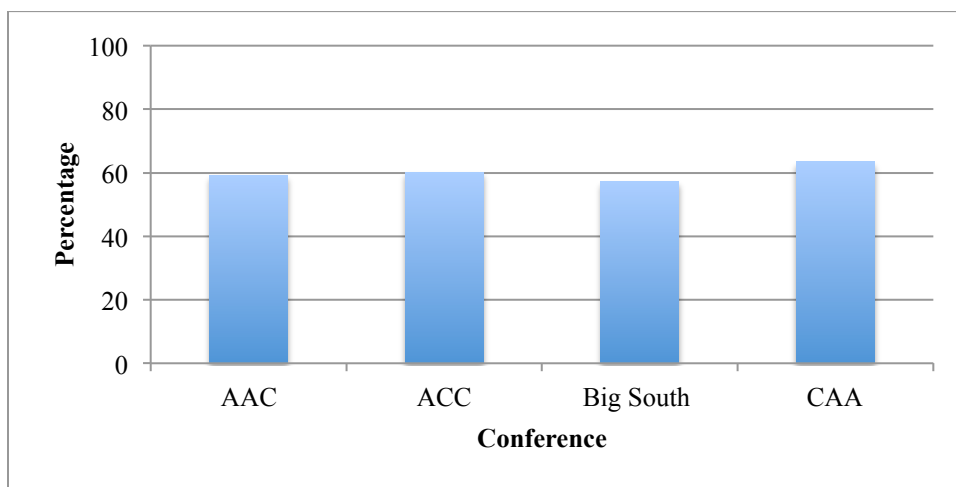
Figure 17. Percentage of Student-Athletes who keep a Healthy Balance Between their Athletic and Academic Commitments

Figure 18 and Table 3.13 displays how these responses are distributed among job categories within the conferences and highlight the range of responses. When these responses were analyzed by job categorizations, a few notable points emerged. Two categories of professionals indicated that less than half of the student-athletes they support keep a healthy balance between their academic and athletic commitments. The 10 individuals categorized as having academic roles within the ACC reported the lowest average percentage (43.1%) of student-athletes who keep a healthy balance between their commitments. Those individuals working in academically related roles at AAC institutions also reported that less than half of their student-athletes keep a healthy balance. The 14 individuals in this category reported that on average only 49.9% of their student-athletes keep a healthy balance. While those categorized as academics in the AAC reported the lowest average percentage, the assistants in this conference reported the highest average percentage, showing disparities that can be found within a single conference. The highest average reported was 74.2% from the five individuals considered to be assistants within the AAC.
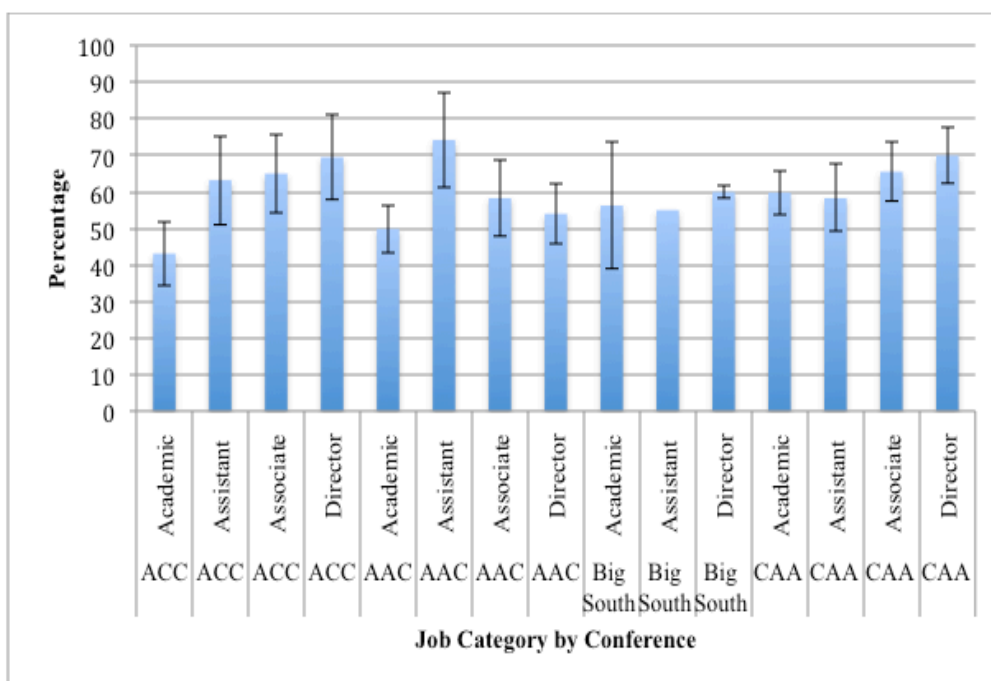
Figure 18. Percentage of Student-Athletes who keep a Healthy Balance Between their

Athletic and Academic Commitments by Job Category and Conference

Table 3.13

Percentage of Student-Athletes who keep a Healthy Balance Between their Athletic and

Academic Commitments by Job Category and Conference

Conference	**Job Category**	**Mean**	**SD**	**SE**
ACC	Academic	43.10	24.04	7.60
	Assistant	63.20	28.56	12.77
	Associate	65.00	32.53	23.00
	Director	69.50	23.14	11.57
AAC	Academic	49.90	24.58	6.57
	Assistant	74.20	28.56	12.77
	Associate	58.30	32.53	18.78
	Director	54.00	26.53	13.27
Big South	Academic	56.25	34.97	17.49
	Assistant	55.00	n/a	n/a
	Director	60.00	17.32	10.00
CAA	Academic	59.80	17.65	5.58
	Assistant	58.30	31.41	12.82
	Associate	65.5	21.92	15.5
	Director	70	20	11.55

"The student-athletes I work with have a genuine interest in their own academic success"

On the whole, respondents from all four conferences indicated a high average percentage of student-athletes who have a genuine interest in their own academic success. Results of the average percentage reported by conference can be found in Figure 19. This figure displays that average responses by conference range from 69.3% to 76.9%. Respondents from the AAC, ACC, and CAA all indicated very similar percentages with 69.3%, 69.4%, and 70.1% respectively. Respondents from the Big South reported the highest percentage (76.9%) of student-athletes had a genuine interest in their own academic success.
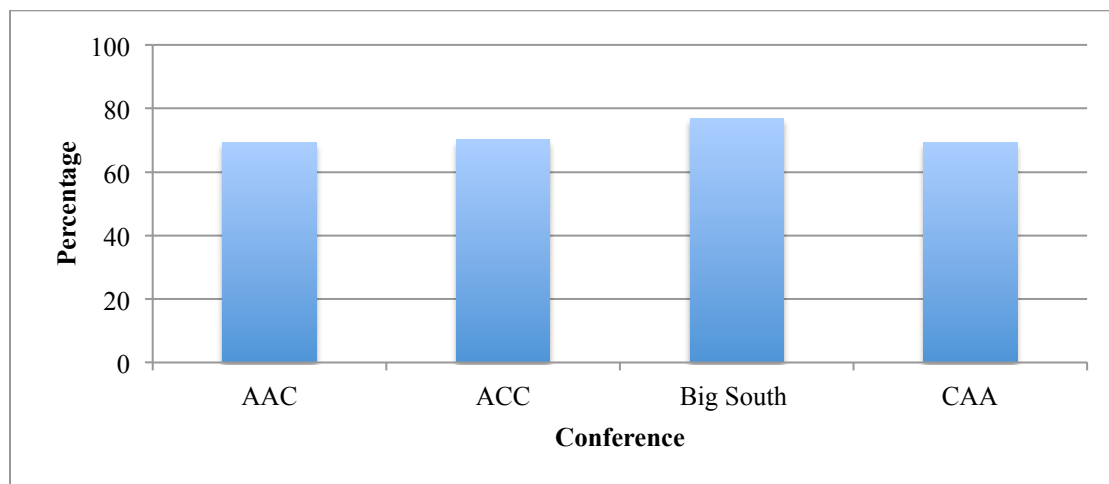
Figure 19. Percentage of Student-Athletes who have a Genuine Interest in their Academic Success

The results of this question when analyzed by both job category and conference can be found in Figure 20 and Table 3.14. When these responses were reviewed by job classifications, a range of responses emerged. The one individual considered an assistant in the Big South indicated that 90% of the student-athletes they work with have a genuine

interest in their own academics. The lowest average responses came from the 14

respondents who are employed in the academic category within the ACC. These

respondents indicated that an average of only 55.7% of the student-athletes they work

with have a genuine interest in their own academic success.
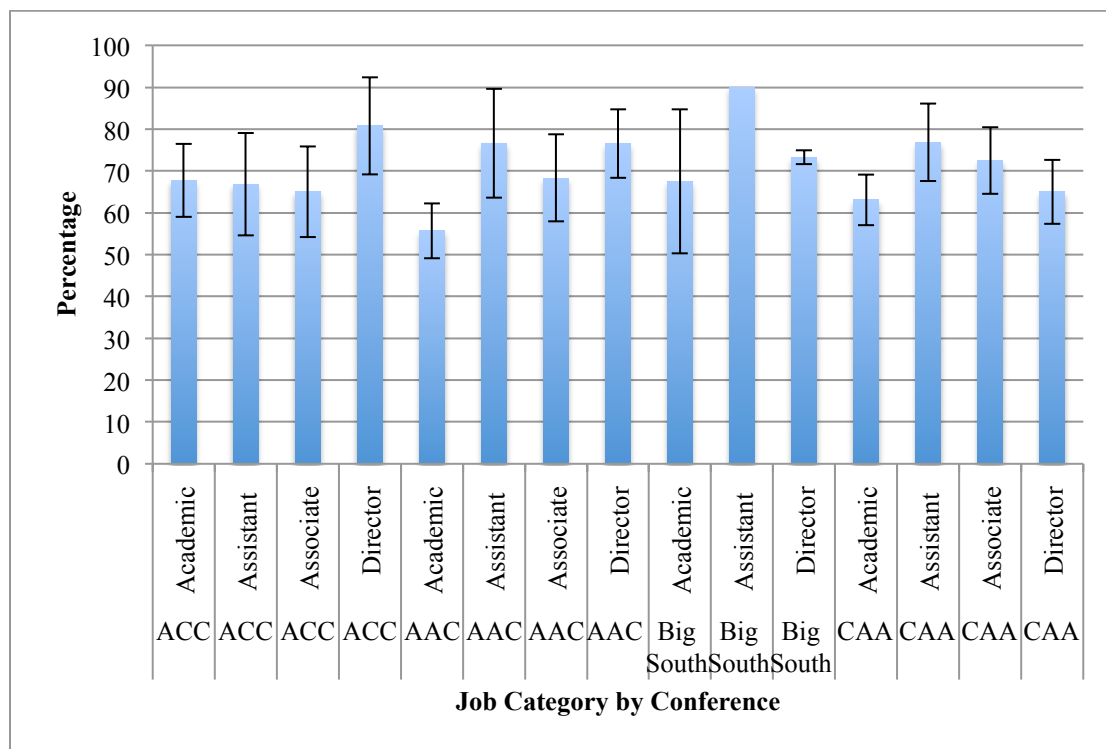
Figure 20. Percentage of Student-Athletes who have a Genuine Interest in their

Academic Success by Conference and Job Category

Table 3.14

Percentage of Student-Athletes who have a Genuine Interest in their Academic Success

by Conference and Job Category

Conference	Job title	Mean	SD	SE
ACC	Academic	51.10	27.61	8.73
	Assistant	52.40	27.27	12.20
	Associate	65.00	15.28	10.80
	Director	73.30	23.14	11.57
AAC	Academic	54.60	24.58	6.57
	Assistant	76.20	29.19	13.06
	Associate	45.00	18.03	10.41
	Director	64.00	16.35	8.18

Big South	Academic	66.30	34.49	17.25
	Assistant	65.00	n/a	n/a
	Director	76.7	2.89	1.67
CAA	Academic	58.20	19.27	6.09
	Assistant	68.70	22.64	9.24
	Associate	73.00	11.31	8.00
	Director	65.00	13.23	7.64

Q15. Question 15 was a multiple-part question that consisted of statements asking respondents to rate the following questions in a scale of always, frequently, somewhat frequently, never, or not applicable as they apply to their current institutional employer. **"I feel pressure from athletic coaching staff to make sure certain student-athletes maintain their eligibility."**

Figure 21 represents how often respondents felt pressure from coaching staff to make sure that student-athletes maintained their eligibility, independent of conference of affiliation and job classification. Of the 80 responses to this question, 33 individuals (41.2%) indicated that they never felt pressure from coaching staff to ensure the eligibility of certain student-athletes. However 47 individuals (58.8%) indicated that they always, frequently, or somewhat frequently felt pressure from the coaching staff at their respective institutions to keep certain student-athletes eligible.
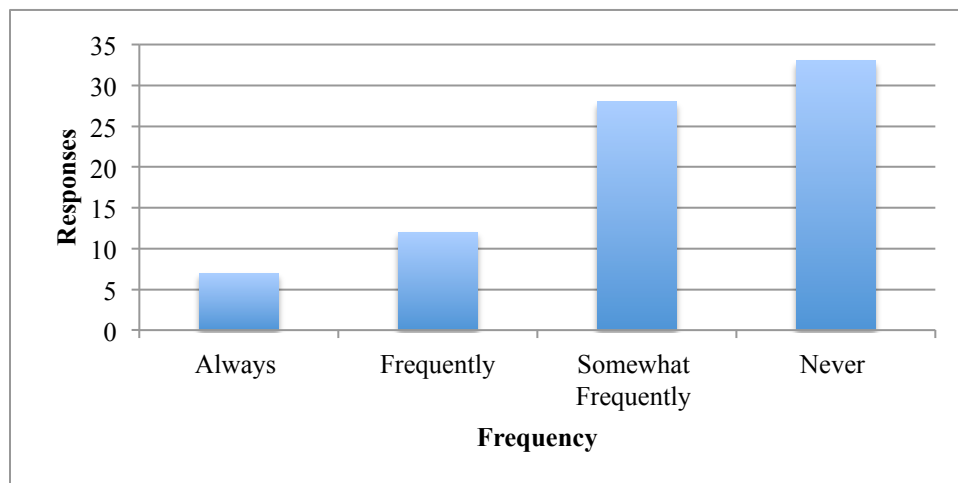
Figure 21. Frequency of Pressure Felt from Coaching Staff by all Respondents

"I feel pressure from other members of the Athletic Department staff to make sure certain student-athletes maintain their eligibility."

Figure 22 shows that, of the 81 total respondents, 33 (40.7%) indicated that at one point or another they felt pressure from these individuals to maintain the eligibility of certain student-athletes. However the majority, 48 respondents (59.3%), indicated that they never felt pressure from this group. Calculations for Figure 22 were done independent of conference of affiliation.
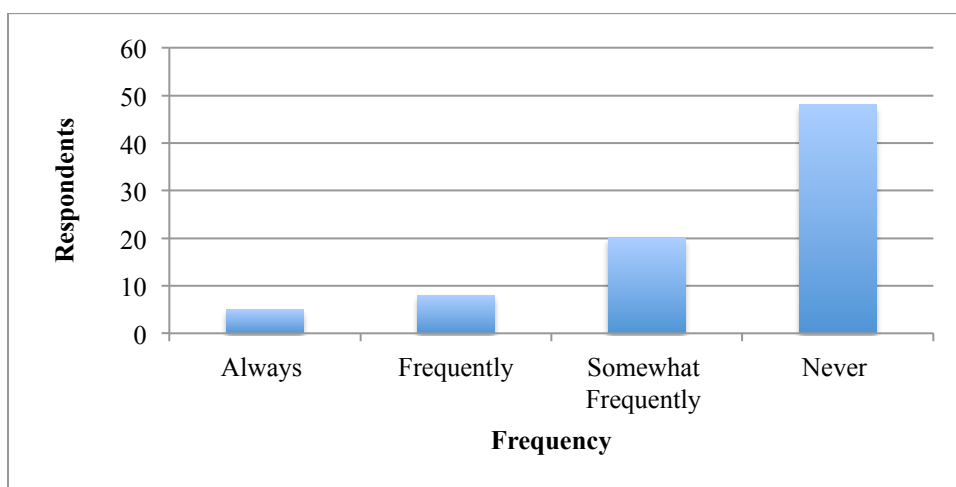
Figure 22. Frequency of Pressure Felt from Athletic Department Staff Members by all Respondents

"I feel pressure from members of the university community to make sure certain student-athletes maintain their eligibility."

Figure 23 depicts how frequently respondents feel pressure from members of the university community, in general, to keep certain student-athletes eligible, regardless of conference of affiliation. This figure shows that very few individuals felt pressure at any

time from members of the university community. Sixty-six respondents, or 84.6% of the

total respondents, indicated that never felt pressure from this subset.
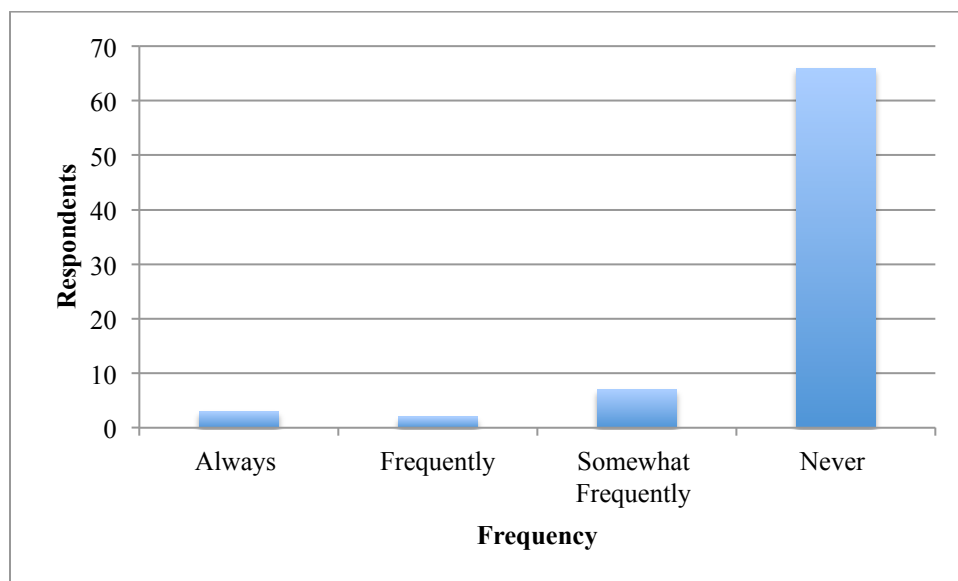
Figure 23. Frequency of Pressure Felt from the University Community by all

Respondents

Based on the results collected from the respondents as a whole, it appears that

academic support staff members more frequently felt pressure from coaching staff than

from either Athletic Department members, or members of the university community.

These results are displayed within Figure 24. Nearly 60% of individuals from all

conferences indicated that they always, frequently, or somewhat frequently felt pressure

from their coaching staffs to maintain the eligibility of certain student-athletes. Almost

40% of respondents indicated that they felt pressure from other Athletic Department

employees at some point. The fewest respondents, 15.4%, indicated that they felt pressure

from members of the university community at any level of frequency.
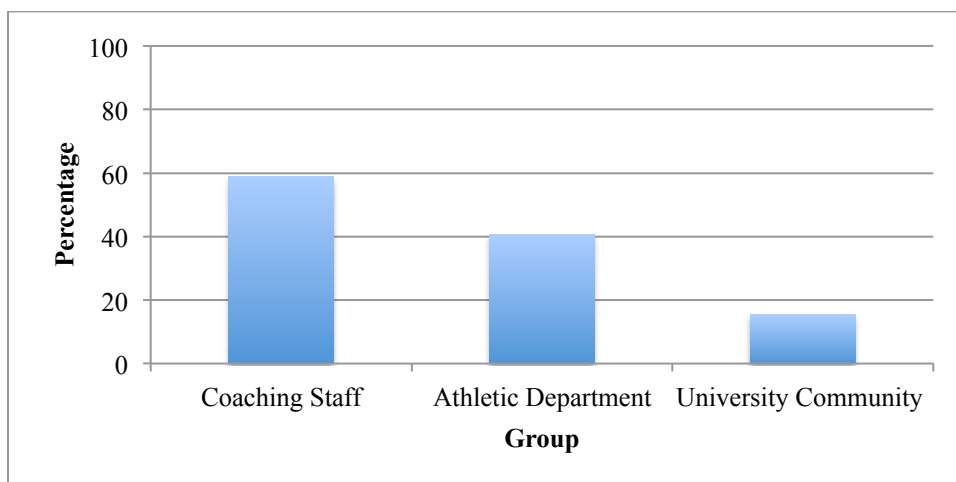
Figure 24. Percentage of Respondents who feel Pressure from Coaching Staff, Athletic

Department Employees, and the University Community

Tables 3.15, 3.16, 3.17, and 3.18 show the distribution by conference and job

category the number of respondents who felt pressured by coaching staff, athletic

departments, and the university community to maintain the eligibility of student-athletes.

Note that the sections of the tables below that have an asterisk (*) indicate that one

respondent selected "N/A" for that particular question. Several observations can be made

based on these tables. First, those respondents from the CAA appear to feel more pressure

than respondents from other conferences to maintain student-athletes' eligibility. Next,

respondents from the AAC reported feeling pressure from the coaching staff at their

universities less frequently than respondents from the other conferences. In fact, the

majority of the respondents from the AAC indicated that they never feel pressure from

the coaching staff to maintain certain student-athletes' eligibility, which is surprising

given the competitive level of the institutions affiliated with this conference. Respondents

from the ACC reported feeling pressure to maintain certain student-athletes' eligibility

from the Athletic Department less frequently than the other three conferences. There is

less than a 3% difference in percentage of respondents from the ACC and Big South, who indicated never feeling pressure from the Athletic Department. Although respondents from all conferences rarely felt pressure from the university community to maintain eligibility for certain student-athletes, the Big South was unique in that there were no respondents who indicated that they had ever felt pressure from the university community to ensure that the eligibility for certain student-athletes was maintained.

Table 3.15

Pressure Felt from Groups by Job Category: AAC

	n	Coaching Staff	Athletic Department	University Community
Academic	12	4	6	2*
Assistant	5	2	1	0
Associate	3	2	1	0
Director	3	2	1	0

Table 3.16

Pressure Felt from Groups by Job Category: ACC

	n	Coaching Staff	Athletic Department	University Community
Academic	9	5	3	0
Assistant	5	2*	2	1
Associate	2	1	0	0
Director	4	3	0	0

Table 3.17

Pressure Felt from Groups by Job Category: Big South

	n	Coaching Staff	Athletic Department	University Community
Academic	3	2	0	0
Assistant	1	1	1	0
Director	3	2	1	0

Table 3.18

Pressure Felt from Groups by Job Category: CAA

	n	Coaching Staff	Athletic Department	University Community
Academic	10	9	7	2*
Assistant	6	3	3	1*
Associate	2	1	1	1
Director	3	2	1	1

Q16. Please indicate if the following statement is true or false as it applies to your institution of current employment. You may choose not to answer this question: I have had to report a student-athlete to the compliance department for academically fraudulent practices.

 A total of 80 individuals surveyed responded to the question regarding academically fraudulent practices. Individuals who did not wish to not answer this question were excluded from data analysis. Twenty individuals (25%) reported that they had reported student-athletes at their current institution for academically fraudulent practices, while 60 individuals (75%) reported they had not reported such cases. Responses to this question can be found in Figure 25 and the data are presented without reference to conference affiliation.
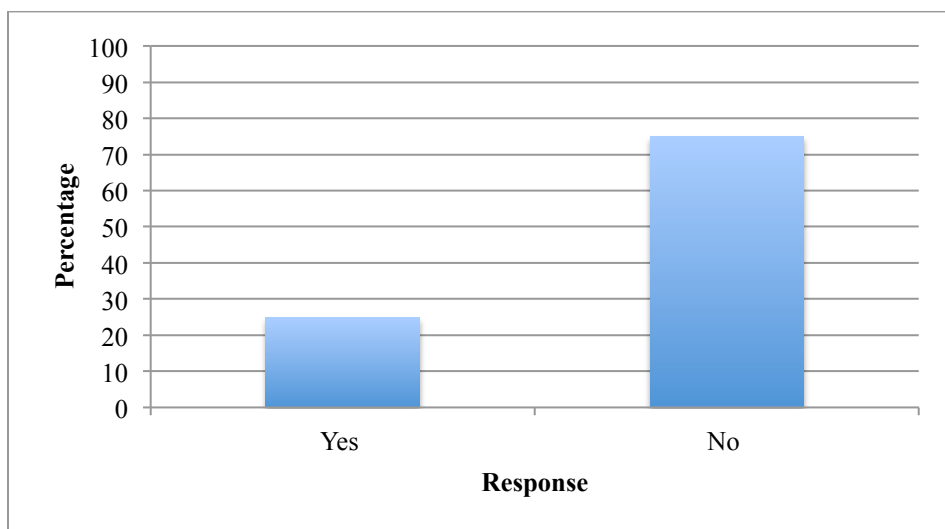
Figure 25. Overall Percentage of Respondents who had Reported Academic Fraud at Their Institution

When responses to the question of academically fraudulent practices accounted for conference affiliation, the sample size is decreased to 79 respondents because one respondent did not provide a conference. Occurrences of academic fraud by conference affiliation can be found in Figure 26. Instances of academic fraud by conference are also presented in Table 3.19. Responses to this question indicate that respondents from the AAC have reported the highest percentage of academic fraud when compared to the other three conferences. Respondents from the Big South indicated that they had never reported incidences of academic fraud in higher percentages than those from the other conferences.
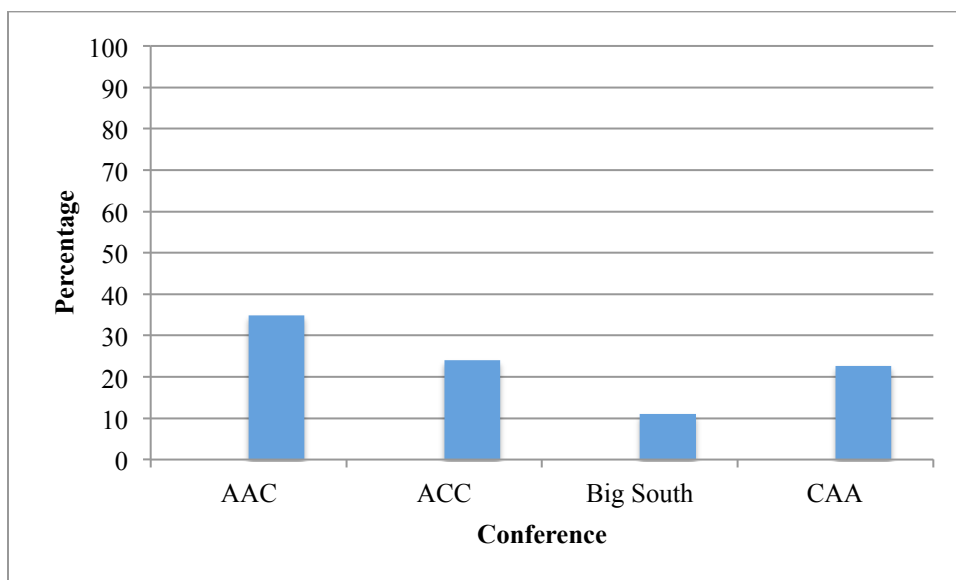
Figure 26. Percentage of Respondents who had Reported Academic Fraud at their Institution by Conference

Table 3.19.

Incidences of Academic Fraud by Conference

Conference	n	True Responses	% of total	False Responses	% of total
AAC	23	8	34.8	15	62.2
ACC	25	6	24	19	76
Big South	9	1	11.1	8	88.9
CAA	22	5	22.7	17	77.3

This section presented the results of the survey administered to academic support staff members at AAC, ACC, Big South, and CAA institutions. Visual representations of data collected were provided within the section to better represent these responses. In the section to follow, I will discuss the conclusions and limitations of this study, as well as provide recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

In this final chapter I will discuss the survey results, provide conclusions from this research, and offer recommendations for future research. One function of this study was to gather demographic information to better understand the educational background and experience of academic support staff members, given that the most recent related study, completed by Brooks et al., was published in 1987. While the study completed by Brooks et al. (1987) reported 32% of their respondents indicated that they held a doctoral level degree, only 15% respondents in the present study indicated holding such a degree. I expected that the number of individuals holding a doctoral degree would increase from this original study given the expansion in this field within the past nearly 30 years. Both the present survey and the study completed by Brooks et al. (1987) indicate that most professionals working in this field hold a master's level degree.

The present study found distinct differences in academic preparation when compared to the Brooks et al. (1987) study, which found that majority of individuals received their degree(s) in the field of Education and/or Physical Education. While the results of the present study were consistent with these findings for holders of master's and doctoral degrees, the present study found a higher incidence of bachelor's degrees in the field of Psychology, Sport Management, and/or Sports Administration. Few respondents from any of the conferences received any level of degree in Counseling, which is surprising given the job responsibilities of these professionals. The present study also revealed a wider range of bachelor's degree majors than those reported by Brooks et al. (1987), indicating that academic support staff members come from diverse

backgrounds. This diversity of these bachelor's degrees may be beneficial in supporting the wide range of interests of the student-athlete's they support.

Demographic information showed that the individuals working to support the academic endeavors of student-athletes in the AAC, ACC, Big South, and CAA are well-educated individuals from diverse educational backgrounds. These individuals are relatively experienced in the field of academic support for student-athletes, with the largest number of respondents indicating that they have between 6-10 years of experience in the field. However, respondents have significantly less experience at their institutions of current employment, with the largest number of respondents indicating that they have two or less years of experience at their current institutions. This number is lower than the years of experience reported by Brook et al. (1987), who found that respondents had an average of 4.15 years experience at their current institutions of employment. This lack of experience at the respondents' present institution in comparison to the respondents' overall experience in the field may be indicative of a high turn over rate at the institutions at the focus of this study, but further research is needed to determine the reasoning for these disparities in experience.

In addition to the experience and educational backgrounds of these academic support staff members, this study also aimed to gain a better understanding of how the responsibility of supporting sports programs are distributed among academic support staff members employed at a given institution. Much of the current literature focuses on the academic support of the revenue producing sports of football and men's basketball (Brooks et al., 1987; Comeaux & Harrison, 2007; Harrison et al., 2006; Bambel & Chen, 2014). While the majority of respondents indicated that they did indeed work with these

sports, the survey results showed that few individuals support these programs exclusively. Many individuals indicated that their time was split among several sport programs. These results show growth in the field from the 1987 study completed by Brook et al. These authors found that 63.79% of their respondents dedicated their time to revenue producing sports, and that their respondents dedicated 72.54% of their time to male student-athletes. While the present study did not inquire into the amount of time dedicated to each of their respective sports, the breadth and diversity of the sports supported by these individuals indicates a trend that the field of academic support for student-athletes is no longer solely focused around revenue producing sports.

Beyond the demographic information of academic support staff members, this study aimed to better understand the relationship between academics and athletics at AAC, ACC, Big South, and CAA institutions as perceived by academic support staff members. Much of the current literature focuses on the stereotypes and challenges that face many student-athletes. Several studies have found that student-athletes were admitted under different criteria than the regular student body (Gatman, 2011; Fried, 2007; Shulman & Bowen, 2000; Espenshade et al., 2004; Simiyu, 2012; Bambel & Chen, 2014; Ferris et al., 2004; Aries et al., 2004). The faculty and staff members who work with these student-athletes have been found to view them negatively, in part based on these differing admission criteria (Stone, 2012; Gruber, 2003). This less than favorable view of student-athletes has reportedly left some student-athletes feeling as though their professors do not take them seriously, and perceive them to lack academic motivation (Aries et al., 2004; Engstrom et al., 1995; Gruber, 2003; Simiyu, 2012). As advocates for the academic success of student-athletes, academic support staff members were asked to

reflect upon their opinions of the academic preparedness of their student-athletes, and the interactions between university faculty and staff and student-athletes.

In order to assess perceptions of student-athlete's readiness for collegiate studies, the present study asked academic support staff member to provide a comparison of the percentage of student-athletes' academic preparation to the regular student body. When these percentages were averaged, respondents indicated that they felt the majority of their student-athletes are as academically prepared as the regular student-body. However, a substantial percentage, between 30-40% of student-athletes from all conferences, was classified as academically underprepared. This perceived gap in the academic preparation may perpetuate the negative stereotypes faced by student-athletes in regard to intellectual capacity. Notably, these findings were based on the position that these respondents hold at their respective institutions, which may limit their interactions with the regular student body. Therefore, their assertions of the academic preparation level of the regular student body are based solely on perception and not on personal experience.

Despite this gap in academic readiness, academic staff members still held that the student-athletes they work with have a genuine interest in their academic success. However, what cannot be determined based on these results is the source of the student-athlete's motivation for academic success. The motivation may be authentically focused on increasing his or her knowledge base and obtaining a four-year degree, or it may be related to maintaining the necessary GPA to remain academically eligible at his or her respective institution. Comeaux and Harrison (2011) indicated that if the student-athletes' motivation lies in the desire to achieve a bachelor's degree in order to reach the long-term

goals they have set for themselves, they will likely be more academically successful than those student-athletes who have set no goals beyond obtaining a degree.

In regards to faculty and staff perceptions of student-athletes, the highest percentage of respondents across the four conferences indicated that the faculty and staff they interact with do indeed view the student-athletes positively. Similarly, the majority of academic support staff members indicate that faculty and staff members are willing to provide additional resources to student-athletes who miss class due to athletic obligations. The only exception to this finding is the feedback received from individuals who are affiliated with the CAA. In this conference, equal numbers agreed as disagreed that faculty and staff are willing to assist student-athletes who miss class.

A positive impression of student-athletes' academic capabilities, as well as the perception of the overall willingness of faculty and staff members to accommodate the additional needs of student-athletes, can help to promote balance between a student-athlete's academic and athletic commitments. The results of the present survey align with the findings of Harrison et al. (2006). These authors found that meaningful engagement with faculty members had a positive effect on a student-athlete's ability to balance his or her commitments. The majority of respondents from each of the four conferences in the present study indicated that they felt as though the student-athletes they support maintain a healthy balance between their academic and athletic commitments.

While the perception of faculty and staff interactions with student-athletes and student-athlete's academic preparedness and commitment were found to be relatively uniform among the four conferences, differences were found in the resources available at the various institutions. One area in which disparities were found was within the size of

the department supporting student-athletes' academics. Institutions affiliated with Big South had the smallest staff size, with an average of 4.7 staff members. This average staff size is similar to the small staff size that Bambel and Chen (2014) reported in their review of OVC institutions. The ACC had an average staff size (14.4) that was more than double the average staff size reported by CAA institutions (6.9), and triple the average staff size found at Big South universities (4.7). Although less than the average ACC staff size, respondents from the AAC reported average staff sizes (11.2) larger than both the Big South and the CAA. These discrepancies go to show that despite the universal challenges student-athletes face, institutions at the Big South and CAA have fewer individuals available to help student-athletes overcome these challenges and become academically successful.

Although the results of this study indicated that a private study space is commonly provided for student-athletes, a dedicated network of tutors proved to be less commonly found. Results from these two questions illuminate a difference in the resources available to student-athletes at various Division I institutions. Respondents from the ACC were the only group to unanimously indicate that their institutions provide both a dedicated study space and a network of tutors for student-athletes. Respondents from the Big South and the CAA indicated that their institutions provided a dedicated network of tutors less often than the other two conferences. Thompson (2008) highlighted the need for tutors who understood the unique needs of student-athletes, and supported the need for tutors who can incorporate sports knowledge and analogies into their tutoring sessions. Further investigation is needed to see if student-athletes are as satisfied

with academic tutors who are available to the whole student body, as they are with tutors exclusively available to student-athletes.

Survey respondents were asked to reflect upon the statement: "I feel I have all the resources I need to adequately do my job." Variations in the level of agreement with the statement show that there are indeed differences in the perceived ability to successfully complete their jobs of supporting the academic endeavors of student-athletes. The increased budget available to upper level Division I athletics is perceived to result in a greater amount of resources (Bambel & Chen, 2014). There is a clear divide in the level of agreement reported from respondents of the AAC and ACC when compared to respondents from the Big South and the CAA. Only 33.3% of the respondents from the Big South indicated that they felt that they had sufficient resources. In contrast, nearly 85% of respondents from the ACC indicated having all the necessary resources.

This indication of lack of resources mentioned by respondents from the CAA and Big South mirrors the results they reported relating to dedicated space for study and a network of tutors available to student-athletes. One hundred percent of respondents from the ACC indicated that their institutions had both a dedicated network of tutors and a dedicated space for study available to their student-athletes. However, of all conferences the Big South had the lowest percentage of respondents who indicated that their institution had these resources available. These finding are consistent with the evidence presented by Bambel and Chen (2014), who found a financial disadvantage at the mid-major institutions left those schools challenged to support an extensive academic support center. This difference among the conferences in the reported resources available, and the satisfaction with these available resources, helps to show that not all Division I

conferences provide equitable resources to support the academic pursuits of student-athletes.

While respondents from the Big South indicated that their resources were inadequate, they also indicated that an increased number of their student-athletes were as prepared for the academic rigor of college as the regular student body at their institution. Compared to the other conferences, a larger percentage of respondents from the Big South also indicated that their student-athletes had a genuine interest in their own academic success. The Big South also was the only conference to indicate that they felt no pressure from the university community, coaching staff, or other members of the Athletic Department to maintain the eligibility of certain student-athletes. Based on these findings, one may conclude that despite reporting having inadequate resources, staff members employed at Big South institutions may face fewer or different challenges in carrying out their job duties. Thus this lack of resources may have less effect an academic support staff member's self-efficacy than may be expected from professionals working at a Division I-AA institution.

When respondents from all conferences were asked to reflect upon the pressure felt by coaching staff, members of the Athletic Department, and members of the university community to ensure the eligibility of certain athletes was maintained, interesting themes emerged among. Respondents from the AAC and ACC indicated never feeling pressure from coaching staff at rates nearly double those reported by Big South and the CAA. Compared to the other conferences, respondents from the CAA indicated that they most often felt pressure from all subgroups to maintain the eligibility of certain student-athletes. These finding are somewhat surprising given that the athletic programs

at AAC and ACC institutions are perceived to be more competitive than those programs at Big South and CAA institutions. The student-athletes at institutions in the AAC and ACC also tend to attract more media coverage and bring increased attention to their universities, thus their student-athlete's eligibility may be perceived to be more valuable. However, results from the present study indicate that employees at institutions in AAC or ACC rarely feel pressure to maintain their athletes' eligibility from any external source.

Surprising results were also found when these pressures from external groups were examined by job category. Gruber (2003) discussed how academic advisors may feel increased pressure from Athletic Directors to show how their job benefits the Athletic Department as a whole. However, results from this question indicate that individuals who fall into the academic job category rarely felt pressure from other members of the Athletic Department. Furthermore, those placed in the academic category within the Big South conference reported never feeling pressure from this group.

Beyond the pressure felt from various groups to maintain the eligibility of certain student-athletes, respondents were also asked to reflect upon the pressure they felt to engage in potentially academically fraudulent behaviors. Across all conferences, respondents denied feeling pressure to encourage their student-athletes to declare majors that are perceived as having lighter workloads. The intentional declaration of majors that have a reputation of being easier in order to free up more time for athletic pursuits is a type of academic fraud discussed in the current literature (Fountain & Finley, 2011). While respondents from all conferences indicated that they do not feel the need to encourage their student-athletes to participate in this kind of academic fraud, this study cannot rule out that these practices occur at the institutions in question. Student-athletes

may receive encouragement to enroll in easier courses from their teammates, coaches, or other influential sources.

A fine line exists between having professors who understand the unique needs of student-athletes and those professors who implement certain academic accommodations for student-athletes purely based on their student-athlete status. Zimbalist (1999) found that academic fraud could take the form of encouraging students to enroll in courses that are taught by professors who are known to provide extra assistance in order to help student-athletes maintain their eligibility. The present study sought to investigate whether academic support staff members felt pressure to encourage their student-athletes to enroll in classes taught by professors who understand the challenges student-athletes face in their academic pursuits. A total of six respondents indicated some level of agreement with this statement, three from the AAC and CAA respectively. However, the vast majority of respondents from all conferences indicated that they did not feel pressure to encourage student-athletes to enroll in specific courses based on the attitudes of certain professors. These responses may be indicative of academic support staff members being aware that this act has the potential to yield academically fraudulent behaviors. The increased awareness of this particular type of academic fraud may be attributed to media coverage given to the ongoing investigation of fraudulent course content created for student-athletes at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Norlander, 2015).

Beyond these specific types of academic fraud that could be committed by the academic support staff members themselves, respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they had reported a student-athlete at their current institution for academically fraudulent practices. Overall 25% of respondents indicated that they had reported

academically fraudulent practices at their current institution of employment. While this percentage may seem relatively low, this percentage is much higher than the number of academic fraud cases which the NCAA reports it is currently investigating. In June 2015, the NCAA reported being in the process of investigating 20 universities for allegations of academic misconduct (Wolverton, 2015). Of these 20 universities being investigated during the last calendar year, 18 were Division I institutions (Wolverton, 2015; NCAA, 2015). These 18 institutions represent 5.19% of the total 347 Division I institutions (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015). While this survey investigated the number of academic fraud cases reported by individual respondents, the percentage reported is much higher than expected based on the number of actual investigations conducted by the NCAA. It should be noted that this number of investigations, 18, only reflects those conducted by the NCAA and does not represent any internal investigations that may be completed by individual institutions.

Although 25% of respondents reported academically fraudulent behaviors, this percentage contrasts with what one would expect based on the media attention paid to NCAA investigations of academic fraud. This discrepancy between the expected culture of academic fraudulence and the reality of how frequently academic fraud occurs is also reflected by Gatmen's 2011 article. Gatmen (2011) reported that, although the actual number of academic fraud cased brought upon NCAA institutions is relatively low, these behaviors are assumed to be commonplace within college athletics. While a quarter of academic support staff members reporting academic fraud at their own university may still be cause for concern, the 75% of staff members who indicate that they have not had

to report these practices indicates that the academic culture of student-athletes at AAC, ACC, Big South, and CAA institutions may be more positive than expected.

To summarize this section, I will next revisit how these results apply to and answer my original research questions as listed below:

1. What resources are available to student-athletes within AAC, ACC, CAA, and Big South Conference institutions to ensure that student-athletes maintain their eligibility and successfully complete their degree?

This study found that the majority of student-athletes at these institutions are provided with both a dedicated space for student-athlete study, as well as a network of tutors available exclusively to them. Respondents from most conferences also indicated that their institutions employ a substantial number of employees who are dedicated to the academic support of student-athletes. These individuals hold a variety of different titles and are available to a wide variety of sport programs at their respective universities. Based on these resources assessed, and others available, the majority of respondents indicated that they felt as though they had enough resources to adequately do their jobs.

2. What specific challenges exist in the advisement of student-athletes at AAC, ACC, CAA, and Big South Conference member institutions?

Several survey questions were included in order to assess the challenges academic support staff members face. One way in which challenges were assessed was to inquire into the interactions respondents had with other professionals within their universities. Respondents report pressure to maintain the eligibility of certain student-athletes comes most frequently from the coaching staff they work alongside, and less frequently from other employees within the Athletic Department and members of the university

community. Given the role academic support staff members play in serving as liaisons between student-athletes and their professors, respondents also were asked to provide feedback on the willingness the professors have to provide extra assistance to student-athletes, as well as their impressions of how professors perceive the work ethic and academic ability of their student-athletes. The majority of respondents indicated that the faculty and staff members at their institutions viewed student-athletes positively and were willing to provide them with assistance if they are to miss class due to athletic obligations.

Another challenge academic support staff members may face is the level of academic preparedness and commitment of their student-athletes. Overall, respondents indicated that they feel the majority of student-athletes are as academically qualified as the regular student body at their institutions. Respondents also indicated that they feel as though the student-athletes had a genuine interest in their own academic success. However fewer respondents indicated that the student-athletes they support keep a healthy balance between their academic and athletic pursuits. So while the student-athlete may be perceived to be academically on par with and to have a genuine interest in their studies, they may still fall short in dedicating enough time to their studies, thus posing a challenge for academic support staff members.

3. What are some general characteristics (including years of experience and discipline of study) of student-athlete academic support staff members?

This study found that academic support staff members come from a variety of different educational backgrounds, with the majority of respondents earning their degrees in the field of Psychology, Education, Sports Management/Marketing, and Counseling.

The majority of respondents held a master's degree, with a solid number indicating that they held, or are in the process of obtaining, a doctoral degree. These respondents were relatively experienced in the field of academic support for student-athletes, but the majority indicated that they had less experience at their current institution. Although respondents' lack of experience at their current institution is not reflective of an individual's qualifications, it is indicative of a potentially high turn over rate.

4. What differences exist in the field of academic support for student-athletes within varying Division I conferences?

The most substantial differences found by this study were those that existed between the Big South and ACC, particularly in the resources available to academic support staff members at within these conferences. While 100% of respondents from the ACC indicated that their institutions offered both a dedicated space for student-athlete study and a network of tutors specifically for student-athletes, respondents from the Big South indicated that these resources were less frequently found at their universities. The number of individuals who work within the department of academic support for student-athletes within these two conferences also differed greatly. Department sizes at ACC institutions were found to be over three times the size of the academic support staff sizes at Big South institutions. Respondents from these two conferences also demonstrated the greatest disparities in satisfaction with the resources available to them. Over 80% of respondents from the ACC indicated that they felt they had all the resources they needed to adequately do their jobs, while only 33.33% of respondents from the Big South felt this way.

Recommendations for Future Study

Future studies should be conducted to determine if the experiences of student-athletes at these specific conferences are similar to and consistent with the views of academic support staff members. This future research could inquire into student-athletes' perception of how they are treated by their professors and other university staff members to see if they feel as though they are seen in a positive light. It would also be useful to inquire into the tutoring networks available to student-athletes to see if they feel as though they are effective, particularly if those institutions that do not have a network of tutors specifically designated to support student-athletes. Another area for further study would be to isolate these points of inquiry by high-profile sports. Given that much of the current literature and media focus is centered on the high-profile and revenue producing sports, such as football and men's basketball, future studies may wish to focus upon only those student-athletes who participate in these sports. Additionally, further inquiry into the budget given to each of the departments for student-athlete academic support may be a point of focus for future studies. Marked differences are noted in the budgets available to Division I-A and Division I-AA institutions (Fulks, 2015); therefore the effect of these overall budgetary differences on the academic support for student-athletes could be a topic for further inquiry.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on the field of academic support at AAC, ACC, Big South, and CAA institutions. Individuals who are charged with the academic support of student-athletes are highly educated and experienced individuals who are trained in variety of different disciplines. The opinions expressed by these respondents provide a very

different view of the collaboration between collegiate academic and athletics than that which is typically assumed. Respondents indicated that on the whole, the majority of student-athletes they interact with are as academically prepared as the regular student body, have a genuine interest in their own academic success, and manage to keep a healthy balance between their academic and athletic responsibilities. Results also indicated that faculty and staff members at these respective institutions share this positive view of the work ethic and academic ability of student-athletes. Information gathered from this study also shows that academic support staff members report feeling pressure to ensure the eligibility of certain student-athletes less frequently than one may expect given their role as academic liaisons between student-athletes and the greater university community.

Beyond these findings, it was shown that the resources available to student-athletes are not equal across all Division I institutions. The greatest disparities exist between ACC and Big South institutions. Institutions affiliated with the Big South were found to have the smallest staff size and to have the fewest respondents indicating that their institutions offered a dedicated network of tutors for student-athletes. Compared to respondents from the other conferences, a higher percentage of respondents from the Big South also indicated that they felt as though their resources were inadequate do to their jobs. These findings show the need for growth in this field, particularly at Division I institutions who are traditionally considered to be mid-majors There is a great disparity in the type of resources provided to academic staff supporting student-athletes, as compared to those institutions who are part of the "Big Five". This research indicates the need for

further investigation into the field of academic support among the different divisions within the NCAA.

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Protocol

James Madison University
Human Research Review Request

FOR IRB USE ONLY:			
Exempt: ☐	**Protocol Number:**	1ˢᵗ **Review:** _____	**Reviewer:** _____
Expedited: ☒	**IRB:** 16-0234	2ⁿᵈ **Review:** _____	**Reviewer:** _____
Full Board: ☐	**Received:** _____	3ʳᵈ **Review:** _____	

Project Title:	Academic Support of Student-Athletes: a Cross-Conference Comparison
Project Dates: (Not to exceed 1 year minus 1 day)	From: 11/01/2015 To: 08/01/16 MM/DD/YY MM/DD/YY

Minimum # of Participants:	50
Maximum # of Participants:	348

Funding:	**External Funding:** Yes: ☐ No: ☒ **If yes, Sponsor:** _____ **Internal Funding:** Yes: ☐ No: ☒ **If yes, Sponsor:** _____ **Independently:** Yes: ☐ No: ☒
Incentives:	**Will monetary incentives be offered? Yes:** ☐ **No:** ☒ **If yes: How much per recipient?** _____ **In what form?** _____
Must follow JMU Financial Policy:	http://www.jmu.edu/financemanual/procedures/4205.shtml#.394IRBApprovedResearchSubjects

Responsible Researcher(s):	Rachel Simon
E-mail Address:	simonrf@dukes.jmu.edu
Telephone:	804-539-2553
Department:	Adult Education and Human Resource Development
Address (MSC):	4301

Please Select:	☐ Faculty	☐ Undergraduate Student
	☐ Administrator/Staff Member	☒ Graduate Student

(if Applicable):

Research Advisor:	Dr. Diane Wilcox
E-mail Address:	wilcoxdm@jmu.edu
Telephone:	540-568-6707
Department:	Learning, Technology & Leadership Education
Address (MSC):	6913

Investigator: Please respond to the questions below. The IRB will utilize your responses to evaluate your protocol submission.

1. ☒ **YES** ☐ **NO** Does the James Madison University Institutional Review Board define the project as ***research?***

   The James Madison University IRB defines "research" as a "*systematic* investigation designed to develop or contribute to *generalizable knowledge*." All research involving human participants conducted by James Madison University faculty and staff and students is subject to IRB review.

2. ☒ **YES** ☐ **NO** Are the human participants in your study ***living*** individuals?

   "Individuals whose physiologic or behavioral characteristics and responses are the object of study in a research project. Under the federal regulations, human subjects are defined as: living individual(s) about whom an investigator conducting research obtains:
   (1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual; or (2) identifiable private information."

3. ☒ **YES** ☐ **NO** Will you obtain data through ***intervention*** or ***interaction*** with these individuals?

   "Intervention" includes both physical procedures by which data are gathered (*e.g.*, measurement of heart rate or venipuncture) and manipulations of the participant or the participant's environment that are performed for research purposes. "Interaction" includes communication or interpersonal contact between the investigator and participant (*e.g.*, surveying or interviewing).

4. ☐ **YES** ☒ **NO** Will you obtain ***identifiable private information*** about these individuals?

   "Private information" includes information about behavior that occurs in a context in which an individual can reasonably expect that no observation or recording is taking place, or information provided for specific purposes which the individual can reasonably expect will not be made public (*e.g.*, a medical record or student record). "Identifiable" means that the identity of the participant may be ascertained by the investigator or associated with the information (*e.g.*, by name, code number, pattern of answers, etc.).

5. ☐ **YES** ☒**NO** Does the study present ***more than minimal risk*** to the participants?

   "Minimal risk" means that the risks of harm or discomfort anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. Note that the concept of risk goes beyond physical risk and includes psychological, emotional, or behavioral risk as well as risks to employability, economic well being, social standing, and risks of civil and criminal liability.

CERTIFICATIONS:

For James Madison University to obtain a Federal Wide Assurance (FWA) with the Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, **all** research staff working with

human participants must sign this form and receive training in ethical guidelines and regulations. "Research staff" is defined as persons who have direct and substantive involvement in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting research and includes students fulfilling these roles as well as their faculty advisors. The Office of Research Integrity maintains a roster of all researchers who have completed training within the past three years.

Test module **at ORI website http://www.jmu.edu/researchintegrity/irb/irbtraining.shtml**

Name of Researcher(s) and Research Advisor	Training Completion Date
Rachel Simon	**January 31, 2015**
Dr. Diane Wilcox	**January 16, 2015**

For additional training interests, or to access a Spanish version, visit the National Institutes of Health Protecting Human Research Participants (PHRP) Course at: http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php.

By signing below, the Responsible Researcher(s), and the Faculty Advisor (if applicable), certifies that he/she is familiar with the ethical guidelines and regulations regarding the protection of human research participants from research risks. In addition, he/she agrees to abide by all sponsor and university policies and procedures in conducting the research. He/she further certifies that he/she has completed training regarding human participant research ethics within the last three years.

Rachel Simon, ATC   10/30/15
Principal Investigator Signature   Date

Diane Wilcox
                                                                          10/30/15

Faculty Advisor Signature

Submit an electronic version (in a Word document) of your **ENTIRE** protocol to researchintegrity@jmu.edu.
Provide a **SIGNED** hard copy of the Research Review Request Form to:
Office of Research Integrity, MSC 5738, 601 University Boulevard, Blue Ridge Hall, Third Floor, Room # 342

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to investigate the resources available to Division I student-athletes and to better challenges that face the staff that support these student-athletes. Oftentimes Division I student-athletes are not adequately prepared for the intensity of the course curriculum they will encounter throughout their pursuits of a four-year degree. In order for the student-athlete to succeed, academic support staff members are an integral part to the student-athlete's academic success. While academic support staff members share a common goal of producing academically successful student-athletes, the job task/duties and resources available to these professionals vary greatly amongst institutions. Additionally these professionals come from diverse backgrounds and have varying levels and types of training that influence their practice. It is these areas that are the primary concern of my research.

Academic support staff members employed through the athletic departments at universities that are considered to be member institutions of the American Athletic Conference (AAC), Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), the Colonial Athletic Association (CAA), and the Big South Conference will be the targeted population of this research. A mixed-method designed Qualtrics© survey will be sent to these staff members via email. Through this data collection I hope to identify some commonly utilized resources and frequently implemented practices that are used to help student-athletes successfully balance their academic and athletic pursuits. Additionally I wish to determine what these staff members are doing to combat academically fraudulent practices, ensure that student-athletes maintain their eligibility, and promote the completion of a four-year degree. I also wish to assess if academic support staff members feel their interactions with university faculty either aid or hinder their attempts to facilitate academic achievement within student-athletes. Finally, I would like to determine if any variations in available resources or employed practices exists from sport to sport at any particular institution. The data collected from the respondents will be analyzed to investigate what, if any, differences and/or similarities exist amongst the surveyed institutions.

Research Questions:
1. What resources are available to student-athletes within AAC, ACC, CAA, and Big South Conference institutions to ensure that student-athletes maintain their eligibility and successfully complete their degree?
2. What specific challenges exist in the advisement of student-athletes at AAC, ACC, CAA, and Big South Conference member institutions?
3. What are some general characteristics (including years of experience and discipline of study) of student-athlete academic support staff members?
4. What differences exist in the field of academic support for student-athletes at varying Division I institutions?

Procedures/Research Design/Methodology/Timeframe

The sampled population for this study will be academic support staff members employed through the athletic department of each of the fifty schools considered to be full member institutions of the AAC, ACC, CAA, and Big South Conference. The following institutions are considered to be members of American Athletic Conference: University of Central Florida (Orlando, FL); University of Cincinnati (Cincinnati, OH); University of Connecticut (Storrs, Connecticut); East Carolina University (Greenville, NC); University of Huston (Huston, TX); University of Memphis (Memphis, TN); University of South Florida (Tampa, FL); Southern Methodist University (Dallas, TX); Temple University (Philadelphia, PA); Tulane University (New Orleans, LA); and University of Tulsa (Tulsa, OK). Member institutions of the Atlantic Coat Conference are as follows: Boston College (Boston, Mass.); Clemson University (Clemson, SC); Duke University (Durham, NC); Florida State University (Tallahassee, FL); Georgia Institute of Technology (Atlanta, GA); Louisville University (Louisville,

KY); University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, NC); University of Notre Dame (Notre Dame, IN); University of Pittsburg (Pittsburg, PA); Syracuse University (Syracuse, NY); University of Virginia (Charlottesville, VA); Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Blacksburg, VA); and Wake Forest University (Winston-Salem, NC). Member institutions affiliated with the CAA are as follows: College of Charleston (Charleston, SC); Drexel University (Philadelphia, PA); Hofstra University (Hempstead, NY); Northeastern University (Boston, MA); University of North Carolina-Wilmington (Wilmington, NC); University of Delaware (Newark, DE); Elon University (Elon, NC); James Madison University (Harrisonburg, VA); Towson University (Towson, MD); and the College of William and Mary (Williamsburg, VA). The Big South Conference is comprised of the following member institutions: Campbell University (Buies Creek, NC); Charleston Southern University (North Charleston, SC); Coastal Carolina University (Conway, SC); Gardner-Webb University (Boiling Springs, NC); High Point University (High Point, NC); Liberty University (Lynchburg, VA); Longwood University (Farmville, VA); Presbyterian College (Clinton, SC); Radford University (Radford, VA); University of North Carolina-Ashville (Ashville, NC); and Winthrop University (Rock Hill, SC).

Potential participants will be identified through review of each individual institution's Athletic Department's staff as listed on their webpage. Contact information for each individual academic staff member will be obtained through review of each respective institution's athletic department staff directory and identifying individuals who are involved in the academic support of student-athletes. Job titles for these individuals include but are not limited to Academic Advisor, Learning Specialist, Academic Counselor, Associate Director, Assistant/Associate Deans of University Advisement, Assistant/Associate Athlete Director (AD), and Director of Student-Athlete Services/Academic Achievement.

How will subjects be recruited once they are identified (e.g., mail, phone, classroom presentation)? Include copies of recruitment letters, flyers, or advertisements.

Recruitment of participants will occur via email. Prior to distributing the survey instrument I will send out an informational email in hopes of making potential participants aware of my study. In this email I will inform potential respondents of the purpose of my research and ask for their participation in my survey. A draft of this email is provided below:

Rachel Simon, ATC, is a graduate student at James Madison University conducting research regarding academic support for student-athletes. The intent of the researcher is to investigate the academic support provided to student-athletes at various Division I institutions, as well as to further understand the individuals who provide this type support to student-athletes. This survey will require a maximum of 10 minutes of your time. Your participation is completely optional. The data provided by this study will remain anonymous to your identity as well as your institution of affiliation.

Describe the design and methodology, including all statistics, IN DETAIL. What exactly will be done to the subjects? If applicable, please describe what will happen if a subject declines to be audio or video-taped.

I will design and create a unique survey to be distributed to the academic support staff of the aforementioned universities. This survey will be the sole data collection instrument used for my research. I will utilize the Qualtrics© software available to me through James Madison University to design and distribute this survey. I plan to take full advantage of the variety of question delivery methods available to me in the software in order to create a comprehensive, mixed-method survey.

For a part of the quantitative portion of my survey I would like determine respondent's attitudes towards certain statements. Likert Scales will be used to in this survey quantify respondent's level of agreement or disagreement with questions dealing with the following areas of interest: university faculty/staff's willingness to provide additional assistance, accommodations, and resources to student-athletes; resources available to these professionals; and course advisement processes.

Likert Scales asking respondents to rate on a scale of always, frequently, somewhat frequently, and never will be used to inquire about the frequency in which respondents feel pressure from coaching staff, administrative staff, and other members of the university community.

Three yes or no questions will be used. Respondents have reported a student-athlete at their current institution of employment to the compliance department. Respondents will have the opportunity to abstain from answering this question. Additionally respondents will be asked if their institution has a dedicated space for student-athlete support and if there is a network of tutors that are specifically dedicated to student-athletes.

Percentage rating scale questions will be used to ask respondents to indicate the percent of student-athletes they advise who keep a balance of academic and athletic commitments and have a genuine interest in their academic achievement. This question type will also be used to ask respondents what percentage of student-athletes they work with are on par with the rest of the student body in regards to their level of preparedness for the academic rigor of university.

Single select question design will be used to ask the following areas of information: years of experience in the field and years of employment of the field.

Open-ended questions will be utilized for the qualitative portion of the survey. Respondents will be asked to provide their job title in order to provide background information into the types of academic support staff member who respond to the survey while still protecting these individual's identities. Another area of demographic area assessed through an open-ended question would be asking the respondents to provide the name of the degree(s) they have earned, such as stating that they earned a Bachelor's of Science in Sports Marketing and Management. Respondents will also be able to indicate that they have not received a degree listed.

Due to the large variation in responses that may exist, respondents will be asked to provide the total number of student-athletes they support. Respondents will also be asked to provide the exact number of individuals employed at their institution who work to support student-athlete's academic endeavors. Finally, respondents will be asked to provide the conference in which their institution is considered to be a full member.

Statistics will be analyzed utilizing both the Qualtrics$^©$ and SPSS software available to me through James Madison University. I will initially analyze the responses as a whole based on the reports generated by Qualtrics$^©$. This review will be used to determine if any themes exist amongst the respondents that can be used to reflect upon the group of a whole. I will then use SPSS to complete a more detailed data analysis in order to establish any inter-conference or intra-conference correlations that may exist between the ACC, CAA, and Big South Conference.

Emphasize possible risks and protection of subjects.

The nature of the electronic survey poses no apparent risks to human subjects. This survey will contain an informed consent section in which respondents will agree to contribute their survey results to research. All survey respondents will also be guaranteed complete anonymity in all aspects of their responses in order to protect their own identity and the identity of the institution to which they are affiliated. Finally, respondents will be encouraged to contact me if they have any questions about the process or study itself.

What are the potential benefits to participation and the research as a whole?

While there are no direct benefits for participating in this anonymous online survey, the survey   data will be used to expand the literature regarding the academic support of student-athletes   at the Division I level.

Will data be collected from any of the following populations?

_____	Minors (under 18 years of age); Specify Age: _____
_____	Prisoners
_____	Pregnant Women, fetuses, or neonates
_____	Cognitively impaired persons
_____	Other protected or potentially vulnerable population
____X____	Not Applicable

Where will research be conducted? (Be specific; if research is being conducted off of JMU's campus a site letter of permission will be needed)
Research will be conducted at:

James Madison University
801 Carrier Drive
Harrisonburg, Virginia 22807

Will deception be used? If yes, provide the rationale for the deception. Also, please provide an explanation of how you plan to debrief the subjects regarding the deception at the end of the study.

No deception will be used in this research.

What is the time frame of the study? (List the dates you plan on collecting data. This cannot be more than a year, and you cannot start conducting research until you get IRB approval)

The time frame for this study is approximately 11 months. As soon as IRB approval is granted, I will aim to send out the survey during the middle of November 2015. The survey will close after a four-week period of time. Data analysis will take place throughout the spring of 2016.

Data Analysis
For more information on data security, please see:
http://www.jmu.edu/researchintegrity/irb/irbdatasecurity.shtml.

How will data be analyzed?

The first step in my data analysis will be to download the data from Qualtrics$^{©}$. I will first complete a categorical frequency analysis of the open-ended responses provided and look for themes within these responses. From this analysis I will create visual representations through the use of charts and graphs to display the frequency of the responses. I will then review the statistics provided by Qualtrics$^{©}$ regarding the quantitative information obtained. I will also create visual representations of this quantifiable data to include in my reflection of this data.

In addition to the data analysis tools available to me in Qualtrics$^{©}$, I intend to use the SPSS available to me through James Madison University. The primary intention of utilizing SPSS is to allow for descriptive statistical analysis. My interest with this type of analysis is to compare, contrast, and categorize responses based on the respondent's conference identification. I will include the histograms produced within SPSS in my discussion of resulting data.

The software itself will provide me with statistics regarding the frequency in which respondents selected each of the answer choices that were provided and what percentage of the total respondent pool selected each of the answer choices. Qualtrics$^{©}$ frequently utilizes matrix tables in order to provide statistical analysis for questions with a Likert scale format. I can take the data represented in a matrix table a step further by transferring the percentages provided into a bar graph to better display variations with the responses

Some of the demographic information of interest in regards to the academic support staff members themselves will also be collected quantitatively. Qualtrics$^{©}$ also has the capability to produce frequency matrixes for the single-select multiple-choice questions that will be included. One of these types of questions will involve the years of experience the respondents have. I will take the frequency matrixes provided to me and convert the data to be represented graphically in order to show percent distributions more clearly.

After analyzing the aforementioned characteristics for the respondents as a whole I then wish to complete analysis in order to compare responses amongst the four conferences in which the survey was delivered. In particular I wish to see how the resources available, number of athletes advised, and perceived external pressures vary amongst the institutions. Much of this comparative statistical analysis will be completed through the use of SPSS software. This software will allow me to complete inferential statistical analyses of responses based on conference of affiliation.

How will you capture or create data? Physical (ex: paper or tape recording)? Electronic (ex: computer, mobile device, digital recording)?

All data will be collected electronically via a computerized Qualtrics$^{©}$ survey.

Do you anticipate transferring your data from a physical/analog format to a digital format? If so, how? (e.g. paper that is scanned, data inputted into the computer from paper, digital photos of physical/analog data, digitizing audio or video recording?)

No I do not anticipate changing data formatting. The data will be collected, analyzed, and reported digitally.

How and where will data be secured/stored? (e.g. a single computer or laptop; across multiple computers; or computing devices of JMU faculty, staff or students; across multiple computers both at JMU and outside of JMU?) If subjects are being audio and/or video-taped, file encryption is highly recommended. If signed consent forms will be obtained, please describe how these forms will be stored separately and securely from study data.

No All data will be stored on my personal laptop as well as the computing devices of JMU faculty members who are on my thesis committee. All devices from which data can be assessed must be private and password protected.

Who will have access to data? (e.g. just me; me and other JMU researchers (faculty, staff, or students); or me and other non-JMU researchers?)
Myself and the members of my thesis committee will be the only individuals who may be able to access my data.

If others will have access to data, how will data be securely shared?
All individuals accessing the survey results must do so on a private, password-protected computer. Data may not be viewed on any device that may be publically accessed.

Will you keep data after the project ends? (i.e. yes, all data; yes, but only de-identified data; or no) If data is being destroyed, when will it be destroyed, and how? Who will destroy the data?
Once the data has been retrieved from the Qualtrics$^{©}$ software, all links to the survey will be deactivated. At the end of the study, all records will be destroyed. The data entered into SPSS will be based on the reports generated by Qualtrics$^{©}$ and will not be connected to the individual surveys completed.

Reporting Procedures
Who is the audience to be reached in the report of the study?

The audience to be reached in the report of the study will be the members of Rachel Simon's thesis committee. Members of this committee will be faculty members from the Graduate School's Department of Learning, Technology, and Leadership Education as well as faculty members from the Undergraduate Athletic Training Program.

How will you present the results of the research? (If submitting as exempt, research cannot be published or publicly presented outside of the classroom. Also, the researcher cannot collect any identifiable information from the subjects to qualify as exempt.)

Results of this research will be presented to aforementioned thesis committee members through a formal defense in a classroom setting. This defense will present the results of the research and any conclusions that may be formulated from the data analysis.

How will feedback be provided to subjects?

My JMU affiliated email address will be available to respondents within the informed consent form provided to potential respondents. This email will also be available to respondents when they access the survey on the Qualtrics$^{©}$ software. Respondents will be presented with the opportunity to contact myself with any questions, concerns, additional information, and/or feedback regarding the survey or the research itself.

Experience of the Researcher (and advisor, *if student)*:

Rachel Simon has a Bachelor's of Science degree in Athletic Training from James Madison University and is a Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC) and is in good standing with the Board of Certification. She is currently pursuing her master's degree in Adult Education and Human Resource Development at James Madison University. She has completed coursework in Research Methods, Performance Analysis, Learning Theories, Instructional Design, Digital Media and Design, and Foundations of Human Resource Development. The following individuals make up Rachel Simon's thesis committee.

Dr. Diane Wilcox received her Ph.D. and M.A. in Educational Psychology from the University of North Carolina. She has been employed at James Madison University since 2004 and currently serves as the Program Director for the Adult Education and Human Resource (AHRD) program at JMU. She has experience teaching the following subjects at the graduate level: instructional design, instructional technology, research methods, and visual literacy. In addition to her role as Program Director for the AHRD program she serves as the Program Director for the Program Director for the master's degree program in Spanish Language and Culture that is affiliated with the University of Salamanca.

Dr. Noorie Brantmeier received her from Ph.D. Colorado State University in Adult Education and Human Resource Studies with a specialization in research methods. Additionally, Dr. Brantmeier has a master's degree in social work from Washington University in St. Louis. Dr. Brantmeier has conducted extensive research in areas including, but not limited to: the social and economic development in Native American communities; the measurement of student attitudes regarding diversity in higher education; and adolescent attitudes toward violence. She has experience teaching the research methods courses at both the master's and doctoral levels as well as the senior capstone course for the HRD minor.

Dr. Connie Peterson is a faculty member in the Athletic Training Program at James Madison University. She received her master's degree in Physical Education from Ithaca College and a Ph.D. in Exercise Science from the University of Georgia. At JMU she teaches courses with the following areas of focus: organization and administration in athletic training, rehabilitation of injuries, recognition and management of injuries, and professional development within athletic training.

Elaine Kaye is an adjunct professor in the HRD minor as a full time staff member in the Center for Instructional Technology. She is a graduate of the AHRD master's program and conducted her master's thesis research to investigate student perceptions of campus safety.

"Web" / "Email" Consent to Participate in Research (confidential research)

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Rachel F. Simon, ATC from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to *investigate academic support for student-athletes.* This study will contribute to the researcher's completion of her master's thesis.

Research Procedures

This study consists of an online survey that will be administered to individual participants through Qualtrics$^{©}$ (an online survey tool). You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to the academic support of student-athletes. Should you decide to participate in this confidential research you may access the anonymous survey by following the web link located under the "Giving of Consent" section.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require 10 minutes of your time.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life).

Benefits

While there are no direct benefits from your participation in this anonymous online research study, your input will be used to provide insight into the academic support of student-athletes at the Division I level.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented at the thesis defense of the researcher. While individual responses are anonymously obtained and recorded online through Qualtrics$^{©}$ (a secure online survey tool), data is kept in the strictest confidence. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity and the identity of the affiliated institution will not be attached to the final form of this study. Aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information will be destroyed. Final aggregate results will be made available to participants upon request.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. However, once your responses have been submitted and anonymously recorded you will not be able to withdraw from the study.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Rachel Simon   Dr. Diane Wilcox
Adult Education and Human   Learning, Technology, and Leadership
Resource Development   Education
James Madison University   James Madison University
Simonrf@dukes.jmu.edu   (540) 568-6707

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. David Cockley
Chair, Institutional Review Board
James Madison University
(540) 568-2834

cocklede@jmu.edu

Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form through email. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age. By clicking on the link below, and completing and submitting this confidential online survey, I am consenting to participate in this research.

http://jmu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0rE39dXI7RzmDpr

Rachel Simon, ATC _____		_____10/30/15
Name of Researcher (Printed)

"Web"/ "Email" Cover Letter (used in anonymous research)

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Rachel Simon from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to better understand the academic support provided to student-athletes at the Division I level. This study will contribute to the researcher's completion of her master's thesis.

Research Procedures

This study consists of an online survey that will be administered to individual participants through and online using Qualtrics (an online survey tool). You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to the academic support of student-athletes.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require 10 minutes/hours of your time.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life).

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to participating in this research.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented in a classroom setting through a formal thesis defense. While individual responses are anonymously obtained and recorded online through Qualtrics, data is kept in the strictest confidence. No identifiable information will be collected from the participant and no identifiable responses will be presented in the final form of this study. All data will be stored in a secure location only accessible to the researcher. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. At the end of the study, all records will be destroyed. Final aggregate results will be made available to participants upon request.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. However, once your responses have been submitted and anonymously recorded you will not be able to withdraw from the study.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Researcher's Name   Advisor's Name
Department   Department
James Madison University   James Madison University
Email Address   Telephone: (540) …
                                      Email Address

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. David Cockley
Chair, Institutional Review Board
James Madison University
(540) 568-2834
cocklede@jmu.edu

Giving of Consent

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about this study. I have read this consent and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age. By clicking on the link below, and completing and submitting this anonymous survey, I am consenting to participate in this research.

http://jmu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0rE39dXI7RzmDpr

Rachel Simon, ATC   10/30/15
Name of Researcher   Date

This study has been approved by the IRB, protocol # No. 16-0234.

Appendix B: Survey Instrument

Q1: What is your job title?

Q2:

How many years experience do you have in this field?

0-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years
○	○	○	○	○	○

Q3:

How many years of experience do you have in this field at your current institution?

0-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years
○	○	○	○	○	○

Q4/Q5:

Please indicate below the degree(s) which you have earned. If you have earned a particular degree please indicate the discipline in which you earned your degree(s).

	Click to write Column 2		Click to write Column 1
	I have earned this degree	I have NOT earned this degree	Discipline of Study
Bachelor's Degree	○	○	
Master's Degree	○	○	
Doctoral Degree	○	○	

Q6: How many people are employed in your department for academic support of student-athletes?

Q7: Please provide the conference in which your university of employment is considered to be a full member institution.

Q8:

Please indicate all the sport programs you work with from the list below:

- ☐ Baseball
- ☐ Men's Basketball
- ☐ Women't Basketball
- ☐ Beach Volleyball
- ☐ Bowling
- ☐ Cheerleading
- ☐ Men's Cross Country
- ☐ Women's Cross Country
- ☐ Equestrian
- ☐ Men's Fencing
- ☐ Women's Fencing
- ☐ Field Hockey
- ☐ Football
- ☐ Men's Golf
- ☐ Women's Golf
- ☐ Men's Gymnastics
- ☐ Women's Gymnastics
- ☐ Men's Ice Hockey
- ☐ Women's Ice Hockey
- ☐ Men's Lacrosse

- ☐ Women's Lacrosse
- ☐ Rifle
- ☐ Rowing
- ☐ Skiing
- ☐ Men's Soccer
- ☐ Women's Soccer
- ☐ Softball
- ☐ Men's Swimming and Diving
- ☐ Women's Swimming and Diving
- ☐ Men's Tennis
- ☐ Women's Tennis
- ☐ Men's Track and Field
- ☐ Women's Track and Field
- ☐ Men's Volleyball
- ☐ Women's Volleyball
- ☐ Men's Water Polo
- ☐ Women's Water Polo
- ☐ Wrestling
- ☐ Other

Q9: Approximately how many student-athletes do you support?

Q10:

Does your institution have a dedicated space for student-athlete study?

Yes   No
○   ○

Q11:

Does your institution have a network of tutors dedicated specifically for student-athletes?

Yes   No
○   ○

Q12:

Please indicate below how study hall hours are assigned for the student-athletes you support.

○ All athletes are required to complete the same amount of hours

○ Hours required are assigned on a gradient scale based on GPA earned

○ Only student-athletes in their first year are required to complete hours

○ Student-athletes are required to complete hours when their GPA falls below a:

○ Other:

Q13:

Please rate the following items in a scale of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree, or not applicable as they apply to your current institutional employer.

On the whole, I feel as though….

.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
I have all the resources I need to adequately do my job	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel pressured to encourage student-athletes to declare majors that have a lighter work load	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel pressured to encourage student-athletes to enroll in classes taught by professors who understand the challenges student-athletes face in their academic pursuits	○	○	○	○	○	○
The faculty and staff I have interacted with are willing to provide additional resources to student-athletes who may miss class due to athletic obligations	○	○	○	○	○	○
The faculty and staff I have interacted with view the work ethic and academic ability of student-athletes positively	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q14:

Please use the scale below to indicate the percentage of student-athletes you work that reflect the following statements:

	0	25	50	75	100
The student-athletes I work with are as prepared for the academic rigor of university studies as the regular student body at my institution of current employment					
The student-athletes I work with keep a healthy balance between their academic and athletic commitments					
The student-athletes I work with have a genuine interest in their own academic success					
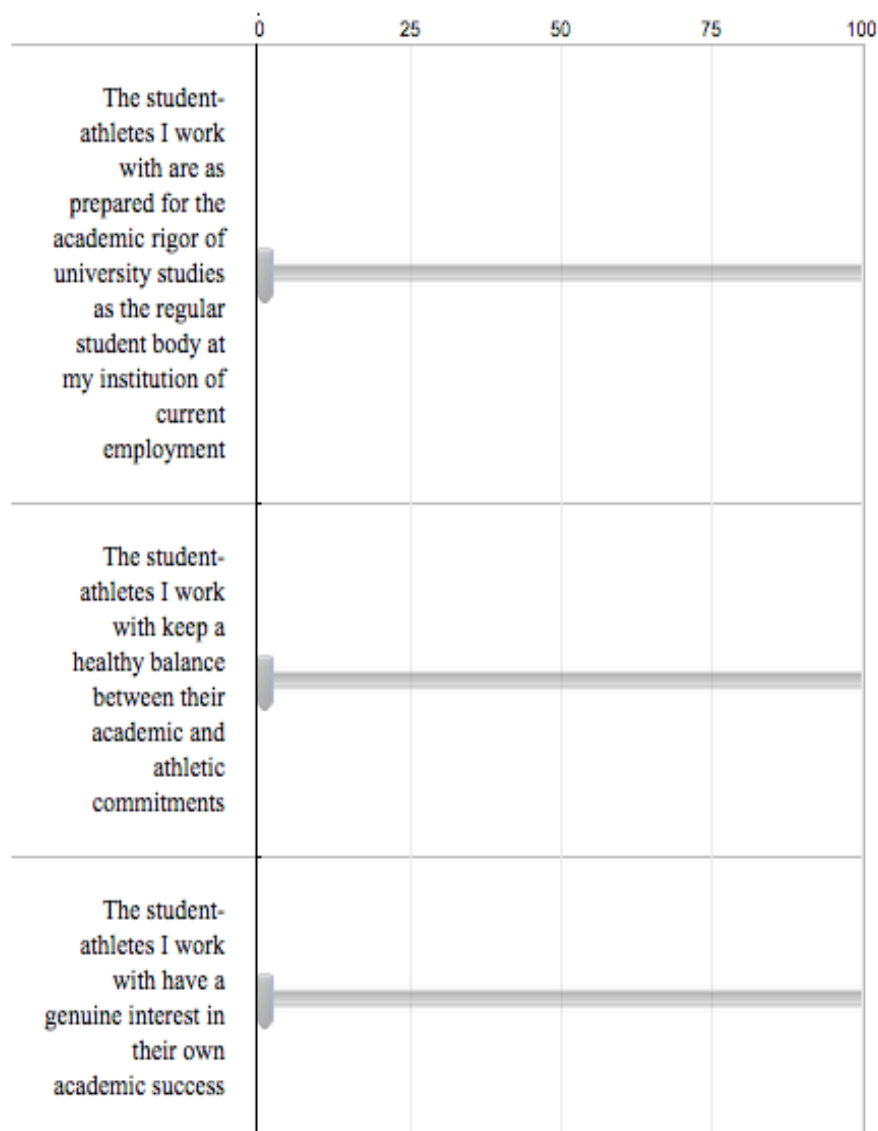
Q15:

Please rate the following items in a scale of always, frequently, somewhat frequently, never, or not applicable as they apply to your current institutional employer.

	Always	Frequently	Somewhat Frequently	Never	Not Applicable
I feel pressure from athletic coaching staff to make sure certain student-athletes maintain their eligibility	○	○	○	○	○
I feel pressure from other members of the athletic department staff to make sure certain student-athletes maintain their eligibility	○	○	○	○	○
I feel pressure from members of the university community to make sure certain student-athletes maintain their eligibility	○	○	○	○	○

Q16:

Please indicate if the following statement is true or false as it applies to your institution of current employment. You may choose not to answer this question.

I have had to report a student-athlete to the compliance department for academically fraudulent practices.

True	False	I choose not to answer
○	○	○

Appendix C: Job Categorizations

Job Category	Job Titles Provided
Academic	Learning Specialist, Academic Advisor, Academic Coordinator, Academic Counselor, PAWS Coordinator, Athletic Advisor, Senior Academic Advisor, Assistant Academic Counselor, Student-Athlete Academic Coordinator, Tutorial Coordinator, Life Skills Coordinator, Graduate Assistant, Athletics Certifying Officer, and Athletic Academic Coordinator
Assistant	Assistant Director, Assistant Director of Academic Support for Athletics, Assistant Athletic Director (AD) for Academics, Assistant Director of Academic Services, Assistant Director of Student Athlete Services, Assistant Director for Student Athlete Support, Assistant Athletic Director/Academic Support Services, Assistant Director of Educational Services, Assistant AD/Academics, Assistant Athletic Director for Academic & Student Services, Assistant Athletic Director: Academics for Student Athletes, and Assistant Director Academic Center for Excellence
Associate	Associate Director: Student-Athlete Development, Associate Director for Academic and Student Services, Associate Director: Student Athlete Services, Associate Athletic Director for Academic & Student Services, Associate Athletic Director, and Associate Dean: Undergraduate Studies/Senior Associate Athletics Director
Director	Director of Athletic Academic Advising, Director of Academic Services for Student-Athletes, Director of Academic & Student-Athlete Services, Director of Student-Athlete Development, Director: Student Athlete Academic Support Services, Director for Athletic Academic Achievement, Director of Student-Athlete Affairs, Director, Director of Academics - Olympic Sports, Director: Student-Athlete Support Services, Director of Learning Services, Director--Academic Services Centre for Student-Athletes, and Director of Academics

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