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### The Mindful Athlete Program

JoAnne Bullard

Rowan University, bullardj@rowan.edu

SoJung Kim

Rowan University, kims@rowan.edu

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## The Mindful Athlete Program

Dr. JoAnne Bullard and Dr. SoJung Kim  
Health and Exercise Science Department

### Introduction

According to the spring 2020 NCAA Well-Being Study, collegiate student-athletes reported experiencing mental health concerns due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The data indicated that student-athletes were experiencing mental health concerns 150%-250% higher than historically reported (NCAA, 2020). These concerns were prevalent among all divisions. For Division III student-athletes, mental health concerns experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic included “feeling overwhelmed by all they had to do, sleep difficulties, feeling mentally exhausted, feeling very lonely, feeling a sense of loss, and feeling very lonely and sad” (NCAA, 2020). This study indicated desired resources of Division III student-athletes included elements such as “maintaining physical fitness, mental health, and staying connected socially” (NCAA, 2020).

### Specific Aims

A holistic approach to incorporating a mind-body modality into an educational setting will serve as the framework for this program. The Mindful Athlete Program (MAP) will include two components in each session: an active yoga component and an educational component based on enhancing mental health and well-being. The active component of the session will include a 20-minute yoga session instructed by certified yoga instructors employed at the Rowan University Recreation Center. The following 20 minutes will include an educational component addressing student-athletes' well-being and mental health concerns. Practitioners employed by Rowan University will lead sessions discussing mental health, sports psychology, mindfulness, and wellness. This 3-month program will have three data point collections at baseline, 6-weeks and 12-weeks. Off-season student-athletes will serve as the population for this program since their competition schedules will be in low demand, and they will have the time to invest in this program. We will hold a focus group at the end of the program to evaluate the benefits of the program.



### Methods

**Subjects:** 60 Division III off-season student-athletes

### Research Design:

1. To measure mental health factors, such as anxiety and depression, participants will complete the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21), the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index and the World Health Organization Quality of Life assessment at the program's baseline, 6-week mark, and 12-week mark. In addition, a demographic questionnaire will be included during the initial intake of participants.
2. Key findings will be applied in a practical environment in the educational setting since this program model will assess the needs of student-athletes and match them with the opportunity to learn about available services already established on the Rowan University campus. Examples may include mental health services on campus, support from coaches and athletic administration, guidance from the Office of Career Advancement and the Office of Academic Transition and Support Programs, and collaboration with the Health and Exercise Science, School of Osteopathic Medicine, and Psychology Departments.
3. Programmatic outcomes will be evaluated both in the short- and long-term by measuring the initial follow-up with student-athletes that will be conducted at the baseline, at 6-weeks and at 12-weeks, where they will retake the assessments. Our research team will assess the feasibility of recruitment, adherence, retention, safety, and treatment fidelity.
4. An additional follow-up will occur after the completion of the program, where previous participating student-athletes will serve as the focus group to discuss program outcomes.