LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD:

STUDENT-ATHLETE ACADEMIC SUPPORT AT GEORGETOWN COLLEGE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The academic success of student-athletes is a hot topic on college campuses. This exploratory action research study seeks to understand the best ways to support student-athletes at a small, private college with a large student-athlete population. Utilizing the Whole Student Theory of Advising (WSToA) framework, student-athletes were surveyed and interviewed to better understand their perspective. The data indicates that student-athletes seek more support that meets their unique needs. An intervention-based model of faculty advisor training is proposed as a solution for improving the academic success of student-athletes and building interpersonal relationships between student-athletes and advisors. The scope of this solution may only apply to the institution studied; however, higher-education academic and athletic staff will find the methodology and findings useful.

Dedicated to my loving, supportive partner,

my inspiring mother, and the Tiger campus community.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAUP	American Association of University Professors
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019 (SARS-CoV-2)
CRT	Critical Race Theory
CToL	Critical Theory of Love
FoK	Funds of Knowledge
GPA	Grade Point Average
IPEDS	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LRC	Ensor Learning Resource Center (library)
NAIA	National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
QUAL	Qualitative
QUAN	Quantitative
RA	Resident Advisor
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
WSToA	Whole Student Theory of Advising

CHAPTER ONE: PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

Student-athletes have long been the subject of numerous studies within higher education policy (Bowen & Levin, 2003; Fumasoli & Stensaker, 2013; Rishe, 2003; Shulman & Bowen, 2001). As colleges and universities seek to increase enrollment and retention, many have recently turned to student-athletes to accomplish this goal (Aries et al., 2004; Cosh & Tully, 2014; Hazzaa et al., 2018). The use of student-athletes to increase enrollment is especially true of small private liberal arts institutions, such as Georgetown College (Georgetown, Kentucky). As the number of student-athletes at Georgetown College continues to increase, the institution struggles to respond to the academic needs of this population.

In recent years, many studies focused on the needs and academic success of student-athletes and the various ways universities seek to improve the academic performance of their athletes (Beron & Piquero, 2016; Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Harris et al., 2014; Nicholas et al., 2019). Given the dominance of large public university National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I athletics, the student-athlete experience at small private institutions, even those with robust athletic programs, is often left out of this discourse (LaForge & Hodge, 2011; Nicholas et al., 2019; Rifenburg, 2016). However, the same challenge of how to best support the academic success of student-athletes is still prevalent for small private institutions. This study sought to better understand and evaluate the academic support services available to student-athletes at Georgetown College, an institution with a rich, winning athletic history. Furthermore, this study recommends policies for increasing the academic support of student-athletes at small institutions.

Statement of The Problem

Data from the Georgetown College Office for Institutional Research showed that, as of the fall 2020 semester, student-athletes made up 49.10% of Georgetown's student population. Table 1 details recent enrollment information for the College and demonstrates its high percentage of student-athletes. With such a proportionally large population of student-athletes, many of the issues related to the academic success of student-athletes studied at NCAA institutions also exist at Georgetown College (Bowen & Levin, 2003; Brecht & Burnett, 2019; Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; LaForge & Hodge, 2011). Numerous academic support services are available to all Georgetown students, including free academic tutoring and a writing center. Yet, there is no comprehensive understanding as to the academic challenges experienced by student-athletes and their use, or lack thereof, of academic support services. Given this lack of awareness, there is a clear need to better understand the student-athlete experience at Georgetown College to increase the academic success of its student-athletes.

Table 1

Georgetown College Undergraduate Enrollment Data

Semester	Total Enrollment	Male	Female	Total Athletes	Athletes as Percentage of Total Enrollment	Male Athletes	Female Athletes
Fall 2017	1090	491	569	526	48.26%	311	215
Fall 2018	961	430	530	504	52.45%	290	214
Fall 2019	987	445	542	507	51.37%	294	213
Fall 2020	1110	499	611	545	49.10%	315	230

Note: Enrollment data is as of the institution's census date.

The data at Georgetown College also supported this issue. Table 2 lists cumulative grade point average (GPA) information for all undergraduate students and student-athletes based on grade data obtained from the Office of Institutional Research.

As of the end of the fall 2020 semester, the average campus grade point average of all students was 3.19, while the average student-athlete GPA was 3.21. This relatively similar GPA is seemingly an outlier, possibly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the institution's temporary restructuring of class format. This study utilized more consistent data from fall 2017 through fall 2019. During this period, student-athletes consistently underperformed compared to their non-athlete peers. The disparity between the two populations increased when gender was considered, as the male athlete average GPA was consistently one of the lowest average GPA's of any measured campus population. There was consensus among most campus offices that student-athletes underperformed academically; however, there was little understanding on campus as to why this occurred.

Table 2

Georgetown College Cumulative Grade Point Average at End of Semester (4.0 Scale)

Semester	All Undergraduates			All Student-Athletes		
	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female
Fall 2017	3.09	2.85	3.29	3.00	2.77	3.33
Fall 2018	3.05	2.77	3.28	2.91	2.66	3.26
Fall 2019	3.15	2.91	3.34	3.06	2.83	3.36
Fall 2020	3.19	3.05	3.31	3.21	3.05	3.42

Notes: Cumulative grade point averages calculated at the end of the semester listed. Only students who completed the semester were included in calculations.

The failure to understand this crucial experience of such a large student population could easily lead to issues of student-athlete satisfaction, a decrease in student-athlete graduation rates, and a sharp decrease in student-athlete retention. As Georgetown continues to implement new recruitment programs attracting more student-athletes, the College finds itself at a crucial decision point – as an institution, we must better understand the role of academic support services in relation to our student-athletes' overall academic success or prepare to face immediate challenges. As with any small,

private institution, even a small change in retention can have severe financial consequences. In order to avoid immediate challenges and fulfill our institutional mission to support our students, the College must quickly begin to understand the student-athlete experience. Appendix A details additional Georgetown College enrollment data.

Research Question

The primary research question in this practical action research study was: how do academic support services promote and/or hinder the academic success of Georgetown College's student-athletes? This exploratory case study also sought to explore two sub-questions:

1. How do student-athletes at Georgetown College perceive academic support services?

2. What academic support services can be implemented by Academic Programs to further the academic success of student-athletes at Georgetown College?

Audience

This study is most useful for athletic and academic administrators at Georgetown College. However, the methodology and general findings could be of interest to other small private higher education institutions with robust athletic programs, especially those that are also National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) members. Those responsible for the academic advising of student-athletes may also find this study and its recommendations to be of use.

Overview of Framework and Methods

Frameworks

A relativist ontology and a transactional, subjectivist epistemology served as the foundational basis for this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). As a constructivist researcher, I often turn to Critical Race Theory (CRT), intersectionality, and Brooks' (2017) Critical Theory of Love (CToL) to better understand the lived experiences of others. These three approaches serve as a basis for the Whole Student Theory of Advising (WSToA) framework, see Figure 1. This framework, which seeks to consider all students as individuals and respect the autonomy of their identity, guided this exploratory study of the student-athlete experience.
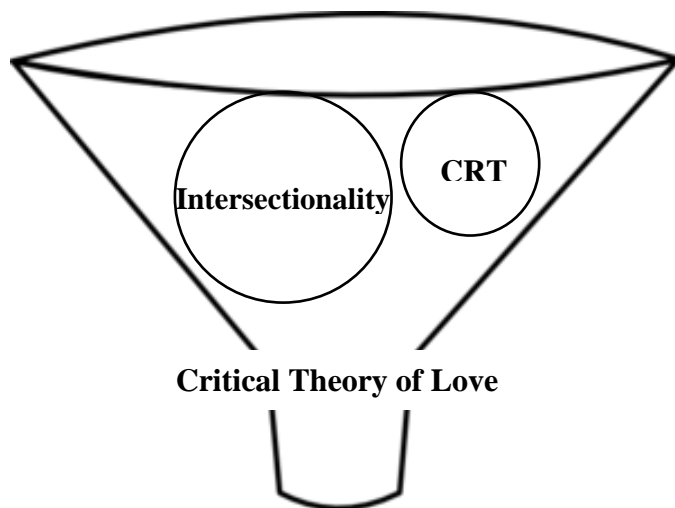
Figure 1
Whole Student Theory of Advising Framework

Methods

This study is an exploratory, practical action-research bounded case study that sought to understand the student-athlete experience at Georgetown College. The single instrumental case study allows for the analysis of one topic within one setting (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Thus, in studying the experiences of student-athletes at Georgetown College in relation to academic support services, I was able to understand possible connections between support service usage and academic success. Also, in utilizing the principles of exploratory action research (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019), I better understood the challenges faced and offered solutions to improve student-athlete academic success**.** This process allowed me, along with my colleagues in Academic Programs, to implement strategies to further the academic success of the College's student-athletes. However, within the bounded case study structure, the suggested solutions likely only apply to Georgetown College, though similar institutions may also benefit. In line with the principles of exploratory case studies (Hesse-Biber, 2017), I primarily utilized interviews. A survey and document analysis were also used to guide participant selection and the overall interview process.

Limitations

This study is focused solely on Georgetown College and the experiences of a small number of student-athletes. More research must be done at similar institutions and with a larger sample of student-athletes before general conclusions may be drawn. Another limitation of this study is the sample of students and staff. The overall sample-size allowed for an exploratory approach but did not result in generalizable findings. The sample also lacked diversity given the demographics of Georgetown College.

<center>**Review of Related Literature**</center>

Frameworks Informing this Study

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) sets race as the central focus of the topic being studied (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Vargas, 2003). Gillborn (2020) noted that policy structure is inherently based on race, often with Whiteness setting the norm. Given the policy involved with intercollegiate athletics and the number of non-White student-athletes, CRT was crucial to understanding and analyzing the institutional structures that encourage or diminish the academic success of student-athletes (Beamon, 2014; Harris et al., 2014; Lawrence et al., 2016).

Intersectionality

While race is certainly key to studying the student-athlete experience, it was also imperative to understand that race is not the only factor at play. Intersectionality allows for the student-athlete experience to be analyzed while considering the student-athlete as a whole person. This framework considers the gender, socioeconomic status, background and numerous other factors alongside the race of the student-athlete (Cho et al., 2013). More specifically, intersectionality allows for the convergence of several social identity structures, especially as they relate to privilege and oppression (Gopaldas, 2013). As discussed in the following review of related research, there are many factors to consider when studying student-athletes, and intersectionality allowed for the study of these factors.

Critical Theory of Love

Much like intersectionality, Brooks' (2017) CToL seeks to consider the whole person. However, the CToL takes this notion a step further and requires the recognition and appreciation of all identities a person carries (Brooks, 2017). Essentially, this framework asks us to not only study student-athletes but also to improve policies affecting their success. Barnett and Witenstein (2020) developed specific guiding principles for university libraries based on the CToL. I incorporated modeling equity-mindedness, one of their principles, throughout this study (Barnett & Witenstein, 2020). This methodology was also used to propose suggestions for leveling the playing field for all student-athletes, while taking their well-being as a person into consideration.

Whole Student Theory of Advising

The Whole Student Theory of Advising (WSToA) draws upon all three of these frameworks: CRT, intersectionality, and the CToL. This hybrid framework allowed for a multi-faceted approach to understanding the student-athlete experience. It calls for the understanding of the entire student-athlete, including their various identities, backgrounds, and roles on campus. The use of this intersectional framework allowed me to consider student-athletes as whole people and better understand the obstacles they face on our campus, while simultaneously calling for ways to better their success based on a foundation of love.

Related Research

Student-athletes have long been integral to the discourse of higher education. However, in recent years, trends focused on the various methods universities utilize to support their students, both academically and athletically. This research highlighted

several tensions on campuses, from deciding who should oversee academic support to the possible reduction of admission standards to admit more athletes (Hazzaa et al., 2018). Even large sports governing bodies, such as the NCAA, have consistently updated policies in response to various controversies surrounding student-athlete academic success (Franklin, 2006; LaForge & Hodge, 2011). In synthesizing the literature on the academic success of student-athletes, popular articles, such as those from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, were first reviewed given the frequent topic of student-athletes. Once broad themes and trends were established, peer-reviewed literature was considered and broken into six themes. These themes not only informed the student-athlete experience at Georgetown College, but provided insight into the various frameworks and methodologies used to study student-athlete academic success. Lastly, I explored the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on student-athletes given the timing of this study.

More Athletes Means More Academic Support

The central theme of most recent literature related to student-athletes is the drastic increase in both the number of student-athletes and the amount of funding universities devote to their support (Nicholas et al., 2019). The increase in student-athletes led to an increased focus on academic support, especially in the form of academic support centers specifically for athletes (Wolverton, 2008). General research within higher education has made it clear that academics is a major source of anxiety for students (Jones et al., 2016) and much of the research on student-athletes focuses on the tension between academic and athletic expectations (Nicholas et al., 2019). Many schools struggle to adapt to academically support more athletes, both structurally and financially (Wolverton, 2008). Some schools, such as the University of Auburn, even struggled to adapt their curriculum

to meet the seemingly ever-varying and increasing needs of athletes (Stripling, 2018). The federal government has considered legislation to "bring intercollegiate athletics back into proper perspective" as the number of student-athletes continues to increase, along with the various issues associated with them (Umbach et al., 2006, p. 710). It is also important to note that, while the increasing number of student-athletes is often studied within the context of the United States, Canada and other countries also face similar challenges (Thibault & Babiak, 2013).

The Under-Prepared Student Athlete

There is a broad conversation within higher education research regarding the under-prepared student (Jones et al., 2016). However, this topic recently shifted to include discussions surrounding the lowering of admission standards for student-athletes and the resulting increase in needed academic support (Hazzaa et al., 2018). These changes have even led to intense discussions about student-athletes and their influence, both direct and indirect, on curriculum (Stripling, 2018). In the case of Auburn, it was a question of the number of electives in a major which led to a high percentage of athletes declaring this major, though student-athletes declaring a major with a high amount of flexibility is somewhat expected given the intense pressure put on student-athletes to maintain athletic and academic commitments (Nicholas et al., 2019; Stripling, 2018).

Oversight and Governance

One of the most prominent themes within literature related to student-athletes is governance and oversight. The struggle and tension between various stakeholders, primarily faculty, the institution's president, and its governing board, have existed since the start of intercollegiate athletics, but began to increase sharply after World War II as

many institutions sought to increase the standing of their athletic programs (Smith, 2007). The case of William and Mary is one of the most salient examples of this issue, as it sought to become a liberal arts institution with a prominent athletic program in the early 1950's but quickly found itself in trouble with its governing body as various stakeholders sought control of the athletic program (Smith, 2007). The challenge of governance within higher education is not unique to athletics, as the industry is known for its resistance to change and constant reexamination of organizational and power structures (Fumasoli & Stensaker, 2013; Scott, 1999). However, athletics serves, perhaps, as the most controversial area for oversight (Ellis, 2018).

Faculty Oversight. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) consistently comments on the issue of athletics and oversight. The organization called for the need for faculty to set standards for both the oversight of athletic programs and how athletics and academics should interact before other stakeholders fill this void and set additional policies (Earl, 2004). Specifically, the AAUP encourages faculty to participate in oversight before athletics has the sole say in matters of policy and/or the market of higher education sets policy (Earl, 2004). However, Comeaux (2011) cautioned that faculty oversight can be problematic. In their study of attitudes towards college student-athletes, Comeaux (2011) concluded that many faculty advisors hold implicit biases against student-athletes. If faculty are to govern policies affecting student-athletes, new approaches are needed to account for several layers of faculty bias against student-athletes (Comeaux, 2011). This need is especially true for institutions with large minority student-athlete populations since many faculty biases against student-athletes also align with racial biases (Comeaux, 2011).

Academic Support Centers. Academic support centers designed specifically for student-athletes seek to "establish a sense of belonging and structure" for student-athletes while working to maintain academic eligibility (Botelho, 2019, p. 10). The rise of such academic support centers for student-athletes has led to a central question – who should oversee such a center? Many institutions relied on athletic departments to create and oversee these centers; however, this contributed to issues of academic integrity and athletic eligibility (Kelderman, 2018). The AAUP has even offered recommendations on the topic, arguing that "faculty should be responsible for the academic offerings and support of all students on campus, including athletes" (Kelderman, 2018). However, this structure led to increased tension between athletics and academics as athletics is typically the central, if not the only, source of funding for these centers. The research on this specific topic suggests that academic support centers for athletes should be overseen by the academic umbrella of an institution or be seen as a joint venture between these two pillars of universities (Kelderman, 2018; Wolverton, 2008).

Athletics Subculture

Numerous studies refer to a student-athlete subculture that can affect their academic performance and the perception of student-athletes by other campus stakeholders, primarily faculty (Aries et al., 2004; Forster, 2011; Levine et al., 2014; Riciputi & Erdal, 2017; Sperber, 2004; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018). Levine et al. (2014) further studied this phenomenon and defined it as pluralistic ignorance – "a psychological phenomenon in which the majority of group members hold private attitudes that differ from perceived group norms" (p. 527). For example, a student-athlete may choose what is perceived as an easy academic major because they believe that this is

the social norm for student-athletes. However, in reality most student-athletes do not hold this belief. If such pluralistic ignorance is related to student-athlete academic success, it would call for different types of interventions (Levine et al., 2014).

Student-athlete self-perception was also studied in relation to this subculture by Aries et al. (2004). They concluded that both non-athletes and student-athletes struggled with self-perception in relation to their peers (Aries et al., 2004). Self-confidence has also been linked to student-athlete academic success and social norms (Brecht & Burnett, 2019). The AAUP also cited the existence of an athletic subculture and the need for academics to establish harmony with this subculture in order to improve student-athlete academic success (Sperber, 2004). Even more interesting is the way in which this social norm can appear in institutional and/or athletic mottos. Such mottos can influence a culture too heavily reliant on the need to win, rather than finding a balance between academics and athletics (Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2017). However, Potuto and O'Hanlon (2007) found that student-athletes are often satisfied with their overall college experiences, even though their experiences are often subpar due to institutionally perpetuated social norms.

Athletics or Other Factors?

Newer research in the area of student-athlete academic success takes a different approach of examining the numerous factors that may influence a student's success and even how we define student success. Many studies compare the graduation rates of one group to another. Rishe (2003) expanded upon this concept by asserting that previous studies on graduation rates for student-athletes have not taken other necessary factors, such as sex, into account. Rifenburg (2016) detailed the specific ways in which student-

athletes utilize writing centers as a resource and how such resources interact with athletic policy. Such a study relies on other factors beyond the athlete, including specific methodologies used to help support student-athletes and non-athlete students (Rifenburg, 2016). Ultimately, most studies agree that a cohesive view of student success is crucial to the academic success of students as a whole, not just student-athletes (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011).

More specifically, the following factors, among numerous others, are considered within the context of the academic success of student-athletes: social support, mental health, time management, anxiety, financial distress, stress, satisfaction, admission standards, and prioritization (Cosh & Tully, 2013; Jones et al., 2016; Levine et al., 2014; McDougal & Capers, 2012; Paul et al., 2015; Sheehan et al., 2018; Thompson & Mazer, 2009). Hyland (n.d.) added a new concept to this discourse in their discussion of student-athlete identity. Student-athletes frequently identify themselves as an athlete first and a student second, even if academics are of utmost importance to them (Hyland, n.d.). Hyland (n.d.) suggested that this should not be ignored; rather, student-athletes should be taught to foment this identity in their own context. As part of their conclusions, Hyland (n.d.) suggested a course in which students could develop their own identity – both as an athlete and a student. In short, Hyland (n.d.) posited that we should not ignore the athletic identity of student-athletes, but we should, instead, help them to develop their own identity in lieu of normative behaviors.

Advising. Academic advising is imperative for the success of any student; however, it can often be even more integral to the academic success of student-athletes. Different stakeholders are often competing to influence the path of student-athletes.

Coaches may be seeking to simply keep a student eligible while their academic advisor is solely considering their academic goals without an understanding of the student's athletic commitments. Beron and Piquero (2016) highlighted this rampant problem. They argued that coaches often provide incorrect information or even tell players to select a specific major because it is "easy." It is for this reason that defined roles are necessary between coaches and academic advisors (Beron & Piquero, 2016). Haslerig (2018) called for a more formative approach to student-athlete advising, highlighting the fact that failure early in a student-athlete's academic tenure can lead to discouragement, a lack of self-responsibility, and future failure. Gaston-Gayles (2003) provided more insight into this approach by specifically suggesting prescriptive and intervention-based advising for student-athletes. Student-athletes should have more direct, intervention-based advising early in their academic careers with a slow shift of more responsibility to the student over time (Gaston-Gayles, 2003). Studies focusing on general academic advising may also prove useful to better understand student-athletes (Gaston-Gayles, 2003). Johnson et al. (2016) drafted a specific intervention-based advising model based on clinical models within medicine. In utilizing these core principles of clinical medicine, this study suggested that a methodology of diagnosis, prescription, intervention, and evaluation would be useful for all students. In considering this study within the context of student-athlete advising and Gaston-Gayles' (2003) study, this model is prime for student-athlete success.

Race

  The Black Male Student-Athlete. Even before considering race, student-athletes

were defined by Horton (2011) as a marginalized population. However, once race is

factored in along with being a student-athlete, many new themes come to light. One

primary area of such research is the Black male student-athlete. Since Black males

represent a significant portion of student-athletes, it is clear that any conversation seeking

to study the success of student-athletes must take the Black male student-athlete into

consideration (Beamon, 2014). For example, McDougle and Capers IV (2012) cited the

disparity of graduation rates for Black and White male basketball student-athletes, 59%

and 91% respectively. When examining race, the academic and athletic performance of

Black male athletes is not the only topic under consideration. Other scholars, such as

Beamon (2014), highlighted how the lack of Black administrators, both within athletics

programs and universities as a whole, affected the culture of athletic programs. The same

is true of Black coaches – compared to the number of Black student-athletes, the number

of Black coaches is abysmally low ("Black Teams, White Coaches," 2006/2007; "Snail-

Like Progress in Increasing Black Coaches and Administrators in College Sports," 2007).

The academic success of Black males has also been studied within predominantly White

institutions (Strayhorn, 2014). Strayhorn (2014) found that, while many factors may lead

people to believe that Black males would not be successful, the quantifiable concept of

"grit" was studied and found to positively correlate with their success.

  Yet another set of literature explores what factors can help Black male student-

athletes, and Black males as a whole, succeed rather than focusing on the study of

predominantly White environments. A "consistent, collaborative approach laden with

cultural competence" was deemed necessary to the academic success of the Black male athlete (Harris et al., 2014, p. 180). The concept of cultural competency and its importance for the success of students of color is a consistent theme throughout literature detailing the Black male student-athlete experience. However, several other areas of study are often mentioned when discussing the Black male athlete. For example, the intersectionality between race, sexuality, and identity was explored by Wilkins (2012) and numerous other studies (Osegerua et al., 2018).

       Whiteness and Colorblindness. Whiteness is also key to understanding the role of race in relation to the academic success of student-athletes. For example, White male student-athletes have been perceived as athletically inferior and as agents of change for ethnic minorities within sports (Lawrence et al., 2016). However, this notion is based on the self-perception of White male student-athletes. Since Whiteness is considered normative, it is rare that White student-athletes, truly White people in general, consciously consider race (Lawrence et al., 2016). It is this White-centered context that furthers several stereotypes of other student-athletes, primarily Black male athletes (Lawrence et al., 2016). As Lawrence et al. (2016) found, White participants in the study reported that they were surprised when Black student-athletes graduated and often questioned the authenticity of their degree. It is clear that the concept of Whiteness in relation to normative structures within college athletics must be studied more; however, it is also clear that even White students must be considered when race is discussed as being a central aspect of student-athlete success.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and Student-Athletes

      The COVID-19 pandemic created challenges for society as a whole and student-athletes were not immune to its effects (Levine, et al., 2022; Rowe, 2022; Watts, et al., 2022). As colleges around the country altered schedules and worked to keep campus communities safe, student-athletes were unsure of their futures in their sports and had little information about their athletic scholarships and eligibility (National Associate of Intercollegiate Athletics [NAIA], 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d; National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA], 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2021; Levine, et al., 2022; Rowe, 2022; Watts, et al., 2022). Athletic governing bodies, such as the NCAA and NAIA, were quick to make statements in early 2020, yet most of these statements focused on event cancellations and limiting attendance (NAIA, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d; NCAA, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d). Several studies sought to better understand the student-athlete experience throughout the pandemic (Levine, et al., 2022; Mawdsley, 2021; Rowe, et al., 2022; Watts, et al., 2022).

      Levine et al. (2022) conducted a qualitative study with twenty student-athlete participants. The results indicated that student-athletes experienced additional stress compared to their peers throughout the pandemic (Levine et al., 2022). However, student-athletes also developed coping mechanisms at least partly based on the discipline they learned as athletes (Levine et al., 2022). Rowe et al. (2022) reached a similar conclusion but focused their study on the information of which university administrators should be aware. Ultimately, they concluded that personal social structures, such as those between teammates, were strengthened as student-athletes found support in each other (Rowe et al., 2022). However, building social cohesion as a team suffered (Rowe et al., 2022).

Two additional studies focused on the responsibility universities have to their student-athletes (Mawdsley, 2021; Watts, et al., 2022). Mawdsley (2022) noted that universities always have a responsibility to their student-athletes to provide ample mental health support. In fact, Mawdsley (2022) suggested that there is a "special relationship between student-athletes and their institutions [which] gives rise to an affirmative duty of reasonable care" (p. 265). This unique relationship was supported by Watts et al. (2022). They found that even as the pandemic began to plateau after the spring 2021 semester, universities still have an obligation to ensure the health and mental well-being of their student-athletes as they begin their return to a new normal (Watts, et al., 2022). Watts et al. (2022) also suggested that universities provide resilience training in hopes of improving the overall student-athlete experience.

Action Research Design and Methods

Practical Action Research

Action research is used when there is a clear problem to solve (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019). Practical action research expands upon this definition by focusing on problems that educators identify and solve within their own organizations (Creswell & Guttermann, 2019; Gay et al., 2009; Fraenkel et al., 2012; Mertler, 2019; Mertler and Charles, 2011). Given the lack of information on this topic at Georgetown College, this bounded case study utilized an exploratory approach to practical action research. The result was a more thorough understanding of the topic and what solutions might be possible. Yet practical action research on its own does not seek to engage with critical theories that may inform institutional issues. Thus, a critical lens was also used to seek a

deeper understanding of institutional social constructs through the lenses of race, gender, and other identities (Carr & Kemmis, 1983).

This practical approach rooted in an exploratory format and a critical lens aligns with my perspective as a researcher and my role within my institution. My interaction with student-athletes on my campus highlights the issues we need to solve. However, these interactions also point to broader implications of race and identity. Practical research allows for both aspects of this problem to be analyzed. Similar studies seeking to solve institutional issues of student success used critical practical action research with success (Barnett & Witenstein, 2020; Beamon, 2014; Beron & Piquero, 2016; Coronella, 2018; Forster, 2011; Gillborn, 2020; Lawrence et al., 2016; Vargas, 2003; Wilkins, 2012). This mixed methods study (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019) employed the following design:

$$quan \rightarrow QUAL$$

Quantitative data was first collected to begin to understand the student-athlete perspective and establish general themes. Qualitative data, the main focus of this study, was then collected to better understand the complex issues that were present.

Site and Population

Mission of the Organization

William Jones was appointed as the twenty-fifth President of the institution in 2019. With his appointment came a shift in leadership style and the beginning of a process to develop a new strategic plan for the institution, ideally resulting in an updated vision and mission for the College. However, the COVID-19 pandemic delayed this process. As a result, the current mission of the College was reaffirmed by its Board of

Trustees through at least 2023. The official mission of Georgetown College is "to prepare

students to engage in their life's pursuits with thoughtfulness and skill by providing an

exceptional educational experience in a vibrant Christian community" (Georgetown

College, 2020). The unofficial mission and slogan of the College, via President Jones'

synthesizing of what we seek to do into one phrase, is that "Georgetown College provides

a championship-level education of the heart and mind." The official mission of Athletics

is, "to develop the physical, mental, social, and spiritual character of its participants"

(Georgetown College, 2019, p. 3). Academic Programs, in which all academic support

services are housed, did not have an official mission when this study was conducted.

Relevant Organization History

The link between academics and athletics is clear within this unofficial mission.

Yet Georgetown has few academic support resources specifically for athletes and a low

rate of academic satisfaction within the student-athlete population (Snider, 2020). Since

this lack of student-athlete satisfaction has been a consistent issue raised by staff, faculty,

and student-athletes, it is clear that we are currently failing in this area and must address

these goals as soon as possible. The current COVID-19 pandemic amplified this need as

athletic competition and practice schedules continued to change as faculty were adapting

to online teaching in condensed semesters. More than ever before, our student-athletes

were directly asking for academic support services and our faculty find themselves ill-

equipped to properly advise student-athletes.

That is not to say that Georgetown has not previously worked to better support

student-athletes. Several initiatives have been attempted, though each one was under-

supported and not assessed. One such initiative was the Academic and Athletics

Committee. This currently operating committee is composed of faculty, academic staff, and athletics staff. Their charge is to discuss various issues related to student-athletes and their academic success as they arise. As they agree on possible solutions, they are to formerly suggest them to the Office of the Provost. However, actionable items rarely come out of this committee, and there is an overall lack of true commitment to their charge. If we are to truly offer a "championship-level education of the heart and mind," we must develop more comprehensive attempts to support our student-athletes.

Participants

Five student-athletes, two coaches, one faculty member, one athletic administrator, and one academic programs staff member served as the participants for this study. The student-athlete participants were identified using convenience then snowball sampling. The student-athlete participants included a mix of genders, races, sports, academic majors, and class years. The staff members were selected based on their position at the College. The first was the Associate Director of Athletics, who is responsible for oversight of student-athlete eligibility and serves as the main contact between the academic and athletic umbrellas of the institution. The second staff member was the Associate Dean for Academic Success. They are responsible for academic support for all students but frequently work with student-athletes to support them in the classroom. The faculty member was identified based on their role on the Academics and Athletics Retention Committee. The coaches were identified using convenience sampling.

Researcher Role and Positionality

I played a key role in this study as a researcher with an emic perspective. My own experiences and biases are a part of this research and certainly influenced the findings. Attia and Edge (2017) loosely defined reflexive research as the researcher affecting the research and the research itself affecting the researcher. Indeed, this link between this study and myself was impossible to separate. As a member of my organization, especially one involved in policymaking, the lived experiences discussed with student-athletes involved my own opinions and my previously made decisions. I served as a "passionate participant" in this study rather than an outsider seeking to ascertain the solution to a problem (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 203).

Ethical and Political Considerations

Biases

Even though I sought to control the focus of my research, I was still keenly aware of several implicit biases that certainly affected my interactions with research participants. Berger (2015) outlined that a researcher's positioning can include "gender, race, affiliation, age, sexual orientation, … beliefs, … theoretical, political, and ideological stances, etc." (p. 15). They (Berger, 2015) continued to extrapolate how these attributes might affect research including how participants might respond based on the researcher's perceived sympathy with their situation, how the relationship between the researcher and participant is formed, and how the worldview of the researcher may skew findings. In this study, my position as a gay, white, cisgender male may have affected my relationship with a non-white, non-male, and/or heterosexual athlete. Given the demographics of our student athlete population, mostly heterosexual males and many of

whom are Black, this was challenging at times. In attempting to understand a student athletes' decision-making, my own lack of religious beliefs may have also skewed my understanding of any religion-based logic shared. While this scenario may seem unlikely, Georgetown College is a Christian institution with a historically Baptist history. Also, since I have never been a student-athlete, I may have failed to immediately empathize with the struggles the student-athletes discussed. Furthermore, my own experiences as an undergraduate student who did not utilize academic support services were also considered. I actively empathized with the student-athlete experience and remained aware of my own biases in order to ensure that the outcomes of this study were not affected.

The Power Differential

While biases must certainly be accounted for, the power differential between myself and most of the participants in this study was more difficult to overcome. I serve as the academic administrator that determines degree completion and athletic eligibility. In working with student-athlete participants, this may have created an environment in which the student would not share the full story and/or altered information to provide information they think I wanted to hear. To account for this, I was very clear about my role as the researcher and any ramifications that could occur because of our interactions. Every interaction began with separating my role as researcher and administrator – I was seeking to understand their experience, not punish or judge. I also highlighted that their participation would not affect their graduation or athletic eligibility. However, I was also clear in areas where such a separation of roles is not possible. For example, federal Title IX law would have required me to report instances of sexual assault should those have been mentioned. I hope that the clear goal of this study, a clear statement of my intent,

and sharing all known instances where my administrator role would have to "kick-in" accounted for this power imbalance as much as possible.

Data Collection Methods

Documents

In order to inform the interviews of this study, the 2019-2020 Georgetown College Student-Athlete Handbook was reviewed. The version studied was obtained directly from the Associate Director of Athletics and was the most current. With the permission of the student participants, official transcripts, tutoring attendance records, early warning flags, and academic progress check information were also obtained from the Georgetown College Office of the Registrar. All personal information was securely stored, and identifiable information was removed once the analysis was complete.

Surveys

A Student-Athlete Satisfaction Survey, see Appendix B, was sent to all student-athletes via their college email address by the Associate Director of Athletics. It was administered via Qualtrics. The purpose of this survey was to better understand the student-athlete perspective before interviews were conducted. This survey was adapted from Szymanska (2011) and the College of the Desert (n.d.). It is an affective assessment that utilizes self-reported questions about academic resources in general and specific academic support services. Most questions asked respondents to reply via a Likert scale. Before students were able to answer questions about specific resources, such as the Writing Center, they were asked if they had ever utilized the service. If they had not utilized the service, they were not asked to provide feedback about that specific service. Instead, they were sent to the next grouping of questions.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted in person with three participants and via Zoom with all other participants. They were asked to participate in the study via their college email using a standard form; see Appendix C. All participants were also required to submit a signed consent form; see Appendix D. Given my role at the institution, the email to the student participants explicitly stated that their participation would be voluntary, confidential, and would in no way affect their athletic or academic standing at Georgetown College. My emails to staff and faculty also explicitly noted the voluntary and confidential nature of the interview. All invitations to participate also clearly stated that participation was optional. Participants were not sent questions ahead of the interview; however, they did receive the informed consent and information on the general topic to be discussed ahead of time. The interviews were recorded, audio in person and audio and video via Zoom. Each interview began with a clear reminder of the confidential and voluntary nature of this study. The student interviews also began with a clear discussion of my role as the researcher for this study and a reminder that anything they say would not be utilized and/or held against them in their roles as students or student-athletes.

The interviews were semi-structured and consisted of approximately nine questions; see Appendices E and F for sample interview questions. As the interviews progressed, questions were added to seek clarification or to further inquire about topics that were mentioned. Questions were mostly exploratory in nature, seeking to understand their knowledge of academic services available to them, understanding what services they do/do not use, and to allow them to share any experiences/information they find relevant

to this topic. All interviews concluded with a reminder of the informed consent, the confidential and voluntary nature of the study, and, for the student participants, a final reminder of the fact that this study would not affect their standing at Georgetown College. The audio of the transcript was then transcribed via a third-party platform – Temi.

Data-analysis Procedures

Documents

The student-athlete handbook was analyzed using an iterative approach. It was given a cursory reading before any interviews were conducted to identify any initial themes and to further familiarize myself with the structure of the athletic department. After all interviews were conducted, the handbook was more thoroughly analyzed using a grounded theory coding approach (Charmaz, 2006). This approach allowed me to first identify broad themes within the text after my initial readings. I then carried out more focused coding and compared these codes to the interviews. The ultimate goal of this process was to understand the way in which academic services are mentioned in the handbook and how, if at all, academics were discussed in relation to athletic policies.

Surveys

SPSS was used to generate descriptive statistics for the survey responses. Excel was then used to group survey responses by theme and present visual findings. Given the purpose of the survey, to inform the interviews, themes that emerged in survey responses were discussed in the later interviews.

Interviews

Once the interviews were transcribed, they were coded using a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2016). This approach was ideal given its two basic phases – initial and focused. Since the goal of the study was to understand how academic support services support or hinder the academic success of student-athletes, it was imperative to adopt an iterative approach that allowed for many readings. Such an approach also helped to account for my lack of experience as a student-athlete. I was able to initially read through the transcripts and look for common themes. In subsequent readings, I was then able to find common themes, compare them to one another, and finish by comparing these codes to those found in the document analysis. Other approaches may have introduced more bias into the study rather than allowing for the transcripts and documents to highlight the issues.

Trustworthiness

Given my insider status within my institution, this study was designed to maximize my institutional knowledge and utilized my standing professional relationships as a starting point for interviews. As a result, careful steps were taken throughout the collection and analysis of data to remain cognizant of potential bias and power-differentials. Reflexive practices were also maintained throughout the study, including detailed memoing.

Dependability

In utilizing an exploratory bounded case study structure, this study is clear that it seeks to simply understand the student-athlete experience at Georgetown College. All potential biases of the researcher were made clear, and the methodologies used for data

collection and analysis were grounded in widely utilized qualitative approaches. The reflexive nature of the study solidified the researcher as a clear participant and a knowledgeable stakeholder on his campus.

Confirmability

Member checking and triangulation were used throughout the study to ensure confirmability of findings. All interviews included member-checking throughout the interview in the form of the researcher confirming what the participant mentioned. A quick summary of the researcher's key takeaways were also discussed at the end of each interview while allowing for the participant to correct any issues.

Triangulation was utilized in seeking to identify common and/or contrasting information within the interviews. Triangulation was also taken into consideration with document analysis. The analysis of the students' academic record afforded me the opportunity to confirm the students' academic success and utilization of academic support services. The analysis of the student-athlete handbook also allowed for the confirmation of athletic policy in comparison to policies discussed during the interview with the Associate Athletic Director.

Credibility

One of the main challenges of this study was the clear power differential between the student participants and the researcher. This challenge was explicitly and frequently discussed with the students at each stage of the process. It was made clear that my role was the researcher in this study rather than the Assistant Provost and Registrar. While there was no true way to separate these roles given my participation in the study, steps were taken to inform students of this power differential and offset it as much as possible

by consistently reminding them that their participation was voluntary and would not affect their academic and/or athletic standing. Regular memoing also took place from the outset of this study to document slight changes in approach and challenges that arose throughout the process. Memoing also afforded me the opportunity to frequently reflect on my findings and avoid false connections between data.

Transferability

Given the bounded case study structure of this study, the findings are not likely to transfer directly to other areas of interests or other campuses. However, the general framework presented could easily be utilized by other similar institutions to examine student-athlete academic success in relation to academic support services on their campuses.

CHAPTER TWO: RESULTS OF RESEARCH

In seeking to better understand the student-athlete perspective regarding academic support services at Georgetown College, both qualitative and quantitative data was collected. One hundred and four survey responses were reviewed, all ten interviews were completed, and data was analyzed and coded until themes became apparent. I then determined five themes from the results of this study: competing roles, time management, communication, personal relationships, and student-athlete focused support.

Each theme is briefly summarized and presented alongside a table of relevant survey quotes. A quick discussion of the theme follows. I then considered each theme in a more comprehensive context within the discussion section. This method of presenting the results situates interviewee responses as the main source of data and considers these responses in relation to one another. Such a thematic format encourages the participatory, critical reflection required by this action research study.

Competing Roles

All student interviewees and many of the faculty/staff interviewees (see Appendix E for interviewee profiles) mentioned the dual roles that all student-athletes hold – the role of athlete and the role of student. While the Associate Director of Athletics noted, "they [student-athletes] are students first," students did not necessarily see it this way. Table 3 lists interviewee quotes relevant to the competing roles of student-athletes.

Table 3

Interviewee Quotes: Competing Roles

Interviewee Role	Quote
Student-Athlete	It's almost like you're trying to juggle these two big things of being a student and graduating and getting all of the stuff that you need done.
Athletics Staff	I think we certainly need to hold our student-athletes accountable because they are students first.
Coach	It's a privilege to be called athlete. It's not a right. Only two to three percent of all high school athletes are collegiate athletes. Like, you know, it's an honor to be a college athlete.

The notion of competing roles was apparent throughout most interviews. For instance, even in discussing time management and struggles with communication on campus, all study participants discussed some aspect of competing roles in their interviews. Students consistently mentioned the struggle between "practice and school" while Dr. Thornton mentioned how she must advise student-athletes differently due to the various demands competing for their time. The *Student-Athlete Handbook* (Georgetown College, 2019) also supports the dual roles student-athletes hold. With sections detailing the differences between academic and athletic expectations and a mission that cites student-athletes as a student first, the Handbook implies that the Department of Athletics promotes academic success and sees the role of athlete as secondary to student. In beginning to better understand the student-athlete experience at Georgetown College, the seemingly competing roles of student and athlete must be considered in interpreting other themes.

Time Management

Perhaps the most pervasive theme in both the survey responses and interviews was time management. All interview participants mentioned time management, with each

student-athlete participant being sure to highlight this top challenge. Table 4 lists

interviewee quotes on the topic of time management.

Table 4

Interviewee Quotes: Time Management

Interviewee Role	Quote
Student-Athlete	Definitely time management is something that comes to mind first. It's a big challenge that anyone faces in life. But being a student athlete, it's almost like you're trying to juggle these two big things of being a student and graduating and getting all of the stuff that you need done.
Student-Athlete	In the fall, it's not terrible. It's, it's pretty much school and finding a time to practice and kind of getting your school work done. But in the spring, it's a lot of travel. Lots of missed classes. And when I was younger, that hurt me a lot more than it does now. Cause I kind of understand kind how to work, uh, ahead and all that kind of stuff.
Student-Athlete	Having to time manage and really like plan out my schedule because some days it's kind of a tight squeeze, like with practice and school.
Student-Athlete	But other times I've struggled in classes. I found the way to like, just improve the ways I study and basically find better ways to use my time.
Coach	I also talk a lot about time management with them. Um, and then this wouldn't be necessarily an academic resource, but it is kind of pertinent because it affects their academics.
Faculty	I would say the biggest difference is just taking into consideration time management and we know what it's going to look like for them, all of my students, I'm going to advise them fairly the same, right. Like I look at their degree and I figure out what they still need. And then I look at, you know, if they are working full time, then their advising session might look very similar to an athlete because they have this outside thing that they take into consideration.

It is interesting to note the various perspectives in which time management was mentioned. The student-athletes highlighted their difficulties in getting everything done – schoolwork, practice, workouts, team bonding, then trying to find time to rest in what, if any, time remains. Coaches understand these pressures and cover time management with their teams. Faculty are aware of competing demands for time. However, all participants view time management as a struggle, if not an ongoing battle. Both Susan, a volleyball player, and Neil, a football player, spent a significant portion of their interview discussing time management. Susan noted the stark differences in managing her time in high school versus college. While she was quick to point out that she did not necessarily struggle with her classes, she had to "improve the ways I study and basically find better ways to use my time." Coaches Cooper and Gamble supported Susan's comments in citing that they had to more carefully watch and guide newer students as they learn to manage their time.

Yet it was Neil who considered time management to be his top challenge as a student-athlete. Time management is a year-round struggle for Neil – he still must balance numerous team commitments with academics in the off-season. Neil mentioned one particular anatomy class in which this became overwhelming. Due to practice times, he was not able to easily attend tutoring sessions for the class. While he worked with the faculty member, he quickly fell behind as he could not find adequate time to study. The ending result was a failing grade in the course. Since the course is required for his major, he plans to retake the course when it is next offered. I asked him what he hopes to do differently when he retakes the course. His response was given with strong hesitation, "I hope what I've figured out [about time management] will make it better." In Neil's case,

he was not quite able to balance the demands on his time between being a student and a student-athlete, resulting in an academic setback with no clear, immediate resolution.

Such student-athlete challenges are not new for faculty. As Dr. Thornton mentioned, she is keenly aware of the many "outside demands" for students' time – from athletics to jobs and other commitments. While she does her best to accommodate student-athletes and advise them through such demands, she also noted that not all her colleagues feel the same way. Dr. Thornton stated, "there's an expectation about priority … how they're [students] going to prioritize things." If faculty, even if it is not all faculty, have an expectation of student-athletes to place academics first, that could easily place additional pressure on student-athletes. Recall that the Associate Director of Athletics also cited that student-athletes are, first and foremost, students. Dr. Thornton may be understanding of outside pressures on student-athlete time, but since all faculty do not necessarily agree with her, time management will continue to be a "hot topic" for all student-athletes as they interact with their faculty.

Communication

As the example Dr. Thornton outlined implied, there is also a clear issue of communication when it comes to the academic success of student-athletes and their awareness of resources. Coaches wish they had more information and students do not always know what resources are available to them. Table 5 highlights interviewee quotes about this foundational issue.

Table 5

Interviewee Quotes: Communication

Interviewee Role	Quote
Student-Athlete	Our coach does a good job of like sending out the resources and making sure that we are alerted of the resources and everything that's available.
Student-Athlete	They should advertise it [the tutoring program] more.
Coach	Probably the thing that I find the most is the kids that need the help, don't know how to ask for help.
Academics Staff	It concerns me sometimes that the only contact between the academics and the athletics world is when something's gone wrong.
Coach	I would say the head coach here, um, you know, I am mostly their first point of contact as far as the university and, um, how we operate.
Coach	I would say from a coach's standpoint, the problem with the red flag system is that it doesn't seem like professors are doing it [submitting flags] unless their chair or their department or the university is like, "Hey, we need to put in red flags now so that we can get on top of this." It seems like they come in bulk rather than in the moment.
Coach	I definitely think there's room for improvement. I think that's pretty much every campus, um, because there is always some disconnect with faculty and athletics. Um, you know, because we do travel, we do have to pull kids out of the class.
Athletics Staff	I always think it's really important for students to communicate with their faculty members.
Student-Athlete	I wish it was more like consistent, I guess every teacher does something differently in that case. And some of my teachers have extended my deadlines and said, turn it in whenever, but then other teachers are like, no, you turn it in the same time, everyone else's. So it's just like inconsistent.

In considering the broad theme of communication, there are two sub-themes within the information shared by study participants: communication of services and interpersonal communication.

Communication of Services

As Paolo put it quite simply, "they should advertise it [tutoring] more." As an international student-athlete and a member of the residence life staff, Paolo understands the importance of knowing about resources. In fact, he mentioned that one of his primary roles as a resident advisor (RA) is helping to guide students towards campus resources. He was not originally aware of academic support services, such as tutoring and the Writing Center. However, once he found and successfully utilized these resources, he did not understand why they are not more broadly marketed to campus. Even when coaches proactively communicate with their teams about academic support services available to them, the student-athletes do not always know how to actually start utilizing a service. As Coach Cooper discussed this topic, he was quick to note that student-athletes needing help "don't know how to ask for help." When combined with the Associate Dean for Academic Success's comment of academics and athletics not always communicating until something is wrong, it becomes apparent that proactive communication about the academic resources available to student-athletes is lacking.

The survey data, see Appendices H and I, also supports the need to better advertise academic support services. When asked about their awareness of such services, student-athletes generally agreed that they know about academic support services. However, when asked about the value of these services, such as improvement in a class, student-athletes were less aware of the benefits academic support services might have. In

essence, some student-athletes are generally aware of academic support services but not the benefits they may provide. Both the interviews and survey responses indicate that better communication of services, including how to access them, what they might be used for, and potential benefits, is needed.

Interpersonal Communication

The communication of services certainly needs to be improved, but the interviews also indicate that interpersonal communication, meaning the communication between various stakeholders at the institution, also needs attention. Susan noted the inconsistency in the ways in which her professors communicate attendance expectations. She also mentioned the various ways her faculty handle student-athlete absences. This lack of consistent communication made it more difficult for her to navigate her academic responsibilities while also being a student-athlete. Coach Gamble discussed the College's flagging system that is meant to help coaches, academic advisors, and Academic Success staff become aware of student issues as they arise. He stated, "it doesn't seem like professors are doing it [submitting flags] unless their chair or their department or the university is like, 'hey, we need to put in red flags now so that we can get on top of this.' It seems like they [the flags] come in bulk rather than in the moment." Even with a system designed to improve communication of student issues between campus stakeholders, there is still room for improvement in terms of flag submission timing.

Nearly all interviewees, in some form or another, also cited the importance of faculty-student relationships. The Associate Director of Athletics, the Associate Dean for Student Success, and both coaches noted that they encourage communication with faculty and frequently send students directly to faculty as they encounter issues. The student

interviewees also discussed their success in working directly with faculty, whether it was regarding missing classes due to athletic commitments or an academic issue. This successful mention of interpersonal communication indicates that improvements in this area may prove useful in increasing overall student-athlete academic success.

Personal Relationships

One of the most successful characteristics of Georgetown College is the positive relationship between faculty and students. As the theme of communication indicated, relationships are key to the success of student-athletes. In fact, the importance of these personal relationships on campus was also a common theme throughout the interviews. Table 6 lists interview quotes on this topic.

Table 6

Interviewee Quotes: Personal Relationships

Interviewee Role	Quote
Student-Athlete	The smaller class sizes at a place like Georgetown, working with the teachers a little bit, kind of formed relationships. They understood what I was going through and there was a little bit of a, a two-way road. Teachers kind of helped me out a lot here.
Student-Athlete	I've just noticed that if you are clear with your teachers from the beginning of the semester and let them know, like when you won't be there and what days you're going to need to miss class, they're usually really understanding, and I've never had a problem with like, making anything up or like missing a class day.
Student-Athlete	So one more thing I would say is that once you get here, when you're a freshmen, they make sure to really like focus on making sure you're supported. I had like two people text me every week to make sure I was doing okay. And they do that for all freshmen [on my team], which is great. But then it just sort of feels like once you get to be like older, they just kind of not forget about you, but just kind of like, don't do the same.
Coach	My job to kind of walk the middle line, making sure the kids are still going to class, but not asking them every night if they did their homework. Um, so that's part of it. And then the other prong on the fork is being the resource to direct them in the right direction.

Overall, interviewees were satisfied with the personal relationships they formed on campus. Connor noted the small class sizes and how they helped him to form relationships with his professors. These relationships proved useful when he was struggling, especially when he missed class due to travel for athletics. Susan's experience was very similar. The more she communicated with her faculty and built a standing relationship, the easier it was to navigate academic challenges, especially those that occurred as a result of athletics. Coach Cooper also stated that he understands his role as

a coach and relationship builder – he is sure to send his players to various campus resources as his close relationship with his players allows him to notice issues.

However, the survey data implies that personal relationships could stand to be improved. As the results in Appendices H and I indicate, student-athletes are mostly satisfied with their academic advisor and academic advising as a whole. Yet the questions with the lowest rates of satisfaction all have a common theme – deeper personal relationships. For instance, the following questions had the lowest satisfaction scores in the areas of student-athletes' academic advisors and academic advising in general:

- My advisor encourages me to express my thoughts and feelings.

- My advisor listens to my concerns as a student-athlete.

- My advisor is hard to relate to.

- My advisor does NOT understand my experiences as a student-athlete.

- Academic advisors show an interest in students' interests outside of classes.

- I wish advisors knew more about the needs of student-athletes.

All of the questions above ask the respondent to consider the more personal aspects of their relationship to their advisors, not just that they know how to contact their advisor and understand graduation requirements. In order to increase student-athlete satisfaction in these areas, personal relationships must be improved.

Student-Athlete Focused Support

While several themes emerged throughout the survey and interview process, the most common theme was the need for academic support services specifically focused on student-athletes. Table 7 highlights some of the most pertinent interview comments on this topic.

Table 7

Interviewee Quotes: Student-Athlete Focused Support

Interviewee Role	Quote
Student-Athlete	I've gone directly to my professors for help … I like to deal with the person who I know who is going to be grading it so I can kind of get their expectations of what's gonna be going on.
Student-Athlete	Tutors for specific teams, one or two tutors for a couple of different subjects. I'm not saying, you know, dedicate four tutors to like one team and, you know, do it that way. But one or two per team that are good at a, a wide variety of things that are just good students.
Student-Athlete	I feel I would like to have like a study table session, like for athletes that way, like say in the library or the conference center, that way, when I go there, there could be like a range of tutors and I could go there and have a tutor that I need and we could just sit for like the range of time that the study table would be set up for and like actually study.
Student-Athlete	I wish there would be more time flexibility with like tutors. Cause I, it was a couple times when during the season we would get out practice too late for me to set up a tutor session than other days I would have stuff planned, like for other classes that would go past tutor time, like studying for a different class that I didn't need help in because I would have a test the next day.
Athletics Staff	I think it would be really useful for us to have someone in that [advisor for student-athletes] role who is, helping coaches monitor what's going on and helping to just overall streamline that [tracking] process. And I think it would be really great for us to have a male in that role, who was a student-athlete and can really, communicate well with or relate.
Faculty	When it comes to advising, my advice often is different. If they're [student-athletes] going to be in season for a particular semester, you know, like if they're coming to me to ask what their schedule should look like, and they're going to be traveling quite a bit, you know, I'm very specific, for example, with a student who I know is a baseball player with what I encouraged them to take a lighter load in the spring.
Coach	I think we have good services, I think access to the services could use improvement.

The student-athletes all cited their desire for tutoring specifically for student-athletes. They proposed various options for such a system, including having tutors assigned to teams and having more general tutors available at the conference center, the hub of athletics on campus. More flexible services were also mentioned, such as expanding tutoring hours to better accommodate the scheduling challenges student-athletes face. Perhaps most interesting is the perspective of the Associate Director of Athletics. She stated, "I think it would be really useful for us to have someone in that [advisor for student-athletes] role who is, helping coaches monitor what's going on and helping to just overall streamline that [tracking] process." This sentiment was echoed by the Associate Dean for Student Success. Both staff members cited the need for a dedicated staff member whose sole focus is the academic success and tracking of student-athletes. Right now, the tasks of tracking and responding to issues for student-athletes are carried out by staff responsible for the entire student body. In addition, the Associate Director of Athletics expressed that this role should ideally be filled by a male that is a former student-athlete since this key connection with our student-athletes is missing.

As Coach Gamble noted, "I think we have good services, I think access to the services could use improvement." The results of the Student-Athlete Satisfaction Survey support his comment. Per the survey, student-athletes are aware of most academic support services available to them. However, hours more accommodating of student-athlete schedules are wanted. The survey respondents also indicated that academic support services should better consider the needs of student-athletes – such as the location where services are offered and better trained staff and advisors to understand the student-athlete perspective. Rather than simply educating student-athletes on academic

support services available to them, the interviews and survey data call for services specifically developed to meet the unique needs of student-athletes.

Discussion

The findings of this study are clear – more student-athlete focused academic support services are needed at Georgetown College. Such a result aligns with the literature presented earlier in this study. As the number of student-athletes has increased at Georgetown College, so has their demand for academic support services. Nicholas et al. (2019) and Wolverton (2008) cited this need nation-wide as the number of student-athletes increases. The challenges faced by Georgetown College align with the national trend, affirming the crucial need for improved student-athlete support.

One of the most prevalent findings is the need for personalized advising and more student-athlete focused support services. Beron and Piquero (2016) highlighted the need for more tailored advising for student-athletes. In considering their (Beron and Piquero, 2016) work, they called for defined roles for coaches and academic advisors. That is to say, coaches should not make academic decisions for students and advisors should refrain from making athletic decisions for students. As Georgetown College works to consider the findings of this study, the need for defined roles should be kept in mind. Luckily, these defined roles are seemingly already in place. Recall that both coaches interviewed for this study see themselves as a first resource for guiding their student-athletes to resources – they mention wanting to become more aware of campus resources rather than seeking to personally solve all problems facing their student-athletes.

Perhaps even more relevant is Haslerig's (2018) call for a more formative approach to student-athlete advising. The findings of this study clearly imply that a more

"hands-on" approach to academic advising is wanted by student-athletes. However, remembering to scale advising support based on a student-athlete's needs will not only help the student-athlete to grow but also, hopefully, keep academic advisors from having to maintain the same level of hands-on support throughout a student-athlete's academic career. Recall Susan's mention of being highly supported during her first year – receiving consistent check-in text messages from her coach and senior teammates. This approach aligns with Haslerig's (2018) formative suggestion; however, a transition period may be needed rather than cutting off such support at a specific time.

Gaston-Gayles (2003) called for a direct, intervention-based approach to advising student-athletes. This approach relies on constant contact during a student-athlete's start to their academic career. However, in building on Haslerig's (2018) view, Gaston-Gayles (2003) relies on specific interventions. If Georgetown College were to develop specific checkpoints for student-athletes and better utilize its early warning report system to provide real-time feedback, coaches and academic advisors could respond to student issues in a timelier manner and, potentially, increase overall student-athlete academic success.

Considering the framework for this study, the Whole-Student Theory of Advising (WSToA), Georgetown College must move beyond simple interventions to truly improve student-athlete academic success. As both the interviews and survey data indicate, student-athletes want their advisors to better understand them as people and their unique needs as student-athletes. If advisors work to implement the WSToA, they will seek to understand their advisees as students, athletes, people, and work to better understand the perspectives and identities of their students. Such an approach would allow for more

meaningful connections between the advisor and the advisee, hopefully improving student-athlete satisfaction with the advising experience.

The findings of this study also highlight the student-athlete and coach desire for academic support services specifically for student-athletes. As such a solution is considered, the challenges of student-athlete specific resources detailed earlier in this study must be remembered. While Botelho (2019) cited the sense of belonging and culture that resources specifically designed for student-athletes might offer, Kelderman (2018) noted the issues of academic integrity and fairness that can also arise. This is not to say that student-athlete focused academic support services, perhaps even a student-athlete academic center, should not be considered as possible solutions for Georgetown College; rather, the institution must carefully examine potential pitfalls in developing these resources.

Several themes pervasive throughout the literature discussing student-athlete academic success, such as race, athletics subculture, and the complex nature of supporting students, did not appear in the findings of this study. However, these important topics should not be discounted for their importance to the work Georgetown College must do. The sample size for this study was very limited in size, diversity, and role. Given the exploratory nature of this case study, the sample size does not undermine findings; however, the sample size is also a significant limitation of this study and must be taken into account before sweeping generalizations may be made regarding the improvement of academic support for student-athletes. In fact, the WSToA framework requires higher education practitioners to consider many of these attributes no matter the direct findings of this study. While the findings of this study are limited, the literature

presented in this study and the WSToA remind us of the many challenges our students face, not just student-athletes, and that we will always be well served to consider numerous perspectives as we work to increase student satisfaction and success.

Action Plan

In considering the foundational framework of this study, the WSToA, results must not only increase student-athlete success, but also in supporting student-athletes as people. Georgetown College faculty serve as academic advisors and the advisor-student relationship is often mentioned as a key part of the College's identity. The data collected in this study also emphasizes the importance of this relationship given that one of the key findings is the need for faculty advisors to be better equipped to advise student-athletes. Knowing that academic advising is key to student-athlete academic success and builds personal relationships, this action plan focuses on improving this critical relationship via advisor training. Figure 2 provides a general overview of this action plan. Figure 3 details the logic model for this plan.

Goal		Objective		Tasks & Timeline		Persons & Resources
• Increase student-athlete academic success and satisfaction.	⇒	• Improve the effectiveness of student-athlete academic advising.	⇒	• Student-athlete satisfaction survey (Spring 2022). • Faculty advisor survey (Fall 2022). • Student-athlete advising manual (Spring 2023). • Faculty advisor training (Fall/Summer 2023 then ongoing).	⇒	• Student-athletes • Faculty advisors • Assistant Provost & Registrar • Associate Dean for Student Success • Asscoiate Athletic Director • No funding or additonal resources needed.

Figure 2
Action Plan Overview

Student-athletes account for a large portion of Georgetown College's undergraduate student population. While the College is committed to the academic success of all students and relies heavily on the student and faculty advisor relationship, student-athletes are less satisfied with their overall advising experience. This program seeks to improve student-athlete satisfaction with their academic advising via advisor training.
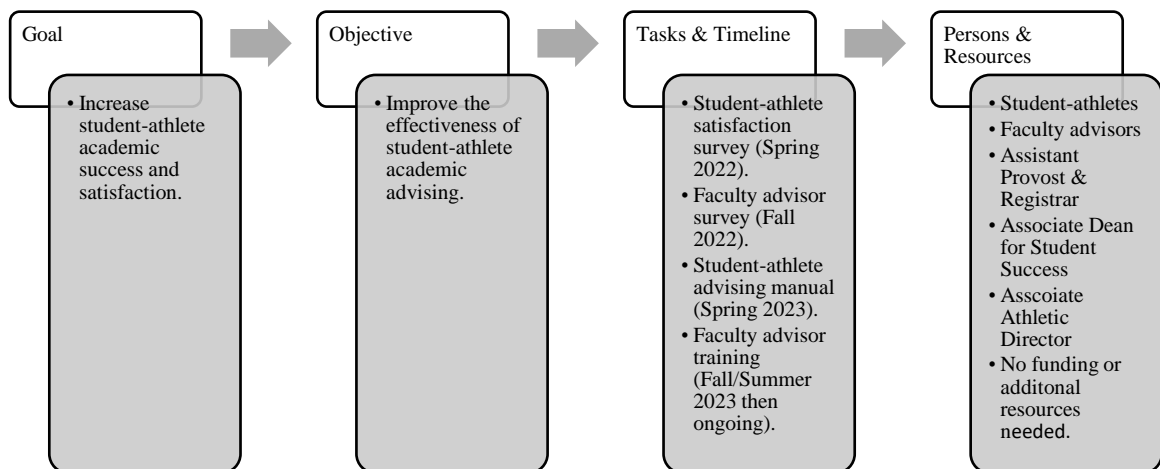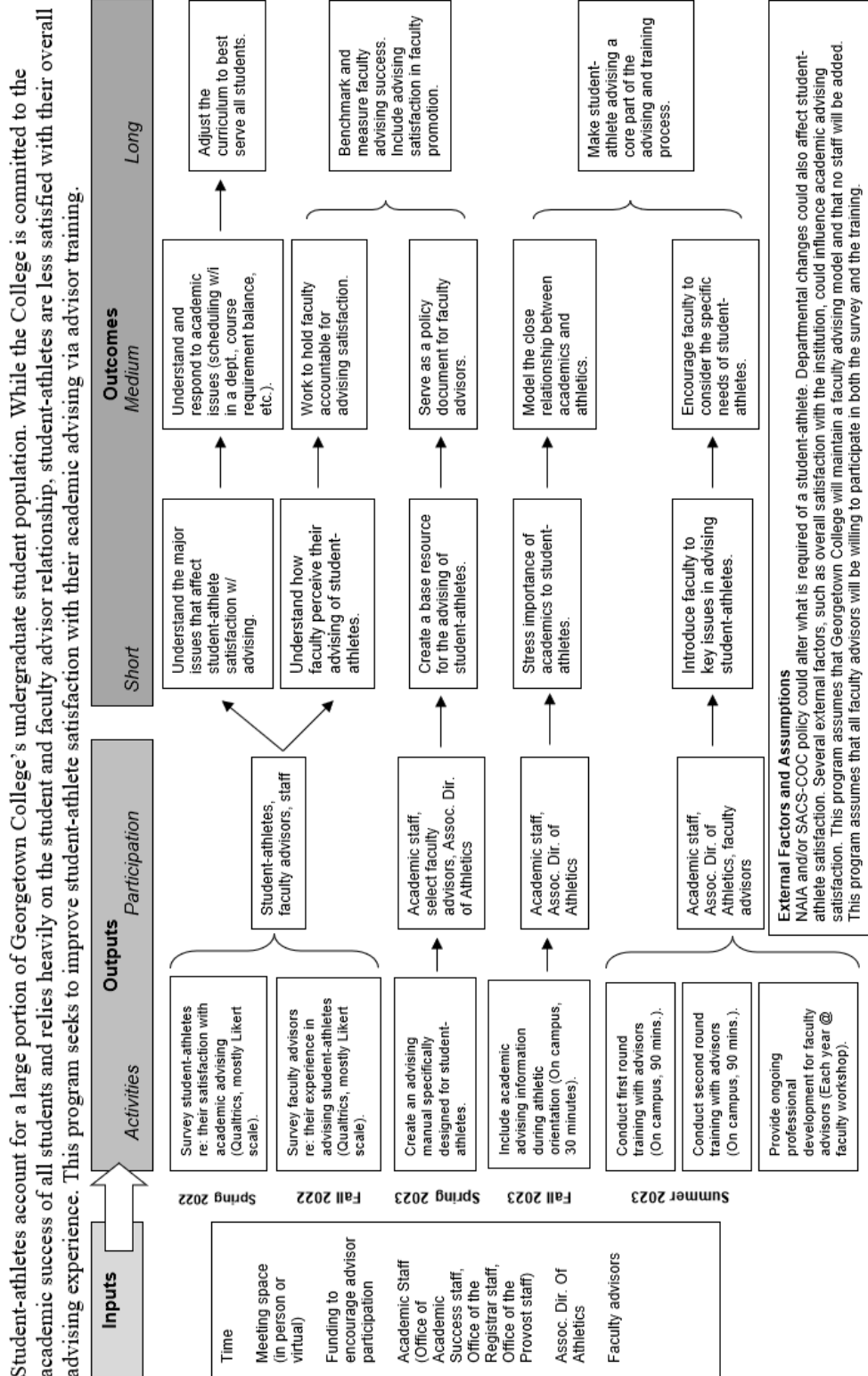

Figure 3

Improving Student-Athlete Academic Advising Satisfaction Through Faculty Advisor Training: Logic Model

This action plan begins with the results discussed in this chapter – utilizing the data learned from surveys and interviews to implement change and improve student-athlete academic outcomes. This first task has already been completed via the survey given as part of this study. As the results of this study show, student-athletes are not satisfied with the academic advising they receive.

The second step of this plan, surveying advisors in the fall 2022 semester, seeks to better understand faculty-advisor attitudes towards advising student-athletes. This short survey will collect successes, challenges, and personal opinions regarding the advising of student-athletes. Several key stakeholders will be involved in drafting this survey, primarily me (Assistant Provost & Registrar), the Associate Dean for Student Success, and the Associate Director of Athletics. Each of these roles brings a different perspective to the relationship between faculty advisors and student-athletes. These multiple viewpoints will lead to a more comprehensive survey. The survey will be issued to faculty via Qualtrics in the fall 2022 semester.

Once the faculty survey data is collected, the same stakeholder group will work to draft a student-athlete advising handbook. The handbook will utilize information from the student-athlete survey, the faculty-advisor survey, best practices in scholarly literature, and the professional experiences of the stakeholder group to develop specific practices to improve student-athlete academic advising. However, the handbook will also include many quick reference guides for faculty advisors. For example, a quick "cheat sheet" of athletic eligibility will be included. The end goal for this handbook is to provide faculty advisors with clear, actionable information to improve their advising of student-athletes. Best practices and practices to avoid will be included. The handbook will ultimately be

published with other faculty documents, such as the faculty handbook, on the faculty portal.

With a specific document outlining key best practices now complete, faculty advisors will need to be trained on how to utilize this information. The training will focus on how to actualize the information in the handbook – how faculty actually use this information to improve their advising of student-athletes. The first training will be conducted in the summer of 2023. The key stakeholder group mentioned earlier in this action plan will facilitate the training. Informed by training best practices, as outlined in chapter three, the training will utilize a mixture of methods including presentations, role play, and participatory experiences. However, the training will last no more than 90 minutes to avoid providing too much information and overwhelming faculty as they prepare for the coming academic year. After the first training, feedback will be collected via quick surveys and informal focus groups with faculty advisors. The training will then be revised based on participant feedback. The end goal is to make this training a regular part of the faculty workshop experience and, ultimately, a part of new advisor training. After the first cycle of training, short surveys will be sent to student-athletes to gauge if student-athlete satisfaction increases as a result of the training.

CHAPTER THREE: DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVENTION PROCESS

Faculty training focusing on improving the student-athlete academic advising experience serves as the intervention for this study. This training-based intervention is based on the findings discussed in chapter two and is informed by the methodologies of two previous studies. The first study informing this intervention was conducted by Comeaux in 2011. Comeaux (2011) studied the attitudes of faculty towards student-athletes. Comeaux's work helped me to understand a way to analyze an experience on a college campus. However, more importantly for this intervention, this study underscored the importance of faculty perception. The intervention cannot solely focus on the student-athlete perspective. If I were to work to train students and provide them with more comprehensive information, it could lead to minor change. However, Comeaux (2011) emphasized the importance of faculty perception. As a result, my action plan specifically seeks to understand the faculty advisor perspective and provide training to this key audience.

A second study that significantly informed this action plan was conducted by Hazzaa et. al. (2018). They sought to understand the student-athlete experience by working with graduated student-athletes (Hazzaa et. al., 2018). This study found that student-athlete motivation is a central factor to student-athlete success and that academic services tailored to student-athletes led to the best outcomes for this population (Hazzaa et. al., 2018). This action plan takes these key considerations into account. The plan focuses on an academic service (advising) and the survey given to student-athletes seeks to understand not only their experience but their motivation in successful academic outcomes.

Steps Anticipated During the Intervention Process

Survey Faculty Advisors (Fall 2022)

Building upon the data collected via the surveys and interviews in this study, a survey will be sent to all faculty advisors during the fall 2022 semester. The survey will be sent to all full-time faculty advisors via their college email account to learn more about their experiences in advising student-athletes, with a focus on their challenges. This survey will be administered via Qualtrics and developed by key stakeholder group (Assistant Provost & Registrar, Associate Dean for Academic Success, and the Associate Director of Athletics). The Director of Institutional Research will assist the key stakeholder group in administering the survey. No financial resources will be necessary given the College's license for Qualtrics software; however, the time of the core evaluation team and the respondents will be needed.

Create an Advising Manual (Spring 2023)

During the spring 2023 semester, the key stakeholder group will use data gathered from the surveys to draft an advising manual designed specifically for student-athletes. This manual will include information about the academic curriculum, athletics compliance, and scenario-based advising examples. A small, voluntary group of faculty advisors and student-athletes may be formed to provide quick feedback on different aspects of the manual. Financial resources may be necessary to provide the faculty advisors participating in the draft process with a small stipend.

Student-Athlete Orientation (Fall 2023)

An effective advising relationship requires active participation from both parties. Student-athletes will be informed of their role in the advising process during student-

athlete orientation at the start of the fall 2023 semester. The key stakeholder group will

review academic requirements with all student-athletes, highlighting areas of concern that

will be determined based on the student-athlete survey administered as part of this study

and the faculty survey given as part of this intervention. This will be accomplished in the

form of a brief (under thirty minutes) presentation given by the Associate Director of

Athletics. No resources will be needed for this step.

Advisor Training (Summer 2023)

Once an advising manual has been created and student-athletes have been

informed of their role in the academic advising process, the key stakeholder group will

develop the first in a series of faculty advisor training workshops. The first workshop will

last approximately ninety minutes and will be held on campus. The key stakeholder group

will develop and conduct the training session. Utilizing feedback from the first session,

and possibly feedback from a small sample of faculty advisors, the key stakeholder group

will develop a second training session. Both training sessions will take place during the

summer of 2023. While no direct financial resources will be necessary, the key

stakeholder group will seek support from the Office of the Provost to incentivize faculty

participation, possibly in the form of meals. These two sessions, along with faculty

advisor feedback, will be used to develop ongoing professional development for faculty

advisors at the annual faculty workshop, held at the beginning of each academic year.

These training sessions will take Bransford et. al.'s (2000) model for creating

ideal learning environments into account. The sessions will rely on a community-based

approach and focus on being learner, knowledge, and assessment centered (Brandsford,

et. al., 2000). In specifically considering faculty training, Gayle et. al.'s (2013) faculty

processing model will also heavily influence how the training sessions are conducted. Their focus on engagement/motivation and community/identity will help to engage faculty in the training sessions and foster an environment of active learning (Gayle et al., 2013). The underlying focus of Gayle et al.'s (2013) study is to tie the training to growth – both for faculty participants and their students. This key theme will be present throughout all training sessions.

Summary of the Intervention Process

Ongoing academic advisor training that improves student-athlete satisfaction while simultaneously building personal relationships is the goal of this intervention, as demonstrated in the logic model in Figure 3. However, in order to work towards this goal, a clear path of data collection, both from faculty advisors and student-athletes, is key. Data gathered will be utilized, along with the literature discussed as part of this plan, to draft a student-athlete advising handbook and develop the first two rounds of advisor training. Assessing outcomes during each step of the process will help to make subsequent steps more effective and will continue this action research basis of this study. The WSToA will then be used to situate the results of the intervention in terms of better supporting student-athletes on a relational level.

Analysis of Future Implementation

Meaning Interpretation

The intervention and action plan discussed is clearly rooted in the results of this study; however, broader meaning must be established within the discourse of higher education in order to benchmark best practice and ground the plan in theory. With this goal in mind, I reviewed many of the studies previously discussed in this study and

sought new perspectives outside of higher education research. In doing this, two clear themes emerged – understanding the student-athlete perspective and training.

Understanding the Student-Athlete Perspective

Surely any study examining the success of student-athletes must take the perspective of student-athletes, the key stakeholders, into account. The first objective of my action plan, surveying student-athletes, sought to do exactly this – understand the student-athlete perspective. However, numerous peer-reviewed articles cite the lack of understanding of the student-athlete experience as a key area for improvement (Comeaux, 2011; Cosh & Tully, 2014; Haslerig, 2018; Hazza, et. al., 2018; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018). John (2003) examined the politics of pedagogy and identified faculty as the gatekeepers to student success, noting that understanding the population to be served while being committed to their success is required to implement lasting change.

Comeaux (2011) conducted a comprehensive study of faculty attitudes towards student-athletes in which a revised version of the Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) was administered to 464 faculty members. The result revealed significant differences among faculty towards student-athletes by race, gender, and college affiliation (Comeaux, 2011). Any action plan must take faculty perceptions into account. Based on Comeaux's (2011) study, the second objective of my action plan focuses on gathering the faculty perspective to better understand how they interact with student-athletes. The framework of my study, largely based on Brooks' (2017) Critical Theory of Love and intersectionality (Cho, et. al., 2013), requires the various identities of student-athletes to be considered. Such an approach must be based on the data collected at Georgetown College. In order to truly understand the student-athlete perspective, Comeaux (2011), Brooks (2017) and Cho et

al. (2013) found that understating and interpreting the complex identities of student-athletes is foundational to any action plan.

In addition to identity, Cosh and Tully (2014) found that student-athlete motivation must also be understood. Their study sought to understand the ways in which student-athletes prioritize sport from a psychological perspective (Cosh & Tully, 2014). The findings of their study imply that student-athletes will often sacrifice academic success in order to concentrate on athletic achievement (Cosh & Tully, 2014). In fact, many student-athlete participants specifically mentioned their desire to "simply pass" their classes rather than opting to do their best in all academic endeavors (Cosh & Tully, 2014). While Comeaux (2011) called for understanding faculty perception, Cosh and Tully (2014) highlighted the crucial need to understand student-athlete motivation. An action plan must take student-athlete motivation into consideration. Even a well-crafted plan that successfully overcomes faculty perceptions will fail if student-athletes are not empowered and motivated to succeed. As a result, the student-athlete survey given as part of this study sought to understand student-athlete motivation.

Yukhymenko-Lescroart (2018) proposed a solution for the challenge of student-athlete motivation since it is clear that student-athletes often prioritize athletics over academics (Cosh & Tully, 2014). Given this information, my action plan seeks to utilize this motivation. By simply connecting academic success to athletic success, student-athletes may find themselves motivated to succeed in the classroom. For instance, students must maintain a certain level of academic success in order to remain eligible for athletics (Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018). When communicating with student-athletes regarding an action plan, it will be crucial to emphasize the connection to athletic

eligibility. By tapping into their motivation, they will hopefully be persuaded to participate in any initiatives to improve their academic success. The student-athlete satisfaction survey took this motivation into account. The survey was sent to students to understand their perspective to better their experience – from the beginning, student-athletes were aware that improving their academic success and better understanding their experience is the goal.

Haslerig (2018) conducted a study that will serve as a model for understanding the student-athlete perspective. Graduated student-athletes were surveyed and interviewed in an attempt to understand their experience (Haslerig, 2018). This qualitative study sought to truly understand what did and did not work for the participants (Haslerig, 2018). The results indicated that mandatory programming led to the best outcomes (Haslerig, 2018). Students valued a structure for academic support and found that early structure helped to build skills for success (Haslerig, 2018). Many professionals in higher education often skew towards empowering students to take ownership of their success. However, Haslerig (2018) found that structure and intentional interventions were not only most successful but also preferred by student-athletes. This finding significantly influenced the action plan for this study. The faculty survey will focus on understanding the ways in which faculty advisors work with student-athletes. Is an intervention-based model used? If not, what do they consider most effective?

Training Methods

The first component of my proposed action plan involves understanding the student-athlete experience. However, the second component relies on successfully training faculty to better respond to the needs of student-athletes. Literature from a

variety of sources, including sources based on educational and corporate settings, were reviewed to better understand the nuances of successful training experiences.

Training Models. Bransford et. al. (2000) proposed a model for creating ideal learning environments. This model is rooted in a community-based approach and focuses on being learner, knowledge, and assessment centered (Bransford, et. al., 2000). Each aspect of the model is applicable to this study. All faculty advisor training must be situated within the broader context of the campus community. If the training is to be successful, it must also clearly define the knowledge to be shared and take the perspective of the learners into account. In order to ascertain if the training is successful, regular assessment must be included throughout the training plan.

Gayle et. al. (2013) built upon this model (Bransford et. al., 2000) to create a faculty processing model. While their research focused on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, the findings are applicable to most situations in which faculty are trained with the goal of improving student outcomes (Gayle et al., 2013). Two specific components of this model are key to this study – engagement/motivation and commitment/identity. Engagement occurs in the overlap between knowledge and learning. A successful plan must blend these two components to engage learners by fostering an environment of active learning. Commitment involves both learning and growth. If faculty are to whole heartedly participate in training, it must be tied to their own growth and the growth of their students. As a result, consistent communication with faculty throughout this process will be key. Faculty must understand the results of each objective within this action plan to truly understand their value and the importance of their advising role.

Components of Successful Training. Training models provide a framework for the overall structure of my action plan. However, lessons learned from previous training studies must also be considered in order to carry out effective, meaningful training. In studying diversity training, Bezrukova, Jehn, & Spell (2012) found that an integrated approach to training yields the best results. They also concluded that avoiding blame for past failures prevents training participants from feeling attacked (Bezrukova, Jehn, & Spell, 2012). In considering my own action plan, it will be key to discuss the current state of student-athlete academic support without implying that faculty have failed. The training will need to be presented as an opportunity for growth and more comprehensive support of student-athletes rather than a solution to a problem.

Keengwe, Kidd, and Kyei-Blankson (2009) examined the implications of faculty training in technology. They found that there are several challenges in encouraging faculty to adopt new practices (Keengwe, Kidd, & Kyei-Blankson, 2009). However, they proposed that helping faculty to see the value in achieving the end goal and the support of colleagues helped to encourage faculty participation. This greater purpose for participating, as opposed to direct incentives, was supported by Gayle et. al.'s (2013) study of scholarship teaching and learning. In fact, Gayle et. al. (2013) suggested that utilizing faculty experience and identities will lead to greater commitment to training and more interaction between colleagues. Panitz (1996) supports this view in finding that understanding all stakeholder perspectives, not just student-athletes, is foundational to a successful training plan. My plan is largely based on these approaches. Rather than seeking to understand just the student-athlete experience, my action plan focuses on

understanding the perspective of all stakeholders and finding commonalities to influence change.

Results of the Intervention Process

Now grounded in the results of this study and the broader discourse surrounding student success and training, the intervention process will hopefully go according to plan. Given that the process is based on the findings of this study and relevant research within higher education, the intervention is on track for success. Each step of the process will now be discussed in terms of defining success. Table 8 details the program evaluation process and potential measures of success.

Results at Each Stage of the Intervention Process

Survey Faculty Advisors. The survey of faculty advisors regarding their advising of student-athletes will be deemed a success if 50% of the faculty respond to the survey. While this response rate may seem high, the relatively small total number of faculty advisors will require this response rate to provide meaningful data. It is very possible that incentives for participation will be necessary if the initial response rate is low. These incentives could include prizes for responding. However, I would first seek to increase the response rate by speaking at a faculty meeting and leveraging the pressure of their faculty peers before turning to incentives.

Create an Advising Manual. The creation of an advising manual focused on student-athletes will determine success. Any improvement in this area will prove useful in training faculty. However, it is very possible that we will encounter challenges in drafting this manual. Should this occur, we may need to divide the manual into sections and consult various campus stakeholders for feedback before moving on to subsequent

sections. It will be key to remember that any progress towards the ideal manual will be a valuable campus resource and to involve other stakeholders as necessary.

Student-Athlete Orientation. The primary indicator of success for the first presentation during student-athlete orientation will be the number of student-athletes in attendance. As we begin to set academic advising expectations with this group, their attendance and participation will be key. However, more comprehensive indicators of success must be defined. These may include self-evaluations from those presenting as well as quick, digital outcomes surveys given to the student-athletes at the end of each session.

Advisor Training. There are numerous ways in which the success of advisor training can be measured. The most basic indicator of success will be the number of faculty in attendance at each training session. The initial goal will be for at least 25% of the faculty to attend the first training session. Given that the training will be new and many faculty may feel as though they do not need such a training, this seemingly low goal is an ideal starting point. As the trainings shift to an ongoing rotation, 75% attendance will be the goal. The training sessions will also rely on brief surveys at the end of each session. These surveys will be distributed to participants digitally. The leaders of the training will also need to conduct self-evaluations. Feedback from both forms of evaluation will be used to improve future training sessions. The trainings could need to be drastically altered from their initial format based on feedback – they are not effective if participants do not see the value in participating. It is also possible that the timing of the trainings will need to be adjusted based on participant feedback. They could be split into shorter trainings or combined into a half-day workshop if needed.

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Table 8

Improving Student-Athlete Academic Advising Satisfaction Through Faculty Advisor Training: Program Evaluation Matrix

Logic Model Component	Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Targets	Data Source	Data Collection	Data Analysis
Survey student-athletes re: their satisfaction with academic advising (Qualtrics, mostly Likert scale)	How many and what types of questions were asked? How were the survey distributed/advertised? What was the response rate?	Survey response rate	20% of student-athletes responded; 50% of faculty advisors responded	Survey results	Examine survey results once survey closes	Compare number of respondents to number of student-athletes/faculty advisors
Conduct first round training with advisors (On campus, 90 mins.)	How was the training conducted? How many faculty advisors attended? How was the training advertised?	# of faculty in attendance	25% of faculty	Session sign in sheet Faculty roster	Session sign in sheet collected an examined after first session. Compared to current faculty roster.	Sign in sheet and roster compared to determine what percentage attended.
Provide ongoing professional development for faculty advisors (Each year @ faculty workshop)	To what extent do faculty find this training useful? How were faculty involved in the planning process? How many faculty participated?	# of faculty in attendance Availability of prof. development Faculty satisfaction with prof. development	75% of faculty attend One session each year @ faculty workshop 50% satisfaction with training session	Session sign in sheet Faculty meeting notes Short post-training survey sent to faculty	Session sign in sheet after each training Faculty meeting records Short digital survey after event	Compare sign in sheet to faculty roster. Review faculty meeting records Descriptive statistics re: faculty satisfaction

Unintended Consequences

The potential unintended consequences of this intervention plan are few in number. The surveys and other forms of feedback are narrow in their scope and should not cause issue. While the faculty advisor trainings might be unpopular, the faculty are used to new initiatives and training sessions. However, one unintended consequence could be the "deep dive" into the academic success of student-athletes. The trainings will be participatory in nature, allowing faculty to discuss topics as needed. Faculty could easily bring up other issues related to student-athletes or even voice their negative opinions of student-athletes. This scenario is unlikely but is not outside the realm of possibility. The key stakeholders leading these trainings, myself included, will need to maintain focus on the end goal – improving the student-athlete academic advising experience. Just as faculty must often do in their classes, those leading the training will need to be prepared to rein in conversation and refocus as needed.

Embedded and Continuous Evaluation

Evaluation of this intervention will be carried out using a participatory, embedded approach. Given the shared governance faculty hold within the College, their participation is key to the success of the program. The participatory approach will engage faculty as stakeholders throughout the evaluation process, ultimately encouraging their use of what is learned throughout the advisor training sessions (Christie & Alkin, 2013; Giancola, 2021). An embedded approach will also be utilized, allowing for evaluation at each step in the program and encouraging continuous improvement (Giancola, 2021). Embedded evaluation also allows for a constant reevaluation of desired outcomes as new information is learned (Giancola, 2021). This evaluation will allow for adjustment of

future steps of the intervention process based on data gathered and the experience of the key stakeholder group leading this initiative.

Stakeholder Engagement

There are two key stakeholders in this intervention plan – student-athletes and faculty advisors. I anticipate both groups responding positively to this intervention plan. So long as student-athletes are not asked to commit a large portion of their time to this intervention, they are likely to support any initiative that seeks to afford them more support on campus. The worst-case scenario is that student-athletes will be indifferent to this initiative. While this is far from ideal, the intervention would still remain valuable to all campus stakeholders.

Faculty advisors are likely to actively participate in the intervention process, at least at first. Overall, Georgetown College faculty support their students and seek to hone any skills they can to better support students. However, this support could begin to waiver as trainings occur and new methods of advising are discussed. Understanding faculty motivation, on a group and individual level, will be imperative to the success of this intervention plan. Leaders of the training will need to utilize the results of the embedded evaluation to adjust training sessions as necessary to respond to faculty motivations.

Analysis of Organizational Change and Leadership Practice

As outlined in this study, the WSToA framework is foundational to advising. However, the fundamental elements of the WSToA framework, understanding and supporting all aspects of students, have more general implications for the organization as a whole.

Organizational Change Analysis

By implementing advisor training, Georgetown College will have completed an important step in increasing overall student support. Kezar and Eckel (2002) call for an overall sense of self-reflectiveness to be included in any university initiative affecting students, and I argue that the same is true of academic advising. Advisors must examine their self and their own identities to better understand their position within their colleges and their communities. This self-examination will also hopefully allow them to better understand some of their inherent biases. CRT can be used as a framework to understand one's self to the world around them, especially to those they advise (MacDonald 2014). Yet the WSToA takes this notion even further by the inclusion of intersectionality, the CToL, and Funds of Knowledge (FoK). Advisors must understand that everyone, including themselves, carries several identities and that each brings something to the table. As more diverse students join our college campuses, this simple yet imperative understanding must be incorporated into our advising practices.

In considering organizational change, fairness within academic advising must start at the institutional level. Factors such as accountability and advisee load are key to successful advising utilizing the WSToA. As Salmi and Bassett (2014) noted, we must study issues of access, results, and outcomes to promote equitable practices within higher education. The only way to level the playing field and provide all college students with the same quality advising experience is to implement policy and put accountability structures in place.

After all, if neither student-athletes or advisors feel satisfied with the outcomes they experience, problems will persist until a policy is implemented to correct the issue.

Braun and Zolfaharian (2016) described the various ways in which satisfaction affects academic advising, or vice versa, from the success of the student to the overall retention of students. Satisfaction must be measured by all parties involved in academic advising, and the WSToA must be utilized to develop such instruments. It may seem odd to try to measure such large concepts of identity, fairness, and satisfaction, but Sablan (2019) provided a framework through which such instruments may be developed.

Type of Organizational Change

Hyde (2012) also justified such organizational change from a bottom-up approach, leading to the WSToA accentuating professional development. Witenstein & Niece (2019) supported working between the intersection of institutional policy for academic advising. Academic advisors working at the intersection of a need must act as advocates and allies for improving equitable access to quality academic advising for all students as outlined previously in the equity audit discussion section.

In constructing an equitable organizational change process, Witenstein & Niese (2019) also mentioned directly involving students in the planning and change process. This underlying concept will be utilized to enact change framed by the WSToA. An academic advisor who only advises their advisees but is not empowered, as suggested by the CToL, fails to develop a relationship with their students. The quality of the interaction between the academic advisor and the student is a contributor to the WSToA (Young-Jones et al., 2013). The academic advisor and their advisees need to develop a relationship wherein the advisor provides guidance while allowing advisees to critically self-reflect on their goals (MacDonald, 2014). The importance of this relationship is

supported by the FoK, which seeks to develop relationships by establishing ties of mutual trust between the academic advisor and their advisees (Llopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2016).

Bensimon (2012) entertained the possibility that inequality may be a problem that is not a typical practice among academic leaders and stakeholders. Framing the WSToA from the standpoint of the academic advisors and their current practices will lead to substantive acceptance from the stakeholders for organizational change. The stakeholders will be the key players to start the process for the organizational change plan. A distinctive approach to the stakeholders is essential for the buy-in process for the change plan. By sharing the results of this study with stakeholders at the ground level, their participatory input will bring all players to the table for WSToA-based organizational change (Witenstein & Niese, 2019). Also, this will allow the organizational change to be carried out by strategically forging new connections between academic advisors and planning professional development, allowing Georgetown College to quickly move from theory to practice.

Reflection on Leadership Practices

The WSToA framework, while not directly a leadership model, provides a general direction for effective leadership. The model encourages leaders to consider the various motivations and identities of those around them, most notably students, while also inspiring positive change. Transformational leadership aligns quite well with the WSToA framework – it is designed to meet the needs of organizations and followers while focusing on relationships (Northouse, 2019). This study inspired me to reflect on the following three aspects of transformational leadership.

Meaningful Follower Relationships

Transformational leadership cannot be considered effective if meaningful relationships between followers and leaders are not formed. For example, in considering the health of employees, we now know that transformational leadership will have a positive effect (Zwingmann et al., 2014). However, a leader carrying out transformational behaviors without focusing on relationships will likely find themself to be frustrated and unsuccessful. The various interviews and surveys I conducted highlighted the numerous identities, backgrounds, strengths, and weaknesses our entire campus community holds. If I am to have a positive effect on campus and campus policy, I will need to grow these relationships and consider them in all situations.

Increased Organizational Citizenship Behavior

If transformational leadership were distilled down into one metric of success, it would most certainly be its ability to increase organizational citizenship behavior. Given its focus on relationships, moving towards a common goal, and inspiring, this certainly make sense (Northouse, 2019). As transformational leaders work to move towards a common vision, they also navigate organizational politics to form relationships and inspire (Asgari, Mezginejad, & Taherpour, 2020; Bastedo, Samuels, & Kleinman, 2014). This work helps followers to feel part of something larger than themselves. In doing so, transformational leadership can also result in stakeholders who are more willing to go above and beyond in their organizational roles, even if doing so did not result in additional compensation or favor (Asgari, Mezginejad, & Taherpour, 2020). The intervention in this study does exactly this – it asks faculty advisors to go above and beyond their typical expectations to better support our student-athletes, all without

increased pay. My role on my campus makes me keenly aware of any ask of faculty or other employees as we are usually relying on their passion for the success of the institution. The advisor training plan was developed keeping time commitment and overall effort in mind since advisors will not receive additional pay for their participation.

Positive Impacts on Organizational Success

Given transformational leadership's ability to inspire followers to do more, the organization is nearly guaranteed to be more successful in, at least, some attributes if leaders adopt transformational behaviors (Lyndon & Rawat, 2015). If employees are healthier and are able to see themselves as integral to the organization, as transformational behaviors encourage, they will also be more productive (Lyndon & Rawat, 2015). Any increase in productivity is always a positive outcome for any organization, no matter its size or sector. Given the constant desire to increase productivity, it is clear to see why transformational leadership is so popular. As previously mentioned, Georgetown College typically excels at developing personal relationships. This study highlights the importance of these relationships and how they can be leveraged to improve student-athlete outcomes. I must invest in personal relationships to improve my own leadership style and continue the forward trajectory of Georgetown College.

The relational foundation of transformational leadership can also lead to more successful team-based learning (Raes et al., 2013). The main intervention of this study, faculty training, relies on the success of a series of training. As a leader on my campus, I want the trainings to be successful. In considering what success could look like, I evaluated the motivations of the stakeholders (faculty) and their connection to the

institution. I will need to continue this reflective practice as future trainings are considered.

Implications for Practice and Future Research

While this study has provided a clear path forward for Georgetown College, it has also raised additional research questions. The small sample size and lack of overall diversity of study participants also provide ample opportunity to continue this study on other campuses.

Practice

The WSToA framework seeks to continue the support of students and respond to their needs on a personal and athletic level. Beyond the advisor training intervention highlighted in this study, several other areas of practice should be considered for implementation.

- **On-Boarding for New Coaches** – Both coach participants in this study cited their overall lack of understanding of many campus structures and processes. This was especially true of academic support areas, such as tutoring and the Writing Center. While the coaches were aware of these resources, they did not always have the necessary information to tell students how to utilize them. Instead, they would send students to the Office of Academic Success and/or the Associate Director of Athletics. In essence, the student-athletes are directed to an intermediary before they learn how to utilize the resource. An on-boarding process for new coaches that includes detailed information about student services, with an emphasis on academic support services, would provide this currently missing information in systematic way.

- **Student-Athlete Specific Support** – Nearly all study participants mentioned the need for student-athlete specific academic support services, most notably tutoring. Academic Programs should evaluate current tutoring offerings and usage by student-athletes. Through collaboration with Athletics, tutoring should be offered in the East Campus conference center, the hub of all athletic activity. If it is found that student-athletes use this resource, more tutoring options, perhaps by team or academic area, should be offered. Eventually, other academic support services, such as the Writing Center and library, should be evaluated as well, paying close attention to open hours to make sure they align with the many time commitments student-athletes navigate.

- **Improved Communication** – Communication was brought up most directly by the two coach participants. However, a desire to improve communication was mentioned in some way by all participants. A specific resource mentioned was the College's flag system. A specific flagging policy should be developed within Academic Programs. Such a policy would need to detail each of the flags that could be raised. More importantly, the policy will need to clearly define a timeline for when these flags should be raised. More timely flagging would allow coaches to more directly assist in handling student issues as they arise. There will certainly never be a perfect solution for the flagging of students; however, improvement in this area would benefit student-athletes, coaches, faculty, and the College as a whole.

Research

An exploratory, action-research based methodology was utilized for this study.
The initial research questions focused on the usage of academic support services by
student-athletes and better understanding the relationship between these services and the
academic success of student-athletes. Yet the exploratory nature of this study also
highlighted several other areas for future research. These areas include:

- **Student-Athlete Identity** – Based on the interviews conducted and the research
  presented, student-athletes struggle to define their identity. Are they a student-
  athlete before they are a student or vice versa? Perhaps even more importantly,
  how do their own perceptions of their identity differ from those of their faculty
  and administrators? Sperber's (2004) study of how athletes consider their own
  identity could provide a framework and methodology to further explore this
  concept.

- **Team Culture** – Several of the faculty, staff, and coaches interviewed detailed
  stark differences among the academic success of various athletic teams likely
  based on differences in team culture. The way team culture is established and
  maintained is a key area for future study, especially in relation to academic
  success. Such studies could expand upon research from the faculty perspective
  (Aries et al., 2004; Forster, 2011; Levine et al., 2014; Riciputi & Erdal, 2017;
  Sperber, 2004; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018) or seek to build upon Levine et
  al.'s (2014) concept of pluralistic ignorance.

- **Role of Gender** – Another topic raised by faculty, staff, and coaches was the
  notion of gender. At Georgetown College, female athletes have a higher overall

GPA and seemingly outperform their male peers. While this concept seems to be rather well known on campus, there is little research as to why this occurs. A better understanding of gender and student-athlete academic success would better allow institutions to develop successful interventions for specific student groups. Given that the research reviewed for this study did not contain direct references to gender, there is a clear need for more studies in this area.

Other aspects of student-athletes and their academic success certainly exist. Studies among various institutions may help to benchmark common traits; however, specific institutional culture and practice are likely to always play a key factor in any study related to student-athlete academic success.

Conclusion

It is clear that Georgetown College must better support its student-athletes to improve their academic success. Within the WSToA framework, the intervention that will likely yield the most success begins with the training of faculty academic advisors to improve their knowledge and practices, while providing more tools and models to better connect with student-athletes on a personal level. Luckily, the College typically excels at establishing and growing personal relationships. The intervention process will not be easy, but it will, ideally, lead to happier student-athletes, increased academic performance among student-athletes, and a group of faculty advisors with specific training ready to expand progress in these areas.

Implications for Other Organizations

Even though small, private colleges vary in their structure, funding, and student support, this study provides one clear message – we must support the specific needs of

our student-athletes if we expect them to excel on the court and in the classroom. Other institutions similar to Georgetown College, especially in the NAIA, could easily conduct a study using the methodology and framework provided. As described in this study, other institutions must also keep front of mind the key role their faculty and staff play in the day-to-day success of student-athletes. The institution must support both the athletes and those that support them in order to truly increase satisfaction and academic-based outcomes. Even an institution that may outperform Georgetown College in the general area of academic support for student-athletes will still be better served by regularly revisiting and assessing the effectiveness of their practices.

How Study Helped Respond to Problem of Practice

Throughout my time as Assistant Provost and Registrar, I have been aware of the notion that student-athletes often need specialized resources and attention. Yet, considering their academic success through the WSToA framework and an action-research based approach helped me to understand this challenge on a more foundational level. For instance, simply providing more tutoring specifically for student-athletes seems like a possible solution that might increase academic outcomes. However, this study implies that such a solution would not be enough. It is only through a better understanding of stakeholder perspectives that it became clear that personal relationships may hold the key to increasing both satisfaction and academic outcomes. Such a result would only be possible through a study such as this one. The general methodology I have used will inform many of the higher-level challenges on my campus and will always encourage me to keep relationships and identity in mind.

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Table 9

Georgetown College Undergraduate Demographics: All Students

Semester	Gender		Race								
	Male	Female	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Asian	Black/African American	Hispanic	Non-Resident Alien	Two or more	White	Unknown
Fall 2017	45.05%	52.20%	0.37%	0.64%	8.44%	3.67%	0.55%	4.22%	74.86%	4.50%
Fall 2018	44.75%	55.15%	0.31%	0.73%	9.78%	3.85%	0.42%	4.06%	76.69%	3.54%
Fall 2019	45.09%	54.91%	0.10%	0.61%	9.73%	5.27%	1.93%	4.96%	74.77%	2.63%
Fall 2020*	44.95%	55.05%	0.27%	0.90%	8.02%	5.41%	2.25%	5.50%	80.18%	2.88%

*Notes: All data is as of the institution's census date. *Race was reported differently starting with the fall 2020 semester due to a change in the IPEDS standards. As a result, Hispanic may be duplicated with other races in this count.*

Table 10

Georgetown College Undergraduate Demographics: Student-Athletes

Semester	Gender			Race							
	Male	Female	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Asian	Black/African American	Hispanic	Non-Resident Alien	Two or more	White	Unknown
Fall 2017	59.13%	40.87%	0.57%	0.76%	11.22%	3.99%	0.57%	4.56%	73.76%	4.56%
Fall 2018	57.54%	42.46%	0.00%	0.79%	13.49%	3.97%	0.60%	5.56%	71.03%	3.97%
Fall 2019	57.99%	42.01%	0.20%	0.79%	12.82%	6.31%	3.75%	5.92%	68.24%	1.97%
Fall 2020*	57.80%	42.20%	0.73%	0.73%	10.28%	6.61%	4.59%	7.16%	74.13%	2.39%

Notes: All data is as of the institution's census date. *Race was reported differently starting with the fall 2020 semester due to a change in the IPEDS standards. As a result, Hispanic may be duplicated with other races in this count.

Table 11

Black Male Student-Athlete Enrollment

Semester	Percentage of Undergraduate Population	Percentage of Student-Athlete Population	Percentage of Student-Athlete Male Population
Fall 2017	4.68%	9.70%	16.40%
Fall 2018	5.52%	10.52%	18.28%
Fall 2019	4.86%	9.47%	16.33%
Fall 2020	3.96%	8.07%	13.97%

Note: All data is as of the institution's census date.

Table 12

Georgetown College Undergraduate Graduation Rate by Cohort: All Students

Cohort	N	Degree Earned	No Degree Earned	Graduation Rate
Fall 2011	354	192	162	54.24%
Fall 2012	236	139	97	58.90%
Fall 2013	242	113	129	46.69%
Fall 2014	271	151	120	55.72%

Notes: Cohorts as set per the institution's policy. Graduation rate is defined as degrees earned divided by N. No degree earned includes students that transferred, withdrew, and/or did not return.

Table 13

Georgetown College Undergraduate Graduation Rate by Cohort: Student-Athletes

Cohort	N	Degree Earned	No Degree Earned	Graduation Rate
Fall 2011	147	84	63	57.14%
Fall 2012	105	67	38	63.81%
Fall 2013	127	62	65	48.82%
Fall 2014	141	90	51	63.83%

Notes: Cohorts as set per the institution's policy. Graduation rate is defined as degrees earned divided by N. No degree earned includes students that transferred, withdrew, and/or did not return.

APPENDIX B

Student-Athlete Satisfaction Survey

What is your current classification?
Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Not Sure

What is your race/ethnicity?
American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or
Latino, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White, Two or More Races, Prefer
Not to Say

What is your gender?
Male, Female, Non-Binary/Third Gender, Prefer Not to Say

Are you currently an active student-athlete? (This means you are an active member on
team roster.)
Yes, No

What is your sport? If you play multiple sports, please select all sports of which you are
an active member on a team roster.
List of sports.

How many full-time semesters have you attended Georgetown College, including the
current semester?
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 or more

Did you transfer to Georgetown College from another institution?
Yes, No, Not Sure

What is your current major? If you have more than one major, please select the major you
identify most with.
Dropdown of all majors including undecided.

How many academic advisors have you had at GC, including your current advisor?
One, Two, Three, Four or more

Did you select your current academic advisor or were they assigned to you?
I selected them, They were assigned to me, I'm not sure.

My Academic Advisor
Please respond to the following statements about your CURRENT ACADEMIC
ADVISOR:
Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

My advisor is hard to get in touch with.
My advisor gives me as much time as I need when we meet.
My advisor encourages me to come by for help.
My advisor takes a personal interest in me.
My advisor encourages me to express my thoughts and feelings.
My advisor is a good listener.
My advisor gives me accurate information about course and graduation requirements.
My advisor considers my personal abilities, talents, and interests.
My advisor helps me connect with campus resources.
My advisor helps me make important educational decisions.
My advisor does not understand my experiences as a student-athlete.
My advisor is hard to relate to.
My advisor listens to my concerns as a student-athlete.
My advisor helps me to solve my problems.
My advisor supports the athletics program.

Would you recommend your advisor to other student-athletes?
Yes, No

How many advising sessions have you had this year?
None, One, Two, Three, Four, Five or more

On average, how much time was generally spent in each advising session?
Less than 15 minutes, 15-30 minutes, 30-45 minutes, 45-60 minutes, more than 1 hour

The Learning Resource Center (LRC)
Please respond to the following statements about the Georgetown College LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER (LRC), also known as the library.
Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

I can effectively use the LRC to find the resources and information I want.
The LRC provides me with the resources I need to succeed in my classes.
I can seek the help of a librarian when I want to.
I understand the resources the LRC provides.
The LRC is open at convenient hours for me.
The LRC provides comfortable study spaces.

The Writing Center
Please respond to the following statements about the Georgetown College WRITING CENTER. Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

I know about the Writing Center and the services it offers.
Visiting the Writing Center is an effective use of my time.
The Writing Center is open at convenient hours for me.
The Writing Center is a helpful resource.

Tutoring
Please respond to the following statements about the Georgetown College TUTORING program. Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

I know about the GC Tutoring Program and how to request a tutor.
Tutoring sessions are an effective use of my time.
Tutoring sessions improve my performance in my classes.
Tutoring sessions are easy and convenient to attend.
I go to tutoring even when I'm doing well in a course.
Tutoring does not help me.

Academic Advising
Please respond to the following statements about ACADEMIC ADVISING as a whole.
Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

Academic advisors understand the needs of student-athletes.
My athletic coach(es) encourage me to visit my advisor.
I wish advisors knew more about my needs as a student-athletes.
I look forward to my academic advising appointments.
I always have to follow up with athletics after my advising appointments.
Academic advisors show an interest in students' interests outside of classes.

Academic Support
Please respond to the following statements about overall ACADEMIC SUPPORT at Georgetown College. This includes the Learning Resource Center (LRC), the Writing Center, tutoring, and your experience with your academic advisor.
Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

The College provides the academic support I need to succeed.
I feel comfortable using academic support services
I know what academic support services are available to me.
My athletic coach discourages me from using academic support services.
Academic support services are convenient to use.
Academic support services are available to me during the times I need.
Academic support services do not help me.
Academic support services are easily available for student-athletes.
My professors encourage me to use academic support services.
I'm not sure what I need to do to graduate.

Optional: Is there anything else you'd like to share regarding student-athlete satisfaction at Georgetown College?

Adapted from:
Szymanska, I. (2011). *Best Practices for Evaluating Academic Advising*. UNC Charlotte.
Student Success Survey & Student Guide. (n.d.). College of the Desert.

APPENDIX C

Invitation to Participate in Research

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Surveys and Interviews

Understanding the Student-Athlete Experience at Georgetown College
You have been asked to participate in a research project conducted by W. Jason Snider
from the University of Dayton, in the Department of Educational Administration.
The purpose of the project is to better understand the student-athlete experience at
Georgetown College so that academic support services may be improved.

**You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do
not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.**

- Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right not to answer
  any question and to stop participating at any time for any reason. Answering the
  questions will take about 15 minutes.
- You will not be compensated for your participation.
- All of the information you tell us will be confidential.
- If this is a recorded interview, only the researcher and faculty advisor will have
  access to the recording and it will be kept in a secure place.
- If this is a written or online survey, only the researcher and faculty advisor will
  have access to your responses. If you are participating in an online survey: We
  will not collect identifying information, but we cannot guarantee the security of
  the computer you use or the security of data transfer between that computer and
  our data collection point. We urge you to consider this carefully when responding
  to these questions.
- I understand that I am ONLY eligible to participate if I am over the age of 18.

Please contact the following investigators with any questions or concerns:

W. Jason Snider, Principal Researcher, University of Dayton, Educational Administration
Department, 859.552.0226, sniderw1@udayton.edu

Dr. Matthew Witenstein, Faculty Advisor, University of Dayton, Educational
Administration Department, 937.229.3447, mwitenstein1@udayton.edu

**If you feel you have been treated unfairly, or you have questions regarding your
rights as a research participant, please email IRB@udayton.edu or call (937) 229-
3515.**

APPENDIX D

Consent Form

Levelling the Playing Field:
Student-Athlete Academic Support at Georgetown College

We are inviting you to be a part of a research study led by W. Jason Snider at the University of Dayton. Participation is not required. Please read the information below to learn more about the study. Before participating, ask questions about anything you do not understand.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to better understand the student-athlete experience at Georgetown College. The goal is to improve academic services available to student-athletes.

PROCEDURES

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to schedule a short, approximately 45-minute, interview with researcher. Short pre and post interview questions will be sent via email.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Potential risks and discomforts for this study are low. However, participants may find some interview topics, such as previous academic performance, uncomfortable to discuss. Participants may end the interview at any time.

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS

There are no direct benefits to study participants. However, the information gathered will be used to improve the overall student-athlete experience at Georgetown College.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

No payment or compensation will be offered.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout this study. Your name will not be shared or stored along with any data you elect to share. All information gathered will be password-protected and stored on secure devices, with appropriate backups. Participants will be assigned pseudonyms for all data sharing.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You do not have to be in this study. If you do not participate, your relationship with us is not affected. You may still receive other services if applicable. You may stop participating at any time without penalty. You may be stopped from participating if the study is not good for you. You may also be stopped if study instructions are not followed.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

Please contact one of the investigators listed below if you have any questions about this research.

W. Jason Snider, Principal Researcher, University of Dayton, Educational Administration Department, 859.552.0226, sniderw1@udayton.edu

Dr. Matthew Witenstein, Faculty Advisor, University of Dayton, Educational Administration Department, 937.229.3447, mwitenstein1@udayton.edu

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Dayton if you have questions about your rights as a research participant: (937) 229-3515 or irb@udayton.edu.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT (*or legal guardian*)

I have read the information above. I have had a chance to ask questions and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this form. **I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.**

Name of Participant (please print) _____

Address _____

Signature of Participant _____Date_____

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

My signature as witness certifies that the Participant signed this consent form in my presence.

Name of Witness (please print) _____

Signature of Witness _____ Date_____
(Must be same as participant signature date)

APPENDIX E

Interview Questions – Student

Interview Notes

- Reminder of purpose of interview

- Note date and time

- State name of student

- Remind of informed consent and role

- Remind of topic

Questions

1. First do you mind telling me a bit about yourself? Where you're from, what you're studying, your sport and position?

2. How long have you been a student-athlete at GC?

3. Overall, how do you feel like you perform academically?

4. Tell me about a time you struggled in a course. How did you handle that experience?

5. Have you ever used academic support services at GC?

   a. Which ones?

6. How did you find these services? Tell me about that process.

7. Where the services what you thought they would be? Useful?

8. Is there an academic support service you wish you had access to?

9. What is the most challenging aspect of being a student-athlete?

10. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

APPENDIX F

Interview Questions – Staff

Interview Notes

- Reminder of purpose of interview

- Note date and time

- State name of student

- Remind of informed consent and role

- Remind of topic

Questions

1. First, would you mind telling me a bit about your role as it relates to student-athletes and their academic success?

2. When do students usually reach out to you for assistance? How?

3. Which resources do you find yourself recommending most often?

4. Are there academic resources that students ask for or need that you aren't able to find?

5. Do you have a sense of how our student-athletes find academic support services?

6. How do you find the relationship between academics and athletics in terms of supporting student-athletes?

7. Some schools have academic services overseen by athletics, is this something you think could work at Georgetown?

8. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

APPENDIX G

Interviewee Profiles

Table 14

Student-Athlete Interviewee Profiles

Last Name	First Name	Gender	Race	Classification	Academic Major	Sport
Fede	Paolo	Male	White	Junior	Communication & Media Studies; Theatre & Film Studies	Soccer (JV)
Scott	Jeremy	Male	White	Senior	Communication & Media Studies	Baseball
Smith	Connor	Male	White	Senior	Economics	Volleyball
Thompson	Susan	Female	White	Senior	Biology	Volleyball
Wilson	Neil	Male	Multiracial	Junior	Communication & Media Studies	Football

Note: Pseudonyms used.

Table 15

Staff and Faculty Interviewee Profiles

Last Name	First Name	Gender	Race	Position
Parker	Kim	Female	White	Associate Dean for Student Success
Robinson, J.D.	Kelsey	Female	White	Associate Director of Athletics for Compliance
Thornton, Ph.D.	Shelly	Female	White	Professor and Chair, Communication & Media Studies; Chair, Academic and Athletic Committee
Cooper	Mike	Male	White	Head Coach, Women's Lacrosse
Gamble	Alex	Male	White	Head Coach, Men's Volleyball

Note: Pseudonyms used.

Student-Athlete Satisfaction Survey Results

Table 16

Survey Questions and Response Data

Question	Mean Response	Standard Deviation
Academic Advisor		
When I need help, I know how to contact my academic advisor.	4.60	0.76
My advisor is a good listener.	4.43	0.90
My academic advisor helps me to understand academic requirements.	4.39	1.00
My advisor gives me as much time as I need when we meet.	4.37	0.96
My advisor encourages me to come by for help.	4.33	1.00
My academic advisor responds to my needs.	4.33	0.93
My academic advisor understands my personal and educational goals.	4.28	0.95
My advisor considers my personal abilities, talents, and interests.	4.27	1.04
My advisor is hard to get in touch with.*	4.22	1.16
My advisor gives me accurate information about course and graduation requirements.	4.21	1.09
My advisor takes a personal interest in me.	4.17	1.24
My advisor supports the athletics program.	4.17	0.94
My advisor helps me to solve my problems.	4.15	0.97
My advisor encourages me to express my thoughts and feelings.	4.13	1.02
My advisor listens to my concerns as a student-athlete.	3.98	1.01
My advisor is hard to relate to.*	3.96	1.15
My advisor helps me connect with campus resources.	3.89	1.17
My advisor does NOT understand my experiences as a student-athlete.*	3.71	1.11
Learning Resource Center (LRC)		
The LRC provides comfortable study spaces.	4.40	0.85
The LRC is open at convenient hours for me.	4.34	0.84
The LRC provides me with the resources I need to succeed in my classes.	4.11	0.81
I can effectively use the LRC to find the resources and information I want.	4.10	0.89
I understand the resources the LRC provides.	4.00	1.01
I can seek the help of a librarian when I want to.	3.86	1.11
Writing Center		
The Writing Center is a helpful resource.	4.18	0.88

Visiting the Writing Center is an effective use of my time.	4.00	1.00
The Writing Center is open at convenient hours for me.	3.85	0.87
I know about the Writing Center and the services it offers.	3.81	1.25
Tutoring		
Tutoring sessions are easy and convenient to attend.	4.41	0.96
I know about the GC Tutoring Program and how to request a tutor.	3.76	1.27
Tutoring does NOT help me.*	3.73	1.32
Tutoring sessions are an effective use of my time.	3.73	1.32
Tutoring sessions improve my performance in my classes.	3.73	1.35
I go to tutoring even when I'm doing well in a course.	2.64	1.50
Academic Advising		
Academic advisors understand the needs of student-athletes.	3.83	1.09
I look forward to my academic advising appointments.	3.75	1.21
Academic advisors show an interest in students' interests outside of classes.	3.64	1.24
My athletic coach(es) encourage me to visit my advisor.	3.54	1.30
I always have to follow up with athletics after my advising appointments.*	3.38	1.30
I wish advisors knew more about the needs of student-athletes.*	2.39	1.08
Academic Services		
My athletic coach DISCOURAGES me from using academic support services.*	4.47	0.83
I'm NOT sure what I need to do to graduate.*	4.00	1.24
The College provides the academic support I need to succeed.	3.95	0.96
I feel comfortable using academic support services.	3.80	1.05
My professors encourage me to use academic support services.	3.68	1.27
Academic support services do NOT help me.*	3.65	1.04
Academic support services are convenient to use.	3.62	1.06
Academic support services are easily available for student-athletes.	3.62	1.04
I know what academic support services are available to me.	3.58	1.26
Academic support services are available to me during the times I need.	3.55	1.07

*Notes: N value varies by question. 1 - Strongly Disagree, 3 - Neutral, 5 - Strongly Agree. Listed in order of mean response - largest to smallest. *Scale adjusted to account for negative question.*

APPENDIX I

Student-Athlete Satisfaction Survey Results: Graphs by Category

Figure 4
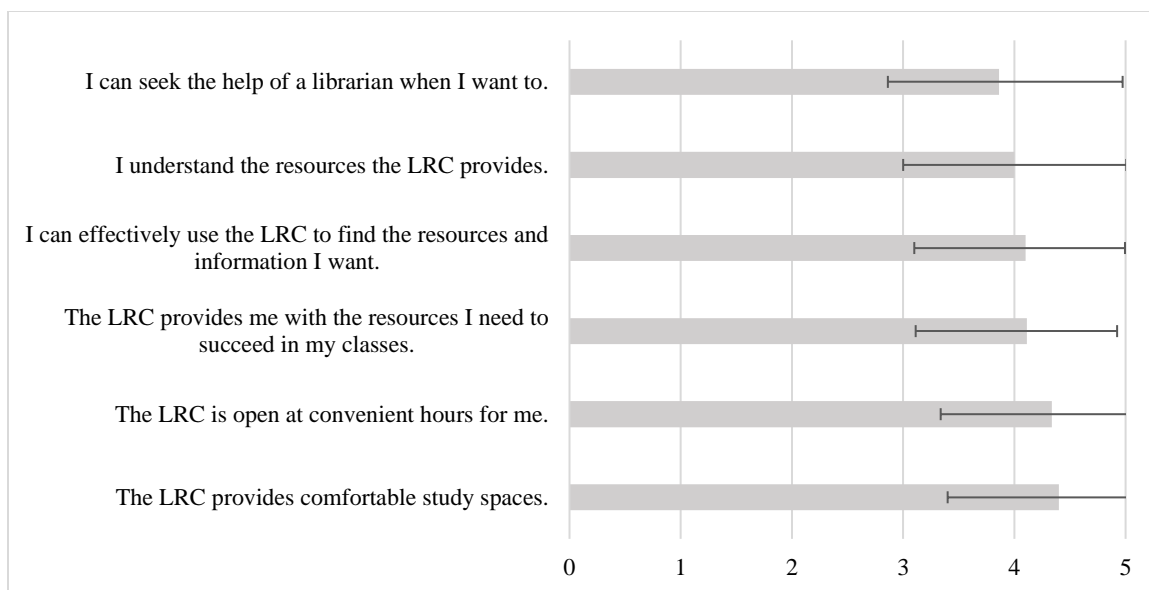*Student-Athlete Satisfaction Survey Results: Academic Advisor by Mean*

Figure 5

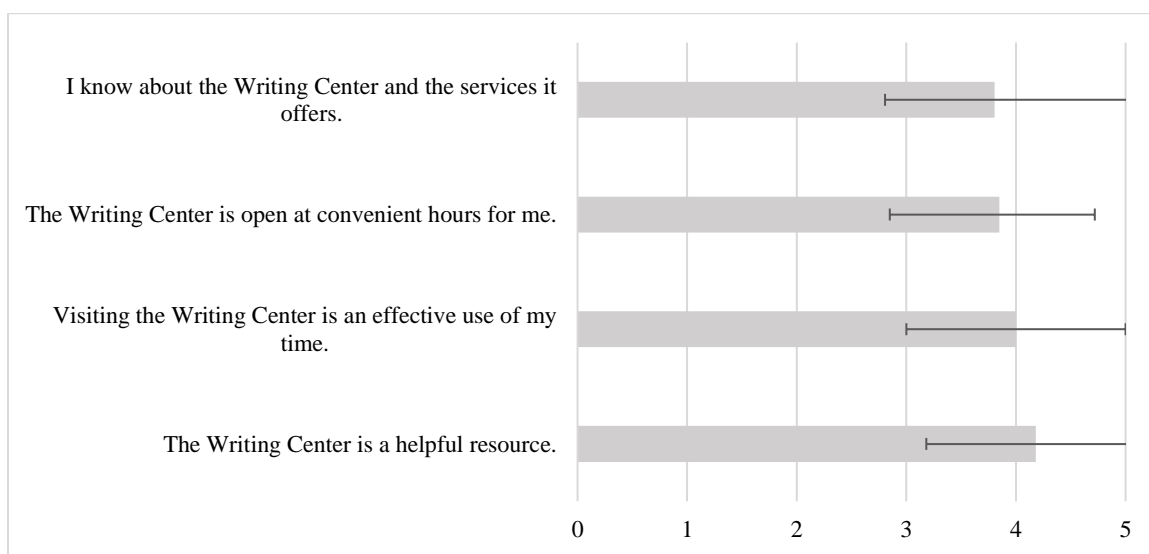*Student-Athlete Satisfaction Survey Results: Learning Resource Center by Mean*

Figure 6

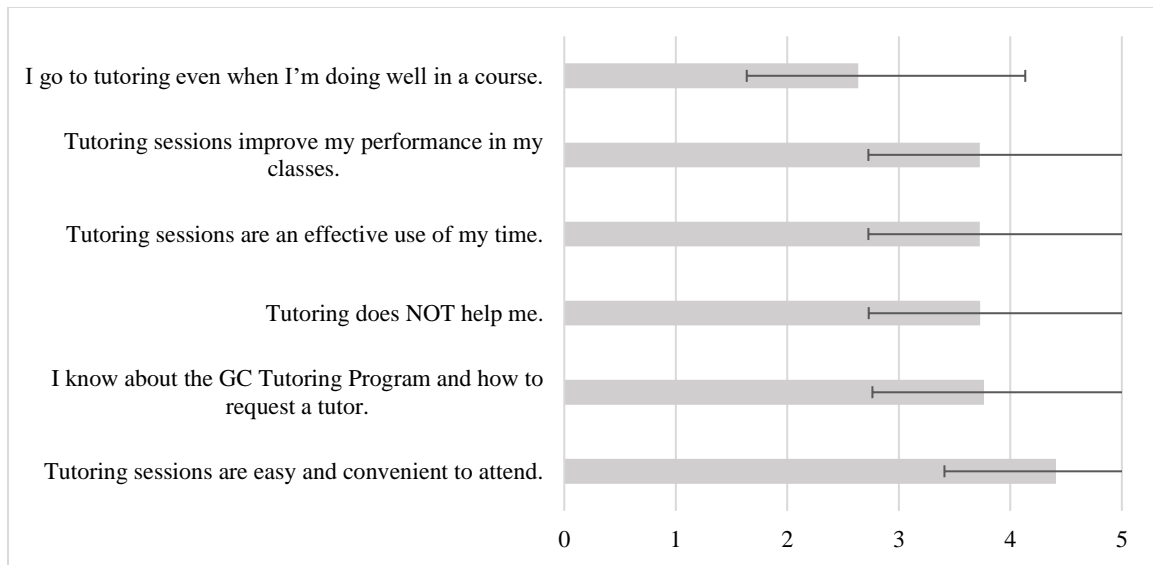*Student-Athlete Satisfaction Survey Results: Writing Center by Mean*

Figure 7

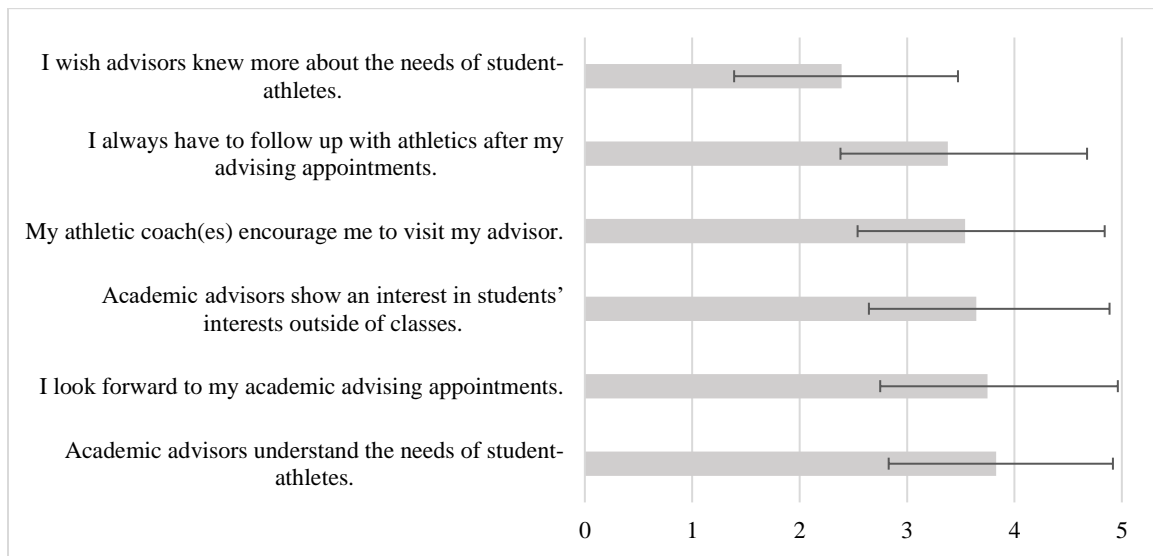*Student-Athlete Satisfaction Survey Results: Tutoring by Mean*

Figure 8

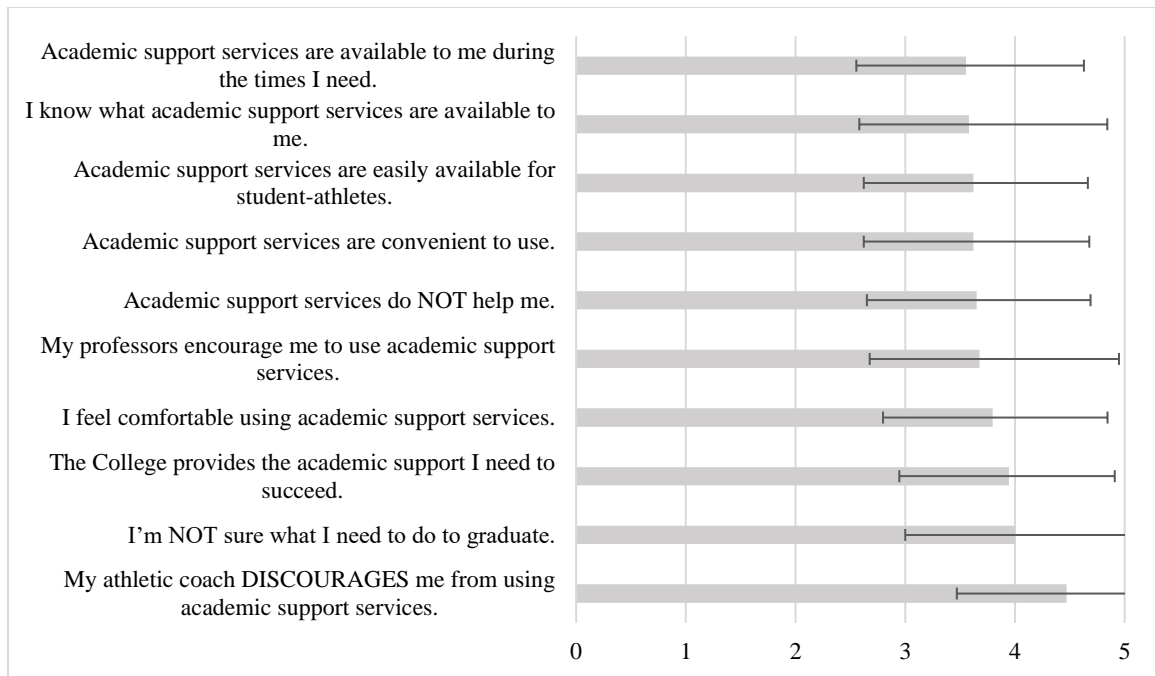*Student-Athlete Satisfaction Survey Results: Academic Advising by Mean*

Figure 9
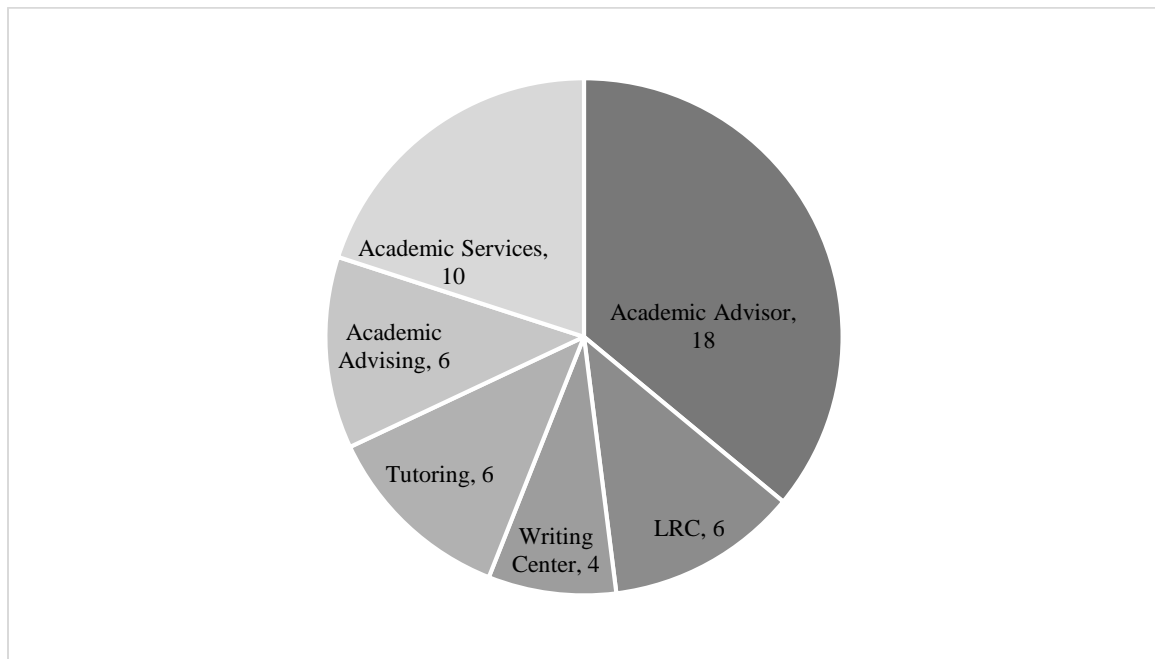*Student-Athlete Satisfaction Survey Results: Academic Services by Mean*

Figure 10
Student-Athlete Satisfaction Survey Question Breakdown by Category