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Student-Athletes & Academic Success

A Comparison of the Graduation Rates, GPA and After College Success of
Student-Athletes and Regular Students

Julia Forster

Honors College Thesis

Advisor: Professor David Smith

Introduction

Sports are a huge part of American people's lives. Americans spend over \$100 billion annually on sports. This expense is the fourth highest in the United States, with only our defense, education systems and health getting more. Through these numbers, it is evident that sports have a big impact on the culture of American life and influence far beyond the playing field. A sport provides its athletes with many benefits. Not only can sports provide athletes with popularity, authority and money, sports can also provide athletes with a sense of internal achievement and success (Andre & James, 1991).

Guttman notes that once athletes are finished being recruited, they often tend to focus on their athletic pursuits, instead of their academic ones. Although many questions have been raised about the ethics of recruiting someone who is well below the requested levels, some defend the coaches in saying that, "We may not make a university student out of him, but if we can teach him to read and write, maybe he can work at the post office rather than as a garbage man when he gets through his athletic career (Guttman, 26.)" Many consider athletics to be intrinsically educational. In addition, others believe that it works well as a character builder. Participation in athletics has helped athletes learn loyalty, teamwork and how to perform in pressure situations, etc. One interesting thing that was noted by Simon was that in some cases, "education can be viewed as an obstacle the athletic program must overcome to keep its players eligible (Simon, 53.)"

The goal of the NCAA, as declared in the NCAA Manual is to "initiate, stimulate, and improve intercollegiate athletic programs for student-athletes and develop educational leadership, physical fitness, sports participation as a recreational pursuit and athletic excellence (Renick, 546)." In addition, the NCAA seeks to "maintain intercollegiate athletics as an integral

part of the educational program and the athlete as an integral part of the student body” and “retain a clear line...between college athletics and professional sports (Renick, 546).” As Renick points out, although there are many athletes who excel in both their athletic and academic pursuits, there are also many that do not. Many athletes are so focused on their sport and performing well athletically that they only worry about maintaining their eligibility. Many of these students choose easy majors, take easy courses, etc (Renick, 549). Many stereotypes exist about the academic success and failure of student-athletes. The idea of the “dumb jock” is often promulgated, unchallenged, by the general academic community. This thesis examines whether the stereotype has merit by comparing the academic success characteristics of student-athletes versus the general student body at collegiate institutions and beyond (Hildenbrand).

Graduation Rates

According to NCAA President Myles Brand “the academic achievement of our student-athletes continues to improve (Eckard, 45).” Brand stated that it was “one of our [NCAA] greatest success stories (Eckard, 45).” Many have argued that the NCAA exploits college athletes by requiring they be unpaid amateurs. The NCAA believes, however, that these students are not being exploited because their scholarships allow them to receive a college degree. The NCAA claims that the graduation rate for student-athletes is higher than those of the general student body. However, this statistic is biased. The graduation rate of student-athletes is higher than the general student body but many non-athlete students that are included in these figures are part-time students. In contrast, student-athletes must be full time students to be eligible. As Eckard (2010) determined, the graduation rates are significantly different when you compare full-time athletes to full-time students. When comparing the graduation rates of football and

basketball players to the full-time general student body, the results show that these athletes graduate at significantly lower rates.

According to David Horton (2009), athletes have often been seen as having lower motivation, organization skills, and intelligence than the general student body. Some have accused athletes of enrolling in easy classes and declaring easy majors so they can remain athletically eligible. Many even believe that athletic participation decreases the graduation rate and that athletes spend little time and/or energy on their academic pursuits as a result of their athletic demands. These beliefs are at odds with the NCAA's statements that student-athletes are students first, and that they should focus on their academic before their athletic activities. Horton states that many community college student-athletes view academic success as remaining eligible and meeting the minimum requirements to be able to continue their athletic careers at a four-year institution.

According to a study conducted by Adler and Adler (1985), student athletes often identify themselves as athletes before students. Adler learned about these athletes opinions as the "team sociologist (Adler & Adler, 242)." Adler worked by counseling players in their personal, social and academic issues. Through his counseling, Adler found that athletes tend to focus on their athletic interests over their academics. However, Horton (2009) found quite the opposite. In his study of community college athletes he found that athletes understand that they need to stay academically sound to be able to remain on their respective teams and this increased their desire to remain eligible and perform well academically. Many students also highlighted the fact that their participation in college athletics had improved their discipline, commitment to their studies, and their networking opportunities. In conclusion, Horton believes it is the responsibility of the coaches, athletics departments, and institutions to make sure athletes are not only having athletic

success but also being successful within the classroom. Horton believes there are three things an institution can do to increase the chance of this happening. First, they can invest in staff members that work to ensure student athletes are on track to achieve their academic goals. Second, institutions can invest in resources to help student athletes such as tutors, counselors and workshops. Last, institutions can encourage their faculty to get involved in their student athletes' lives and be more involved with the athletics department.

Patrick James Rishe extended prior research in his study on the graduation rates of student-athletes compared to the general student body. He used a sample of all the Division I schools that had complete data. The graduation rate for student-athletes for an entire sample was 58.15% compared to a graduation rate of 54.62% for all other undergraduates. This difference is significant based on a paired t-test. This difference in graduation rates would be even bigger if student athletes weren't leaving so frequently to play professionally. Women's basketball had the highest graduation rate for athletes. The male basketball graduation rate was the lowest at just 42.36%. Female and non-revenue generating male athletes are much more prepared entering college and are more likely to graduate, as these athletes often face little pressure to turn professional. Overall, female athletes outperformed male athletes with a graduation rate of 67.51% compared to 52.46% for male athletes. In addition, athletes outperformed undergraduates in all categories. Black male athletes had a 43.32% graduation rate compared to a graduation rate of just 37.39% for black undergraduates. The most significant difference, however, was in the black female undergraduates. Black female athletes had a graduation rate of 58.86% compared to a rate of 44.92% for black female undergraduates. Statistics like these suggest that athletics can play a positive role in academic achievement, especially for minorities. Both women and black athletes are greatly benefited from playing a sport in college. There is

also evidence suggesting that undergraduates have higher graduation rates at schools with bigger athletic programs, though many believe this can be explained by the additional academic resources of these schools. There is no evidence, based on this study, that graduation rates of student athletes are negatively affected by greater levels of athletic success. Actually, better athletic performance results in a bigger difference between the student athlete and undergraduate graduation rates, except in men’s basketball; where there is a lot of pressure to turn professional.

GRADUATION RATES	
Eckard:	Graduation Rates for Student-Athletes are higher
	Graduation Rates more equal when compare athletes to other full-time students
	Graduation Rates of football and men’s basketball lower than full-time students
Horton:	Community college athletes understand need to be academically eligible
	Some only work towards remaining eligible and meeting minimum requirements
Adler & :	Athletes focus on athletic interests over academics
Patrick James Rische:	Athletes had significantly higher graduation rate
	Women and non-revenue generating athletes have greater chance of graduating
	Women and black athletes have much higher rates than respective undergraduates

GPA Comparison

In a study done by Maloney and McCormick (1991), the GPAs of college athletes and regular students from Clemson University were compared over the 1988-1989 year. Maloney and McCormick found that athletes, as a whole, do not perform as well as the general student body. They used almost 300,000 grades from undergraduates and roughly 13,000 grades from athletes during their study. One interesting point is that football was a large portion of the athletic population, making up about 28% of the athletes in the sample. The average GPA of an athlete was 2.379 while the average GPA of a non-athlete was 2.681. The researchers performed a t-test with the null hypothesis that the mean of the non-athlete students' mean subtracted from the student-athletes’ mean was equal to zero. The difference in GPAs for student-athletes and

general students was significant. In opposition, certain sports did perform significantly better than the average. For example, two women's sports were equal to the general student body and two women's sports actually had higher grades than the student body. Although this was a useful first test, it did not take into account important variables that could have affected the outcome. For example, student-athletes tend to be able to get into schools that they would not have qualified for without being an athlete. These students often have lower SAT scores and lower high school GPAs and would be more likely to get lower grades even if they weren't athletes. Another point that must be emphasized is that these results don't necessarily imply causation, they simply imply correlation.

To control for these variables, a formula was created to take into account the difficulty of each class, the number of students in a class, the course load of the student, the SAT score of the student, the student's sex, race, and other factors. As a result of this equation, a new evaluation could be made that would compare the academic success, as measured in GPA, of student-athletes and regular students while taking into account the variables mentioned above. Even with the control variables included, the student-athletes' grades were still significantly lower than those of regular students. As a result of these findings, the study shows that a student's academic achievements are negatively impacted by sports participation. The mean difference, however, was very small: 0.02 of a grade point. However, in revenue-producing sports such as football and men's basketball, this difference was magnified. These two sports showed significant differences between student-athletes and regular students, with the student-athletes having much lower GPAs. When these sports were not taken into account, there was no difference between student athletes and regular students.

One result of the study was the validation that athletes do have lower academic qualifications entering college than do non-athletes. Athletes in this study had a classroom rank of 63% while non athletes had a class rank of almost 82%. In addition, the average SAT score of non athletes was slightly over 1000 while the SAT score of athletes was slightly over 850. The lower SAT scores had a -0.11 coefficient while the lower class rank had a -0.14 coefficient. These results show that an athlete's lower starting credentials have a -0.25 effect on a student's GPA, meaning that an athlete will get a grade lower in one quarter of the classes they take based solely on their lower starting positions. The findings of the Maloney and McCormick study are as follows. Firstly, their sample of regular students outperformed college athletes in the classroom. That said, the SAT scores of athletes were, in general, about 150 points lower than those of the general student body. In addition, their high school rank was about 20 percentage points below the regular students'. These two background issues, on their own, predict that college athletes will perform worse in their classes. The extent of these two issues' effects is estimated to be -0.3, which means that college athletes get a letter grade worse than their peers in three out of ten classes they take.

College students, on average, have a GPA of 2.68 with a standard deviation of 1.82. Using these figures and the -0.3 coefficient just determined, the average GPA of athletes would be 2.38. Using a normal distribution for this mean would imply that 42% of athletes fail to maintain the 2.0 GPA required to graduate compared to 35% of non athletes. Graduation rates for athletes are roughly seven percentage points, 58% compared to 65%, below regular students in this prediction. In reality, the graduation rates of student-athletes are ten percentage points below those of the general student body in the historical mean. Maloney & McCormick also found that athletes in revenue producing sports do worse academically, even when their

academic histories are taken into consideration. These football and men's basketball athletes receive a letter lower grade in 10% of their classes, even taking into account their lower starting points.

GPA: In Season vs. Out of Season

In order to determine if athletes do worse because of the time commitment of athletic practices, games, etc., a study was conducted by Maloney and McCormick (1991) to compare the grades of athletes during and out of season. If athletes performed worse during their sport season, in terms of GPA, then it would make sense that it is indeed the time of college athletics that hinders their performance. In football, the in season coefficient was -0.543. This number shows that football players receive a full letter grade lower in half of the classes they take during their season. In their offseason, their grades are better than non-athletes but are not high enough to negate the effects of their lower in-season grades. In the other seven sports with seasons that are well defined, the results showed a coefficient of -0.312. This coefficient shows that athletes get a letter grade worse than their non-athlete counterparts in 30% of the classes they take during their sport season. An interesting finding of the study, however, was that in the six nonrevenue sports, the coefficient was a mere -0.012. This coefficient means that nonrevenue athletes receive a grade lower only roughly 1% of the time, a very small difference. In the offseason, these same athletes received a grade letter higher than their peers 5% of the time, making their GPA's higher than their fellow undergraduates over the course of a year. In addition, these nonrevenue athletes had no significant grading differential between their on-season and off-season grades. For the purpose of the study, the sports with well-defined seasons were those where there was one semester (Fall or Spring) where there was significantly more practice times, meetings, etc. In this study the sports with well-defined seasons were baseball, football, golf,

soccer, tennis (men’s and women’s) and volleyball. Both football and the seven well defined sports had positive coefficients in their offseason but not high enough to counter their negative coefficients during the season.

Some variables pertaining to these results were whether athletes take harder courses, larger course loads or came to school less prepared. The results found that athletes in revenue sports do not take larger course loads during season; in fact, they take much lighter loads. Therefore, course load is not a determinant of the different grades in and out of season. In addition, the study found that in terms of course difficulty, athletes tend to take courses of similar difficulty during their season and in the offseason. Therefore, the difficulty of the course is not a reason for lower academic performance. Lastly, it was suggested that maybe athletes are less qualified entering students because of poorer high school educations. However, the results show that, in general, athletes come from high schools that are educationally equal to those of regular students.

GPA Comparison:	
Maloney & McCormick	<p align="center"><u>Athletes Compared to Student Body</u></p> <p>-Athletes as a whole do not perform as well as general student body -2.379 average GPA for Athletes and 2.681 average for regular students</p> <p>-Even taking into account different backgrounds, athletes still perform worse -Academic achievement negatively affected by sports participation -Difference small in non revenue sports but much larger in revenue sports</p> <p align="center"><u>In Season-Vs. Out of Season Scores</u></p> <p>-Athletes in revenue generating sports have significantly lower GPA's in season -Athletes in non revenue sports had no significant grading differential</p>

Reasons for Conflicting Results

As Adler and Adler explained, there have been different results and findings about the effect athletics participation has on the student-athletes’ academic success. Some studies have

found a small positive relationship. These studies have found that college athletes, despite having lower academic credentials from high school, have better GPAs, lower dropout rates and larger graduation rates. This study found that the likely reason for this outcome was more academic help, more attention, and special treatment for athletes. That said, most studies performed have found a negative relationship between athletic participation and academic performance. These studies have found that athletes are more focused on advancing their athletic careers than their academic careers. As a result, these student-athletes have lower GPAs, higher dropout rates, and lower graduation rates. The reasoning for these differences in results could be a variety of things. For starters, the university at which the study is done would have a big impact on the results as some schools put more pressure on athletes, lower their admissions standards, etc. For example, schools with more revenue-producing sports would also probably have more athletes looking to go professional and would therefore have lower graduation rates. Although these differing results might be confusing, these differences are important in understanding which type of student-athletes are most likely to struggle and which are most likely to succeed.

Negative Cognitive Effects of Sports on Academic Achievement

Adler and Adler's studies also found a negative relationship between athletic participation at the collegiate level and academic achievement. Adler and Adler were not only able to determine if athletic participation hurts or helps academic achievement with their study, they were also able to determine the reasons that this relationship exists. This study found that although students start out with ambitious goals and academic aspirations, these student-athletes quickly lose interest as their athletic activities take up so much of their time. In addition, the study found that athletics leads to a "de-individuation" of student-athletes. Student-athletes start

out their academic careers with very different interests and aspirations but as their athletics becomes more and more time-consuming, they slowly give up these unique interests. By the time most of these athletes complete their requirements, their goals and interests are very similar to one another. These student-athletes are collectively detached from their studies and show decreasing academic success.

Many of these student-athletes started out college with a positive attitude believing that a college education would help them be successful in the future. Some even had the notion that they would automatically get a degree after attending college for four years. These students believed that they would attend classes regularly and submit the work and that as a result, they would be able to graduate. Many of these freshmen felt that there would be no problems and this task would almost be accomplished easily. Almost half of the athletes upon entering college were interested in preprofessional majors. Another 45% were more focused on just turning professional and chose relatively non-challenging majors such as physical education. Despite not having solid academic goals, these student-athletes still believed they would be able to make it through and receive a degree at the end of their college career. Fewer than ten percent of student-athletes started college with no goals towards getting a degree. With these students, their main interest was remaining eligible.

One of the big changes student-athletes noticed the most from high school to college sports was the professionalization of their sport. These athletes realize in their first few months at college that they are no longer playing for enjoyment but instead their sport is more like a job. Additionally, college sports take up a lot more of a student's time than do high school sports. College athletes not only have three hours of practice a day, they also are required to watch film, be available for team meetings and be on the road for a few days for away games. By the

conclusion of their freshman year, a majority of athletes would openly acknowledge that their athletic participation had negatively affected their success in their classroom. Some athletes felt that they were not in control of their academic studies, as their coaches often managed their schedules, classes, etc. Many of the athletes also struggled with their desire to receive praise. Athletes would often get positive reinforcement for doing well athletically but their academic successes were often ignored.

Adler and Adler came to the following conclusions. First, athletes often externalized the blame for their failures academically. They blamed their professors, lack of time, and other external factors, and never considered that it could be their fault. In addition, athletes often changed their academic goals. Only about 25% of athletes intending to be in a preprofessional major actually stayed in their major throughout college. The 25% that stayed in their major, although they didn't change majors, often were less successful than their non athlete peers and contributed less effort to their academic pursuits. Many of these athletes barely achieved the necessary GPA and credit hours required to be eligible. Of the 75% of athletes that had to drop out of their preprofessional major, many switched to more "manageable" majors, with the idea that their athletic successes would help them get jobs with boosters after college. About 20% of athletes that started out their college career with easier majors, such as recreation and physical education, graduated while the other 80% often realized their chance of graduating was small.

Unchallenging Classes

Some colleges even award academic credit for participating in athletics. At one university, 1,956 of the 2,001 men enrolled in one of these courses received an A. The average grade point average in these courses was a 3.96 compared to a 2.75 average GPA for male

athletes during that same period. The certification of “courses” like these often makes bystanders question the integrity and the academic intellect of many college student-athletes. These “Easy A” courses help ensure some athletes remain eligible but also give people reasons to believe that all student-athletes struggle academically (Renick, 550).

Athletes Subculture

One of the social aspects that Adler and Adler found that influenced college athletes is the unique bond between athletes. These athletes formed a sort of peer subculture where conversations often were about athletic, not academic, issues. The study actually found that some athletes got made fun of for doing too well and this also influenced the athlete's effort on future tests and assignments. Athletes often felt “it was better not to try than to try and not succeed (Adler & Adler, 247).”

Clustering

Another area of concern that has been discussed is the possible “clustering” of majors that occurs, as a result of the progress towards degree and GPA requirements. *USA Today* found that many athletics teams were guilty of clustering. For purpose of the study, clustering was defined as having a fourth of the team members for large teams and a third of the team members for smaller teams in similar majors. Although clustering is not always considered a negative, it can be harmful when students are choosing majors based on their desire to remain eligible as opposed to their future occupational interests. In addition, this clustering towards easy majors often results in higher graduation rates. Unfortunately, these students are often graduating with degrees they have no interest in and/or have no use for (Upton & Novak, 2008).

At one university, with over 130 majors total, 25% of their athletes chose business. Many believe athletes do this because these larger majors have more electives and can better fit an athlete's schedule. The study also found that high school GPA and ACT/SAT scores were great predictors of college success for both student-athletes and non-athletes (James, 2010).

Effect of Study Hall

One very interesting finding of the study was that as the number of study hall hours increased, the lower the GPA was. Although this result may come as a surprise, many institutions base the number of study hall hours on GPA. The NCAA requires all freshmen student athletes to start with a certain number of hours but after that, the GPA they receive determines any future study hall requirements. The negative relationship, therefore, makes sense because the students who are struggling the most have the most study hall hours and those that are doing well are often excused from study hall altogether. Over half the students were not required to attend study hall in this study and a majority of those exempt would be because of high academic achievement (James, 2010).

Admissions

Many question whether institutions should lighten up their academic standards for admission of athletes. One dean of a Top 20 business school got asked this question. He originally responded that this was not the case but decided to ask the director of admissions to make sure. He learned in the process that the admissions committee does give athletes a little more leeway with their scores and GPAs because they take athletic participation "as a sign of energy, stamina, and a goal-oriented approach to life (Shulman & Bowen, 91)." One admissions

worker explained it like this, “I always liked athletes for the same reasons that I liked people who had been in the military: they were confident, team-oriented, and had the interpersonal skills to do well in a corporate environment...it was definitely a tilt factor that we used as a proxy for the characteristics that we were looking for, because we knew what the employers would be looking for at the other end (Shulman & Bowen, 91).”

Men’s After College Earnings

Another area that is important to compare when we are determining the overall achievement of the students is their success after college. Although a high GPA is very important, this doesn’t mean anything if a student does not have the skills to succeed in the post college world. Male athletes out earned regular college students in Ivy universities, liberal arts colleges, Division 1A public and private universities. In the oldest group of male workers, the athletes earned \$10,000 more a year in 1995 than the general student body. This difference was even bigger in the group of graduates from 1976. The athletes had average salaries of \$111,000 compared to the \$98,000 salary of the non athletes. One reason for this higher salary average for athletes could be their greater interest in the for-profit sector of the economy. Almost 80% of the athletes were in the for-profit sector of the economy in the 1976 cohort, compared to just 72% of the non athletes. Employees in the for-profit sector made \$41,000 more in that cohort than those in the non-profit section. Another interesting point to note is that athletes in the not-for-profit sector did not make significantly more than the non athletes at a difference of only \$1,000. However, in the for-profit sector, athletes made almost ten thousand more than the non athletes in 1995 (Shulman & Bowen).

Women Athletes Advanced Degrees and After College Earnings

Women athletes, on average, have a higher rate of graduation than regular students. An area where women athletes differ from men is in their pursuit of advanced degrees. The percentage of female athletes receiving a Masters, Ph.D., J.D., M.D. and MBA are all higher than students in general. Thirty two percent of athletes received a Masters, compared to 28% of the general student body. Although these results are promising, more recent evidence suggests that as women's sports have become more competitive, less academically qualified females have been admitted into universities and are decreasing the difference. That said, it is important to understand that although the athletes' advantage has decreased, these less qualified athletes are still holding their ground against their more qualified and academically superior counterparts. The percentages are equal in every degree area except two. The general female student body is 1% above the athletes in the pursuit of a J.D. while the opposite is true for the MBA program. Female athletes were similar to the men in that they displayed an unusually high amount of competitiveness but were different in that, unlike their male counterparts, female athletes were less likely to be greatly concerned with their financial situations. In addition, the concentration of former athletes in business environments that has been evident in the male population is not very common in the female athletes group as of now. Women athletes tend to concentrate in the areas of higher education and medicine, instead. Women athletes on average had annual wages \$7,000 higher than the general student population. This disparity increased in the for-profit sector, with a difference of \$15,000 but smaller in the not-for-profit section with a difference of only \$3,000. Female athletes did make more than non athletes in all of the categories but the differences varied with the sector. Although female athletes earned less overall, when we take

into account the sector of employment, females are benefitted more from participating in athletics than are males (Shulman & Bowen).

After College Earnings	
Shulman & Bowen	<p align="center"><u>Male Athletes</u></p> <p>-Athletes earn more after college than non athletes</p> <p>-Possible cause might be greater concentration in for-profit sector</p>
	<p align="center"><u>Female Athletes</u></p> <p>-Athletes earn more than non athletes</p> <p>-Unlike males, however, female athletes not as interested in for-profit sector</p> <p>-Female Athletes benefitted more, as a percentage, than male athletes from playing sports</p>

Difficulties in Research

Student-athletes are often believed to be admitted for the athletic benefits they can provide to their institution. In contrast, non-athletes are admitted based more on their academic credentials. Many researchers have failed to show that athletes do worse academically than non athletes because they can't find enough regular students that are similar to athletes in their backgrounds, high school scores, etc. At the lower level of competition (DIII), participating on sports teams has been correlated with increased satisfaction in a student's overall college experience, more motivation to receive a degree, and a better set of both communication and leadership skills. As Shulman and Bowen found, there was no significant difference in academic performance between athletes and non-athletes when all the other possible variables were taken into consideration. Although many popular athletes did not perform well in their studies, this would have been expected of them based on past scores and their backgrounds (Hildenbrand).

Summary of Findings:

Regarding the question of whether student-athletes are more successful in their academic pursuits, the following has been found. In terms of college graduation rates, student-athletes graduate at a slightly higher rate than the general student body. That said, all student-athletes are required to be full-time students while many undergraduates are part-time. These part-time undergraduates lower the graduation rate of non athletes. When the graduation rates of student-athletes and full-time students are compared, the graduation rate difference is much smaller. Football and men's basketball players graduate at much lower rates the general student body, when the part-time students are taken out of the equation.

In addition to comparing the graduation rates of the entire student body to student-athletes, there were also some interesting findings when comparing the results of women and black athletes compared to their respective undergraduate groups. Female athletes graduated at significantly higher rates than male athletes and also significantly higher rates than female undergraduates. In addition, black students were much more likely to graduate if they participated in a sport than the general black student body.

Another important discovery made in this thesis was that athletes in non-revenue generating sports not only have higher graduation rates, they also generally have higher GPA's. These athletes feel less pressure to turn professional and are more interested in performing well academically and receiving their degree. That said, it is important to note that these athletes tend to come into college more qualified than athletes of revenue-generating sports.

In terms of GPA, Maloney and McCormick (1991) found that college athletes, on average, do not perform as well as the general student population. The average GPA of a college athlete was only 2.379, while the average GPA of a regular student was 2.681. This difference in

GPA's was determined to be significant based on a t-test. Although on average athletes performed worse, further analysis shows that some individual sports teams did beat the average GPA. Although this study was useful in some respects, it did not control for the differences in the student's classes, course load, background, etc. However, even when all these variables were taken into account, there was still a significant difference between athletes and the general student body's GPA's.

In regards to performance in-season vs. out of season, it was determined that athletes in revenue generating sports do perform significantly worse in season. These athletes received a grade lower in 30% of their classes during season. During the off-season, these same athletes outperformed their peers but not enough to negate their poor in season performance. However, athletes in nonrevenue sports did not perform significantly worse during their season.

Evidence was also found that "clustering" does occur with athletes in collegiate institutions. This clustering generally occurs in easier majors and can sometimes be very harmful to the athlete who might choose to get a degree in an area that they are not interested in. Additionally, many schools give academic credit for athletic participation and these schools really hurt the image of the student-athlete.

The last subject discussed in this thesis was the success of athletes after college. Despite lower GPA's, athletes of both genders tend to earn more in their occupations after college than the general student body. One possible explanation for this difference in the male athletes is that these athletes tend to be more interested in the for-profit sector, which generally has higher salaries. That said, female athletes still earn more than their female undergraduate counterparts despite being less interested in the for-profit sector than men. Overall, female athletes benefit more from sports participation than male athletes do.

Further Study

Based on the results presented here, it would seem that research in this area needs to be updated to the present time. Although past results are very helpful in some ways, many of the studies are outdated. The NCAA and college athletics have evolved so much in the last few years and there haven't been many studies determining the possible changes in the findings. Further research in the area of the success of athletes after college would be helpful. It would be interesting to determine whether someone would be more successful in the long run getting a lower GPA and participating in sports or receiving a higher GPA but as a non athlete.

Conclusion:

Overall, it seems this area is in need of more research but some of the results found already are very promising. This data, if put in the right hands, could greatly help faculty, administrators and athletics personnel understand the mindset, difficulties and needs of the college student-athlete. Student-athletes should favor their academic over their athletic interests if they wish to succeed in the long run. Although there are always the cases of athletes doing extremely well financially after leaving college, this is not common. The first thing a student-athlete needs to understand at college is that the most important "muscle" they need to develop is the one between their ears. There will never be an athlete that gets cut for being too smart but there are a lot of former athletes that cannot find employment because they are not prepared enough. Although the graduation rate will never be 100% nor will the student-athletes' average GPA be a 4.0, a strong emphasis on academic achievement can greatly improve these rates and result in even more success after college for these athletes.

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