

**Academic Support Services for Collegiate Student-Athletes**

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## Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to identify which academic support services enhance the academic success of student-athletes competing in NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) sports. A thorough literature review was conducted regarding NCAA eligibility standards, retention and graduation rates, and academic services. Peer-reviewed articles written in English that were published after 2001 were required for inclusion. Twenty-five articles were used to create the thesis. These studies have revealed greater retention and graduation rates at universities that assist their student-athletes with their academics. Student-athletes also exhibit higher levels of satisfaction when they attend institutions with appropriately qualified staff, modernized facilities, and flexible hours. Various articles were used to collect data from numerous universities across the nation and shed light on each division in the NCAA (Division I, Division II, and Division III). Although the results varied by division, location, sample size, and other variables, the overall research indicated that providing student-athletes with access to academic support programs does improve their academic performance.

## Acknowledgments

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## I. INTRODUCTION

College student-athletes across the country are being recruited by schools only to fall short due to a lack of academic support. It is not often that both the university and the athletic department "...work together with the individual student-athlete's best interests in mind" (Satterfield, 2010, para. 2). This may be because athletic departments are typically viewed as independent organizations separate from the university. College scouts know that to get an elite student-athlete on their team, they must spark an initial attraction (Czekanski & Barnhill, 2015). To do this, coaches draw attention to the athletic resources available compared to other colleges. They often start by presenting recruits with extrinsic factors. Coaches emphasize guaranteed scholarships, potential playing time, and media exposure. Czekanski and Barnhill's survey of 102 respondents showed the most important factors student-athletes considered when picking a college to attend and play for. According to the findings, the school's location, the quality of the athletic facilities, and feeling comfortable on the team were the major determinants of the college they chose.

A similar study was done using data collected from eight institutions. Le Crom (2009) and her colleagues observed 12,980 individuals over four years. Their findings suggested that highly recruited student-athletes focus mainly on "...scholarship status, the strength of the athletic program, expected playing time, coaching styles and personalities, as well as the cohesion of the team" (Le Crom et al., 2009, p.15).

During the recruitment of student-athletes, the students' interest in a college focused on the athletic department not academic supports. Research on student-athlete

satisfaction with collegiate academic services is lacking. Even though academic services are readily available at many universities, this does not necessarily indicate that the services are sufficient to support student-athletes' needs. For example, institutions connected to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) have been required to offer academic services to all student-athletes. However, student-athletes report needing help formulating study habits and time management skills, supports not always readily available at every institution (Bartolome & Kassin, 2019). Services vary at each institution, making it difficult for every student-athlete to get proper support when needed. For instance, meetings with academic advisors may not occur during the season when athletes are traveling, and tutoring sessions may be held at inconvenient times like during practice or on a game day (Banbel & Chen, 2014). Additionally, three criteria used by the NCAA to determine student-athlete eligibility are “grades, minimum credit hours per year and progress toward earning a degree” (NCAA), which can make earning a degree more challenging without the right supports. Several articles have noted that student-athletes are more likely to stick to their academic objectives if they receive the right guidance (Huml, 2014; Brouwer, 2022).

Due to the lack of research on student-athlete satisfaction with academic services, this research will determine which academic supports best enhance academic success of collegiate student-athletes.

### **Overview of Study**

The research was critically analyzed to discover which academic support models enrich the academic success of student-athletes at the college level. Data from over

twenty sources was collected to compose this comprehensive secondary research. Academic journals were found using Anna Maria College online databases such as Academic OneFile, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), and Google Scholar.

The increased demand for academic reform on college campuses drives this thesis. For instance, a study done in 2001 touched on problems related to academic advising and counseling for college-level student-athletes. Broughton and Neyer (2001) suggested possible advising and counseling models that could be used at any university. Gayles' (2003) study also found that student-athletes reap the benefits of academic advising. Her study examined three different advising models and explained which are most helpful given certain situations (Gayles, 2003).

On another note, several researchers (Hollis, 2001-2002; Kane, 2008; Huml, 2019) have discussed the significance of colleges implementing summer bridge programs (SBPs) for incoming student-athletes. Huml (2019) described three ways bridge programs positively impact student-athletes. For example, SBPs grant student-athletes the opportunity to meet with academic professionals. They also set time aside for "...athletic academic advisors to assess the academic ability of their student-athletes..." (Huml et al., 2019, p.13). Most important, bridge programs introduce student-athletes to the expectations of college.

Tutoring and mentoring strategies will also be reviewed and discussed in this paper. Three higher education professionals conducted quantitative and qualitative research to examine the influence of academic support programs on student-athletes.

Their findings suggest that tutoring is a “...valuable resource in furthering academic success” (Williams et al., 2010, p.230). On the other hand, mentoring programs also aid student-athletes in their college experience. The results of mentoring programs are highly dependent on faculty relationships with student-athletes (Comeaux, 2010). This is because “...mentor programs have been designed to provide students with encouragement, approval, constructive feedback... and support...” (Comeaux, 2010, p.264).

This collective research will show how academic support programs can be improved for student-athletes. The four services colleges should put in place to adapt to the needs of this population include academic advising, bridge programs, tutoring, and mentoring. All these together can increase student-athlete retention and graduation rates.

### **Purpose of Study**

This critical analysis of research literature aims to determine which supports best enhance the academic success of collegiate student-athletes. Research about this topic is needed to ensure that institutions nationwide are aware of this issue. Collaborative models and other strategies must be introduced to higher education professionals so they can reexamine their services and apply new, more informed techniques. Academic and athletic departments should collaborate to ensure student-athletes take their studies seriously to maintain eligibility and excel in their academic careers.

This research is significant to the field for a number of reasons. One is that it will allow us to determine which supports are most crucial to the academic success of



collegiate student-athletes. Another is how it will help universities tailor to the needs of these individuals by promoting the creation of innovative programs that cater to student-athletes. This research will also reveal why colleges should allocate funds toward academic support services before athletics since stakeholders constantly seek methods to increase student retention and graduation rates for this population (Brecht & Burnett, 2019). It is important that this research be done given the fact that “the academic success of student-athletes is essential to the success of the individual team and campus athletic programs” (Hodes et al., 2015, p.47).

### **Research Question**

1. Which academic support services enhance the academic success of collegiate student-athletes?

### **Definitions**

APR- Academic Progress Rate: “Division II, III variations of the GSR. More inclusive cohort definition reflecting that many Division II and all Division III student-athletes do not receive athletic scholarships.” (NCAA)

CRLA- College Reading and Learning Association: A team of higher-education professionals that are dedicated to helping students progress academically.

FGR- Federal Graduation Rate: “Federally mandated calculation for all schools that offer athletic scholarships. Counts all transfers as academic failures...” (NCAA)

GSR- Graduation Success Rate: “Division I rate that accounts for transfers in/out. Also tracks graduation over six years.” (NCAA)

GPA- Grade Point Average: The average score of all your class grades.

NCAA- National Collegiate Athletic Association: The nonprofit organization that focuses on "...the well-being and lifelong success of college athletes." (NCAA)

### **Limitations**

One major limitation of this research was having limited access to online databases with relevant research. Many times, pertinent articles were outdated. On top of that, some books on the topic were unavailable in the Anna Maria College library as well as through interlibrary loan. The hardest part was the time constraints where research had to be completed within one semester with two week-long breaks. Lastly, the course supporting this research was an online class, making it difficult to communicate with the professor and classmates for feedback, suggestions, and more.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The information used to create this thesis came from peer-reviewed articles made available by the databases at Anna Maria College, including Academic OneFile and ERIC. A search for literature using Google Scholar also yielded pertinent research. The search was conducted using the following key terms: “college,” “student-athlete,” “academics,” “support,” “programs,” and “influence.” Other terms were added once the initial research was analyzed, such as “intercollegiate sport,” “retention,” “graduation,” and “university.” No specific sport was searched for in order to gather a larger understanding of the topic. To ensure that articles in the search result were relevant, research was done using various keyword combinations. Organization websites, including the NCAA, were used to gather up-to-date statistics and policies about college athletes.

Inclusion criteria included full-text, peer-reviewed articles. Most crucially, all articles have a publication date of 2001 onward to guarantee they show the most current trends in the field. Articles include statistics derived from public and private institutions and examine all divisions of intercollegiate athletics (Division I, Division II, and Division III). Sample sizes in the research varied depending on which article was used; for example, one study was completed with 90 participants, and another was completed with 196 participants. Articles published before 2001, articles not peer-reviewed, and those written in a language other than English were excluded.

The abundance of articles related to this subject is one of the key successes of this methodology. However, the databases at Anna Maria College only had limited

articles available. Also, several databases only allowed access to an abstract, not the entire text, making research more difficult. Lastly, this research was limited to work completed within the time frame of one semester, also limiting the amount of information that could be retrieved. (Refer to Figure 1 in the Appendix for a flowchart visual of the selection process.)

### III. RESULTS

For years, student-athletes have been considered a unique population on college campuses because they must care about their academics and maintain their athletic eligibility (Broughton, 2001; Kennedy, 2007; Banbel, 2014; Brouwer, 2022) Research has found that student-athletes encounter a variety of challenges the general student population is unaware of. To begin, student-athletes are unable to utilize academic services like other students due to their extensive training and competition schedule (Banbel & Chen, 2014). For instance, student-athletes face difficulties because academic services, like tutoring, frequently conflict with when they are expected to attend practice and games (Banbel & Chen, 2014).

Student-athletes also have specific needs related to their eligibility and graduation (Gayles, 2003; Hazzaa, 2018). Resources must be made available for these individuals to function at their highest level, both on and off the court. The colleges are responsible for establishing support programs that enhance the academic performance of collegiate student-athletes. Colleges nationwide are recruiting student-athletes, but they often struggle academically (Comeaux, 2010; Brouwer, 2022). Thus, college coaches need to highlight the academic support services when students are being recruited. This will make student-athletes aware of the resources that are offered, such as advising and tutoring.

Institutions across the country are searching for fresh approaches and program models to boost the retention of student-athletes. While there are various techniques colleges can implement to increase student-athletes' academic success rates, analyzing

data is essential for determining the effectiveness of the current academic support programs offered to them. Interventions that include academic advising, bridge programs, mentoring, and tutoring are all proven beneficial to the collegiate student-athlete's academic performance (Huml, 2014; Otto, 2019). To determine which academic support services enhance collegiate student-athletes' academic success, a review of the literature is provided.

### **ACADEMIC ADVISING**

Since retention and graduation rates for all students are becoming increasingly examined, the NCAA, too, continues to revise its bylaws regarding academic and athletic eligibility for student-athletes. Historically, the NCAA has made modifications when graduation rates of student-athletes drop (Satterfield, 2010). For example, one of the first major reforms concerning student-athlete retention and graduation was Proposition 48, implemented in 1983 (NCAA). Proposition 48 outlined eligibility requirements such as minimum requirements for grades and test scores for student-athletes (Satterfield, 2010; Otto, 2019). As a result, academic programs began offering services like academic advising to assist with these requirements. Research shows that advising was expanded after Proposition 48 came into effect (Gayles, 2003; Otto, 2019). Further down the road, the NCAA approved bylaw 16.3.1.1 in 1991, which expanded on its requirements. Bylaw 16.3.1.1 mandated that all student-athletes receive academic support services, including advising, counseling, and tutoring. Such services can be provided through an institution's academic or athletic departments (NCAA, 2022).

Although one of the most established and well-supported forms of academic support is advising, it has changed significantly in recent years (Broughton, 2001). Advising now places more emphasis on retention and graduation rather than primarily focusing on class scheduling and degree requirements (Huml, 2014; Hazzaa, 2018). By using the Graduation Success Rate (GSR) and the Academic Progress Rate (APR), academic and athletic advisors can track the development of their advisees more easily. GSR and APR were created to monitor student-athletes who were transferring “...between institutions, progression towards their degree, and graduate within a six-year window” (NCAA, 2010). In previous years, the NCAA used federal data to calculate student-athlete graduation rates. It was not until 1990 that the NCAA introduced the Graduation Success Rate (GSR) and the Academic Progress Rate (APR). The NCAA made adjustments after discovering that transfer students were not included in the Federal Graduation Rate (FGR).

Multiple studies have also shown that financial assistance towards academics granted by the NCAA is a vital aspect of collegiate student-athlete success (Kennedy, 2007; Huml, 2014). Schools must make significant financial investments in advising since it is now understood to be a fundamental element of student retention (Hazzaa, 2018). To develop a successful advising program, the institution must employ staff members familiar with this specific subgroup's needs (Broughton, 2001; Comeaux, 2010). Student-athletes will continue receiving subpar support without competent professionals, which will make it even more difficult for them to meet their academic goals.

Several studies have revealed that student-athletes were more inclined to reach out to academic advisors, as they were more likely to prioritize their academic goals (Huml, 2014; Otto, 2019; Brouwer, 2022). It demonstrates the need for closer collaboration between academic and athletic advisors to create well-rounded student-athletes. If advisors are familiar with student-athletes' professional goals, they can place them in situations conducive to academic success. Advisors can then assist students in making course selections based on their interests instead of their practice and game schedules. In addition, it lowers the chances of academic clustering at the college. Academic clustering occurs when more than 25% of a team's members study the same major (Huml et al., 2014). Studies have shown that student-athletes involved in profitable sports like men's basketball and football have a higher likelihood of academic clustering than the remainder of the student population (Huml, 2014; Otto, 2019). Advisors need to be aware of academic clustering when helping students because Huml (2014) states that it "...becomes problematic for college students due to its negative impact on future career earnings and the increase[d] likeliness of students leaving college without their degree." (p.415)

Considering all of these factors, higher education professionals have discovered that a combination of three advising models works best (Gayles, 2003; Huml, 2014; Otto, 2019). Such models include intrusive, prescriptive, and developmental advising (Gayles, 2003; Huml, 2014; Otto, 2019), all of which are intended to assist the student-athlete in reaching different milestones. Advisors often use intrusive advising while working with first-year student-athletes (Gayles, 2003). In this form of advising, advisors approach



students directly rather than waiting for them to ask for assistance. Although it has been shown that intrusive advising improves student-athletes' retention and academic performance, advisors strive to transition them out of it by their second year (Gayles, 2003).

Even though prescriptive advising is the most conventional style (Gayles, 2003), it does not always meet the needs of student-athletes. Numerous studies have demonstrated that most students do not favor prescriptive advising because the model reduces the likelihood that the student will be involved in decision-making (Gayles, 2003). In prescriptive advising, the advisor bears responsibility for any problems rather than the student. This advising model allows the student-athlete to turn to their advisor for advice before trying to handle issues on their own (Gayles, 2003).

The advantages of developmental advising over alternative models are extensively discussed in the literature (Broughton, 2001; Gayles, 2003; Hale, 2009; Huml, 2019). Developmental advising aims to instill fundamental skills in students, including competence, communication, self-advocacy, and teamwork (Broughton, 2001; Huml, 2019). Academic advisors support this style because it fosters autonomy, which is crucial for the student-athlete's personal development (Broughton, 2001). Student-athletes favor this model since advisors are more likely to keep their academic goals in mind. Advisors using this approach monitor the student-athletes' progress and consult them before making decisions (Hale et al., 2009). Overall, it is the most preferred form of advising because it is a reciprocal exchange between the advisor and the student-athlete (Hale et al., 2009).

A 2009 study examined whether students preferred prescriptive or developmental advising (Hale et al., 2009). Hale, Graham, & Johnson surveyed 429 students from a mid-south doctoral university. Their findings revealed that 77.9% of respondents had advisors that adopted the developmental advising technique and indicated that they enjoyed it, yet 1.8% had prescriptive advisors and preferred that approach (Hale et al., 2009). Furthermore, 95.5% of the students revealed that they would prefer developmental advisors, indicating "...that students want a personal relationship with advisors and seek more from the advising relationship than simply information on course selection and scheduling" (Hale et al., 2009, para 30).

## **BRIDGE PROGRAMS**

Proposition 16 was passed in 1996 to have more stringent eligibility requirements for incoming student-athletes than Proposition 48. It requires a high school GPA of 2.0 or higher, an ACT score of 21 or above, or an SAT score of 900 (nces.ed.gov). With that in place, institutions realized they needed to assist student-athletes in adjusting to the academic rigor of the college setting. Huml and his colleagues Bergman, Newell, and Hancock (2019) recommend implementing summer bridge programs to help student-athletes transition into college. Student-athletes can use bridge programs to meet with their academic and athletic advisors to identify their areas of weakness and proactively seek support (Huml et al., 2019). They also allow student-athletes to meet professors before the academic year begins (Hollis, 2001). In a bridge program, students can engage in college courses without the pressure of earning 12 credits because they can

take summer courses before starting their first year (Huml et al., 2019). Due to the opportunity to earn credits through bridge programs, student-athletes can also advance more quickly toward their degree. Hence, summer bridge programs aid student-athletes in developing academic momentum (Wachen et al., 2018).

Many positive effects stem from providing summer bridge programs. Hollis (2001) states that academic preparatory programs have a considerable impact on collegiate student-athlete retention and graduation rates. In fact, the likelihood that a student will continue to their second year increased by 44%, according to research done on the University of North Carolina Summer Bridge and Retention Program (Wachen et al., 2018). Even better, the pattern continued throughout their third year. Around 53% of students who took summer bridge programs continue their studies (Wachen et al., 2018). Bridge programs are designed to provide students with a slow and acceptable introduction to college. Student-athletes can benefit more than other students from this type of intervention because they will need to establish a routine before the start of the academic year. These initiatives aim to give students a structured environment that focuses on time management, study habits, resourcefulness, and academic success (Wachen et al., 2018).

## **MENTORING**

Programs for academic mentoring are also available to help students flourish in college. Mentors work to enhance the student-athlete's academic and athletic abilities to position them for success (Comeaux, 2010; Hodes, 2015). Similar to advising, mentoring assists students in achieving their individual goals by teaching them essential skills. For

instance, mentors can aid students in developing study habits, practicing time management, and establishing their identities (Comeaux, 2010; Satterfield, 2010). Comeaux (2010) suggests that mentoring is intended to encourage and support students. By offering feedback and career guidance, mentoring programs also direct student-athletes toward the professional goals they have set for themselves (Comeaux, 2010).

Hazza, Sonkeng, & Yoh (2018) conducted a study at a Midwestern university to determine what factors affect student-athletes' contentment with academic services provided by athletic departments. A total of 226 Division I athletes participated in the survey. Hazza and his colleagues discovered a strong correlation between student-athletes' academic achievement and their satisfaction with services like mentoring. According to their data, 64% of student-athletes were happy with mentoring programs (Hazzaa et al., 2018).

## **TUTORING**

Research shows that student-athletes who utilize tutoring services will benefit academically (Hendriksen, 2005; Brecht, 2019; Brouwer, 2022). In research conducted by Hendriksen, Yang, Love, & Hall in the fall of 2003, the final grades of 1,385 tutored students and 6,879 non-tutored students enrolled in the same courses were compared. According to the findings, 75% of tutored students received passing grades of C- or higher, compared to 71% of non-tutored students (Hendriksen et al., 2005). Tutored students in those classes averaged 2.78, while their non-tutored counterparts received

an average of 2.64 (Hendriksen et al., 2005). Moreover, 82% of tutored students returned for the 2004 spring semester (Hendriksen et al., 2005).

Institutions should be dedicated to developing more academic services involving tutoring because it is a common and useful academic resource (Steinberg, 2018). Evans, Werdine, & Seifried (2017) described how Louisiana State University (LSU) organized their learning center. The Cox Communications Academic Center for Student-Athletes (CCACSA) at LSU provides student-athletes and tutors with access to some of the most cutting-edge equipment (Evans et al., 2017). Louisiana State has developed relationships with Apple and GradesFirst, allowing tutors to be informed of the student-athlete's grades and examine their schedule to book appointments accordingly (Evans et al., 2017). Banbel & Chen (2014) discuss a different tutoring approach used at Eastern Kentucky University's Bratzke Student-Athlete Center (SAASC). The Bratzke Center's tutoring coordinators are aware of the busy schedules of student-athletes and have tailored their tutoring schedule accordingly (Banbel & Chen, 2014). Furthermore, academic services at Eastern Kentucky's SAASC are free and closely supervised to guarantee that every student-athlete has access to exceptional tutoring (Banbel & Chen, 2014).

Tutoring is a credible intervention to boost student-athletes' academic achievement. Several studies have demonstrated the beneficial effects of tutoring on retention and graduation rates (Hendricksen, 2005; Banbel, 2014). Tutors must be knowledgeable in the subject matter at hand. Staff members must meet specific requirements to be a tutor at any university (Kennedy, 2007; Banbel, 2014). The

requirements for tutoring at Eastern Kentucky's SAASC were specified by Banbel & Chen (2014). Candidates are expected to have a 3.0 minimum GPA, a letter of recommendation from a department head or professor, and sufficient interpersonal skills to be considered to work as tutors (Banbel & Chen, 2014). On another note, it is critical that tutors are familiar with the NCAA policies, such as Proposition 16, Proposition 48, and Bylaw 16.3, which pertain to an athlete's academic standing (Kennedy, 2007; Banbel, 2014). According to Banbel & Chen (2014), tutors at the Bratzke Center go through training and certification procedures. The SAASC at Eastern Kentucky mandates that tutors familiarize themselves with NCAA guidelines (Banbel & Chen, 2014). They are also expected to receive their College Reading and Learning Association Level-1 certification (CRLA). All these requirements are in place for institutions to provide students with the best academic support possible.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

Coaches and athletic advisors are often more concerned with student-athletes maintaining their eligibility than earning their education. There is little-to-no time for coaches to question if their players are struggling in their courses since 10-20% of their day is dedicated to recruiting and the remainder of their time on campus is taken up by team lifts, practice, and games (Czekanski & Barnhill, 2015). That said, the NCAA created policies that determine a student-athlete's eligibility status based on their academic standing. Therefore, the academic and athletic departments should work together to establish a game plan to assist these individuals in both aspects of their college careers.

A total of 25 peer-reviewed articles were critically analyzed to discover which interventions are the most effective in enhancing the academic success of collegiate student-athletes. To determine which program models and support techniques produce the best results, a variety of research studies were investigated. After extensive research, the data revealed that universities with high retention and graduation rates for student-athletes are those that provide academic support services like advising, bridge programs, mentorship, and tutoring.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Since "student-athletes are a unique subset of most student populations in the higher education community, "...they require academic support services to assist them (Comeaux, 2010, p.260). Several studies have shown that having resources readily available to student-athletes does, in fact, improve their academic performance (Hale,

2009; Huml, 2014; Hazzaa, 2018). It has been proven that services including advising, bridge programs, mentoring, and tutoring improve retention and graduation rates. Yet, these programs must be accessible in order to be useful. While the NCAA tries to keep practice time for athletes to a maximum of 20 hours per week, research has revealed that many teams exceed this limit (Huml, 2019; NCAA). As a result, academic support staff must adapt to their hectic schedules and modify services accordingly. To put it another way, those who work with these individuals directly must schedule appointments that are convenient for all sides (Steinberg, 2018). When a staff revises the schedule, they can also investigate which program model produces the best results for their specific student-athletes.

Many works that are cited in this thesis discuss various academic support models. This demonstrates that there are a handful of intervention programs that may be adopted and tailored to the needs of a particular institution's student-athletes. Banbel & Chen (2014) stated that the Bratzke Center at Eastern Kentucky University provides amenities that complement most athletic schedules. For example, the Bratzke Center "...is open Monday through Thursday from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm, Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, and Sunday from 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm" (Banbel & Chen, 2014, p.57). The services offered are also free and monitored to ensure that every student-athlete has access to some of the most exceptional tutoring.

Kennedy (2007) examined the influence Dr. Lynn Lashbrook and Chuck Patterson had on the University of Missouri's athletic department. According to Kennedy (2007), these two professionals were employed to assist student-athletes with their



academics. They started changing student-athlete interventions when they realized that 38 out of 60 returning football players were ineligible (Kennedy, 2007). At that moment, Lashbrook and Patterson reached out to colleges throughout America to learn about their academic support programs and what might work for MU student-athletes (Kennedy, 2007). These professionals accomplished a lot while working at the University of Missouri. For instance, they were able to alter the student-athlete study hall to make it more effective. Under the new concept, students could attend study hall during the daytime rather than requiring them to arrive in the late evening when they were exhausted from classes and their sport (Kennedy, 2007). In addition, it placed greater emphasis on the quality of their work than the amount they completed (Kennedy, 2007).

Since research shows that academic support programs increase student-athlete retention and graduation rates, colleges need to distribute more funds for creating adequate facilities and programs. Colleges that value such programs and continuously revisit their models to provide student-athletes with the best opportunities have higher levels of student satisfaction (Hazzaa, 2018). While student satisfaction is important, it is crucial that the academic support staff are taken care of as well. Without well-trained staff, it is possible that student-athletes would not receive the help they need. Louisiana State University ensures the staff of the Cox Communications Academic Center for Student-Athletes (CCACSA) is properly equipped to execute their duties effectively and efficiently (Evans, Werdine & Seifried, 2017). Advisors and tutors working for the CCACSA are provided with Apple products and modern software that allows them to perform tasks in a timely manner. Increased funding will create more learning

experiences for these students. Some of the opportunities may include guest speakers and conferences (Kennedy, 2007). With additional funding, schools will be able to hire more personnel, train the employees, and even supply the learning centers with updated materials. To establish academic support centers that will give student-athletes the chance to create their own success and shape their future, funding is required.

## **LIMITATIONS**

There were limitations in developing this thesis. This thesis looked specifically at which support services enhance the academic success of student-athletes, but failed to consider the other factors that may impact their academic performance. Gender, race, and sport are other key factors that have an influence on the academic success, retention, and graduation rates of student-athletes (Le Crom, et. al., 2009). Several articles show that male student-athletes require more academic support in comparison to their female counterparts (Kane, 2008; Le Crom, 2009; Bartolome, 2019). A study done in 2008 suggests this is because female student-athletes are less fixated on their athletic role and therefore take their education more seriously (Kane, 2008). The same study also showed that "...the GSR for females who entered college in 2000 is higher (87.3%) than for male student-athletes (71.5%)" (Kane, 2008, p.101). Furthermore, female student-athletes reportedly have better study habits than males (Bartolome & Kassiz, 2019).

Another limitation was accessing databases with relevant articles. With that, search terms had to be adjusted multiple times in order to find articles that correlated with this thesis. On top of that, although several articles had perfect evidence relating to

the academic success of collegiate student-athletes, they were outdated. Additionally, some books that were related to student-athletes and their academic careers could not be checked out through our library and could not get sent by interlibrary loan.

Other limitations, such as time constraints also impacted the development of this thesis. With a chapter due almost every week in one given semester, it is difficult to create an in-depth thesis. Finally, since this honors course was held online, it was difficult to communicate with the professor and classmates for assistance and suggestions.

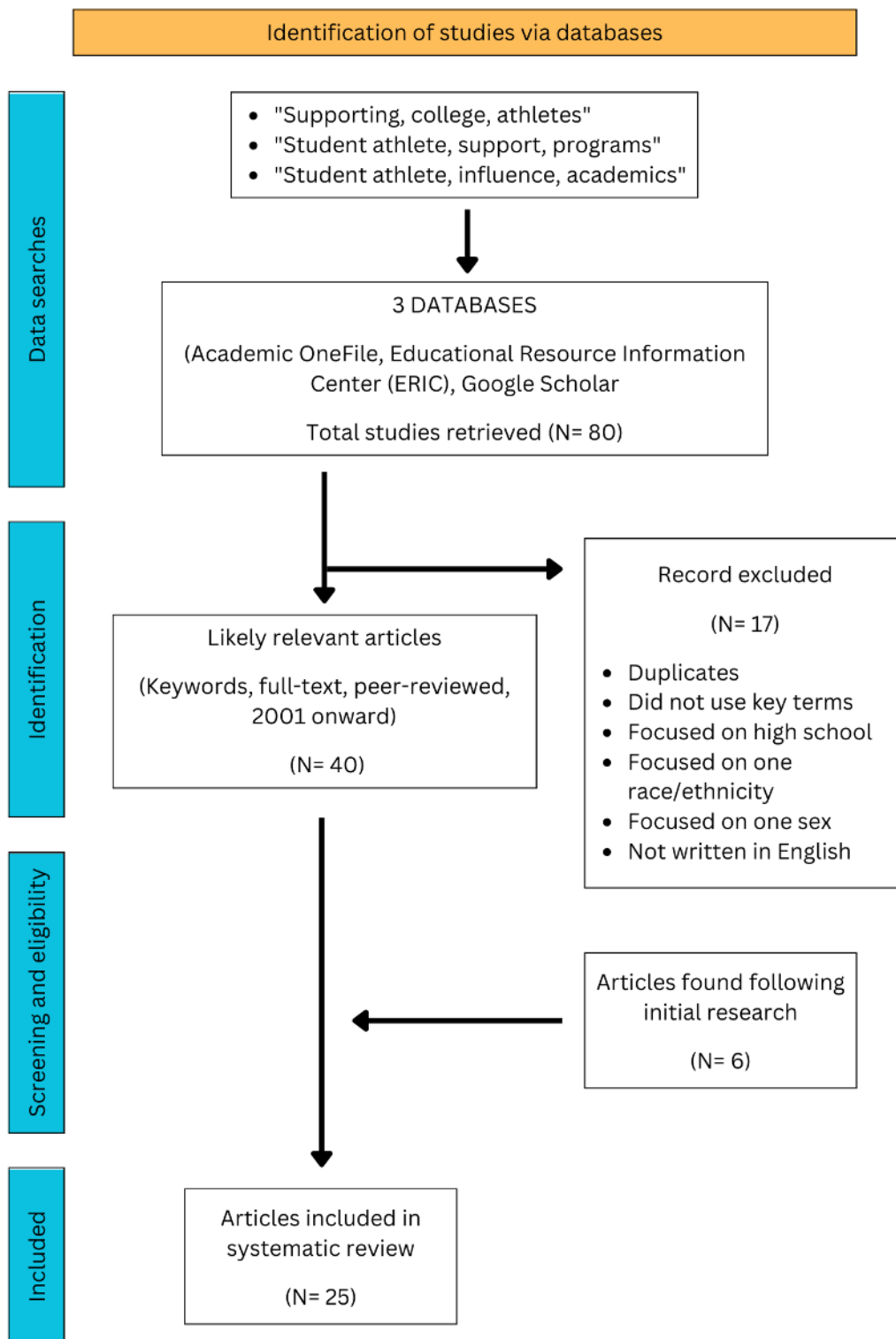
With unlimited time and resources, access to additional articles would be more feasible. The interlibrary loan system could be utilized with more time to gain additional knowledge about the topic and add more information to the research. With unlimited time, more articles could be gathered and analyzed, as well as gathering more statistics on retention and graduation rates and other interventions that help student-athletes. If there was unlimited time and resources, a study on the student-athletes at Anna Maria could have been completed to find out what support services they find useful.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

As the research showed, academic advisors were preferred over athletic advisors. When it came to talking about courses and discussing academic issues, or anything else regarding graduation, students preferred academic advisors. Therefore, the trends and demands of academic advisors should be further researched. Along with that, future studies should examine the same regarding athletic advisers, and survey what students believe they need to improve on.

Since the NCAA distributes some funds to colleges looking to develop academic support centers for student-athletes, it would be beneficial to investigate which institutions receive more funding and why. In researching this, it may also show if retention and graduation rates vary significantly depending on which division or conference the student-athletes belong to. In other words, are the Division I schools receiving more funding, and therefore better academic support services than division III colleges? Further research could also be done to explore student-athletes' intrinsic versus and their extrinsic motivation, since there are so many variables that affect their college careers. In other words, do they attend study sessions to retain their eligibility or their grades? It might be helpful to compare which majors require more academic support, as this might impact the results as well. On top of that, not everyone learns the same. While one student-athlete may learn visually, another may be a hands-on learner which might impact which academic services they need.

## V. APPENDIX



*Figure 1 PRISMA Flowchart*

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