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**Academic Advisors' Perceptions of Student-Athletes at NCAA Division-I Institutions**

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### **Abstract**

This study examined academic advisors' perceptions of student-athletes and factors influencing those perceptions. The importance of this research is because unfavorable perceptions of student-athletes by academic advisors can lead to negative experiences for both groups. Findings indicated increasing both eligibility requirement knowledge and athletic department involvement can lead to positive athletic department perception, which can lead to positive perceptions of student-athletes. This would assist in creating a more desirable and productive advising environment for both groups.

*Keywords:* Academic Advisors, NCAA, Student-Athletes, Stereotypes

**Academic advisors' perceptions of student-athletes at NCAA Division-I institutions**

The needs of student-athletes are often different than the needs of their non-athlete peers (Broughton & Neyer, 2001; Gayles, 2009; Papanikolaou, Nikolaidis, Patsiaouras, & Alexopoulos, 2003; Thompson, 2013). Many student-athletes have mandatory obligations outside of the classroom such as study hall, weight training, physical conditioning, and practice in addition to participating in their respective sport (Gayles, 2009). Student-athletes also must maintain certain academic standards to ensure they are meeting continuing eligibility requirements set forth by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA], 2015). These include maintaining a minimum grade point average, declaring a major before their sixth semester of college, and making progress toward a degree that would lead to graduation (NCAA, 2013). Therefore, student-athletes have different advising needs when compared to their non-athlete peers. Many NCAA institutions have academic advisors or counselors in the athletic department as well as academic centers that assist in maintaining academic eligibility for competition, practice, and financial aid (NCAA, 2015; Wolverton, 2008).

It is exceedingly challenging for athletic department academic advisors to know the inner workings and requirements of every academic major on their respective campuses (Steele & McDonald, 2000). Most institutions require all students, including student-athletes, to meet with their major-specific academic advisor, who typically have no affiliation to the athletic department, on a regular basis to ensure student-athletes are staying on track for graduation. Universities may have requirements that students meet with their academic advisors before being allowed to register for classes as well. Academic advisors may be unaware of the athletic demands and time constraints student-athletes face, and it could invoke bias (Broughton & Neyer, 2001).

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Kuhn (2008) defined academic advising as “situations in which an institutional representative gives insight or direction to a college student about an academic, social, or personal matter” (p. 3). Research has demonstrated that effective academic advisors can impact student retention (Carstensen & Silberhorn, 1979; Lotkowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004), successful initial transition for freshman students (Habley & Crockett, 1988), and an increase in the overall student experience (Coll & Zalauett, 2007; Drake, 2011; Light, 2001; Thompson, 2009). These factors are just as important for student-athletes.

Student-athletes also need to meet with their academic advisors within their specific academic discipline to ensure requirements for their academic major are being satisfied and progress toward graduation is being made. Thompson and Gilchrist (2011) argued “advisors’ directions help ensure the student-athletes place themselves in the best possible position to meet NCAA requirements” (Thompson & Gilchrest, 2011, p. 29). This warrants further investigation into the interactions between academic advisors and student-athletes.

The ability of academic advisors to effectively communicate and develop rapport with students is essential to ensuring an effective partnership between academic advisors and the students they oversee (Hughey, 2011). Nadler and Simerly (2006) found that when academic advisors demonstrate a concern for students, a relationship of trust and respect will most likely develop. Academic advisors have not only been shown to be an important variable in the process of ensuring student success (Coll & Zalauett, 2007; Drake, 2011; Hughey, 2011; Light, 2001), but according to the National Academic Advising Association [NACADA] (2005) academic advisors serve as a key to unlocking students’ potential by ensuring student development and self-direction of their overall learning goals.

There has been limited research focusing on how academic advisors perceive student-athletes (Coll & Zalaquett, 2007; Drake, 2011; Habley & Crockett, 1988). Therefore, the purpose of this study

## Academic Advisors' Perceptions of Student-Athletes

was to further develop an understanding of the perceptions of academic advisors working outside of the athletic department towards student-athletes as well as variables that may influence such perceptions.

The following hypotheses were proposed to investigate if understanding NCAA eligibility requirements and athletic department involvement played a role in the level of stereotype an academic advisor would have for a student-athlete:

H1: The higher the level of NCAA understanding the lower the level of stereotype.

H2: The higher the level of athletic department involvement the lower the level of stereotype. It was also proposed that academic advisors with a positive attitude toward the athletic department would also have a lower level of stereotype.

H3: The higher the level of positive attitude toward the athletic department the lower the level of stereotype.

Understanding how academic advisors perceive student-athletes or college athletics holistically can uncover potential for bias and attitude transformations. Ultimately, academic advisors can increase their understanding of this population to make the advising experience more productive and meaningful for both parties involved and ensure student-athletes are given the proper support for academic success.

### Literature Review

#### Student-Athlete and Athletic Department Perception

Student-athletes have been stereotyped as being, among other similar monikers, “dumb jocks,” and based on such perceptions, student-athletes have generally been held to lower academic standards (Burke, 1993; Preacco, 2009; Watt & Moore, 2001). It is important to note that perceptions and stereotypes are not the same. “A stereotype is an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category” (Allport, 1954, p. 191).

Perceptions (specifically negative perceptions) can potentially lead to the development to stereotypes

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(Burke, 1993; Preacco, 2009; Watt & Moore, 2001). Faculty members have been shown to have prejudicial perceptions of student-athletes, and student-athletes are often not expected to be intelligent or motivated (Burke, 1993; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEewn, 1995; Nelson, 1983; Watt & Moore, 2001). Faculty members often express negativity towards student-athletes out of resentment towards the special treatment student-athletes are given in regards to admissions and academic support (Baucom & Lantz, 2001). Sailes (1996) found undergraduate male students believed student-athletes lacked intelligence and were enrolled in a less challenging curriculum to ensure athletic eligibility. Negative perceptions of student-athletes only perpetuate the “dumb jock” stereotype. However, there is little to no literature on how non-athletic academic advisors perceive the student-athlete population. In addition to coaches, athletic counselors and faculty, non-athletic academic advisors are another group on campus that student-athletes must interact with regularly in order to progress through a selected major. Student-athletes are aware of how they are perceived by their peers and faculty members; but, they do not feel these stereotypes depict them as an individual (Jackson, Keiper, Brown, Brown, & Manuel, 2002).

However, the faculty perception of student-athletes and the athletic department became more positive the more they were involved with the athletic department and the more they interacted with student-athletes (Ott, 2011). Other research indicates faculty members are rather unaware of the functioning of athletic departments, and as such, have a moderate perception of the athletic department on their campus (Lawrence, Hendricks, & Ott, 2007). Junior college administrators believed intercollegiate athletics contributed to campus pride among the student-athletes, students, and the community but faculty at those institutions did not hold that same opinion (Williams & Pennington, 2006). Research has examined how faculty, students, and university presidents’ perceptions of student-

athletes and athletic departments, but the perceptions of academic advisors not working in the athletic department, whom student-athletes work with on a regular basis, has yet to be examined.

### **Intergroup Contact Theory**

Intergroup contact theory focuses on the idea that beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are interconnected, and within constructive environment professional interaction will result in favorable outcomes between the groups (Allport, 1954). The beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals or groups are associated with the understanding (or failing to understand) of specific subject matter or groups (Connolly, 2000; Miller, 2002; Tovar, 2011). Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory provides a means to gain a better understanding of how student-athletes are perceived (both positively and negatively) by their academic advisors. Allport (1954) indicated four conditions that need to be met in order for interactions among groups to be positive: (a) equal status, (b) common goals, (c) intergroup cooperation, and (d) support of authorities, law or custom (Banks, 2002; Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003; Pettigrew, 1998; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). Allport emphasized "equal group status *within* the situation" (p. 66), but research has shown that it is often hard to define the term "equal status" and it is often used in a variety of ways (Pettigrew, 1998). All members should at least perceive that equal status is attained in the situation (Pettigrew, 1998). Pettigrew (1998) stated, "prejudice reduction through contact requires an active, goal-oriented effort" (p. 66).

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1998). Pettigrew (1998) states “prejudice reduction through contact requires an active, goal-oriented effort” (p. 66). An example of common goals is given when Pettigrew (1998) explains how all members of a sports team strive to win a game, division or even the championship and each team member is needed to achieve the common goal. Intergroup cooperation must foster common goals among members without the need for competition among groups (Pettigrew, 1998). This key condition adds to the common goal and ensures all members are working cooperatively to a mutually agreed upon end result. As those in authority positions (i.e. academic advisors) stress the importance of the situation, it is more acceptable to those involved (Pettigrew 1998). Academic advisors along with student-athletes can achieve these four conditions and improve relations between the groups, which can, in turn, provide the student-athlete with academic success.

### **Equal Status.**

One of the goals of the academic advisor and student-athlete advising session should be to focus on coursework for upcoming semesters and a plan toward degree completion and this can be accomplished with the guidance of an advising syllabus (NACADA, 2013). Both the academic advisor and the student-athlete share in the decision-making of the situation and future plans. This shared goal can reduce negative prejudice toward one another and allow progress to continue (Pettigrew, 1998).

Lack of contact with minority groups (e.g., student-athletes) can result in prejudices toward the group, but with additional contact and interaction, these prejudices can be reduced or eliminated (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). Watson and Kissinger (2007) acknowledged, “student-athletes represent a unique, clearly identifiable, college student subpopulation” (p. 153). The student-athlete population could be considered a minority group as it is a subset of the general student population at an institution, regardless of other minority status constructs such as ethnicity or religion. Student-athletes are often categorized as a unique group of students due to their participation in

intercollegiate athletics along with the time constraints and other traits typically associated with being a student-athlete (Broughton & Neyer, 2001). Tropp and Pettigrew (2005) stated members of the minority group tend to be “the target of prejudice from individuals higher in status” (p. 951) and minority group members understand others judge them as being part of a “devalued group membership” (p. 952).

Academic advisors and athletic counselors should collaborate on NCAA Bylaws and legislation as necessary for student-athlete academic success. While athletic counselors are knowledgeable about NCAA Bylaws, many academic advisors may not know the ins and outs and need to be knowledgeable in the legislations to best help the student-athlete (Broughton & Neyer, 2001). However, academic advisors have the best interest of the student in mind and want to gain knowledge in order to help the student-athlete be successful.

### **Common Goal.**

The academic advisor, athletic counselor and the student-athlete all share a common goal of academic success. Pettigrew (1998) states “attainment of common goals must be an interdependent effort without intergroup competition” (p. 67). The academic advisor, athletic counselor and student-athlete must work together to set goals that are realistic and attainable. As the academic advisor’s understanding of the needs and outside of school demands of the student-athlete increases, the advisor can better assist the student-athlete in achieving academic success in addition to athletic success. When conflict exists between groups, whether real or perceived, common goals among members of each group can be difficult to achieve (Gaunt, 2011; Pettigrew, 1998). Negative stereotypes and perceptions toward an institutions athletic department and student-athletes will create conflicts and possibly reduce the opportunity for all parties to meet the common academic goals set by the academic advisor and student-athlete. An example of common goals is how all members of a sports team strive to win a

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game, division or even the championship and each team member is needed to achieve the common goal.

### **Intergroup Cooperation.**

Without the NCAA knowledge by the athletic counselor and the major specific knowledge of the academic advisor, a student-athlete may find themselves in a situation where completion percentages are not being met to remain eligible or the student is not in the correct courses for the major. For a student-athlete to remain eligible, they must complete a set percentage of their overall coursework at specific stages of their academic career. An example would be that a student-athlete completing the second year must have completed forty percent of the required courses needed to graduate with that particular major. Athletic departments need to provide support and additional training to academic advisors to ensure student-athletes are successful in the classroom and are working toward the goals set forth by the academic advisor, athletic counselor and the student-athlete. Academic advisors are provided training to guide students through the selected major with not only coursework needed but to assist in other academic and sometimes non-academic related issues. It is imperative for the academic advisor to understand the function of other offices within the institution to be able to assist the student, and in this case the student-athlete, with any issue or situation that arises related to the academic or physical well-being of the student or student-athlete.

Working in cooperation with an athletic counselor and the athletic department allows the academic advisor to help meet the needs of the student-athlete. When members of the various groups begin to work together, negative stereotypes and prejudices for the group can be reduced or eliminated (Gaunt, 2011; Pettigrew, 1998; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). These three groups may, at times, disagree on the best course of action for the student, but by working together, the academic advisor, athletic counselor and student-athlete can achieve the common goal of passing their coursework and moving

toward graduation. Intergroup cooperation must foster common goals among members without the need for competition among groups (Pettigrew, 1998). This key condition adds to the common goal and ensures all members are working cooperatively to a mutually agreed upon end result. As those in authority positions (e.g., athletic departments, NCAA bylaws) stress the importance of the situation, it is more acceptable to those involved (Pettigrew, 1998).

### **Support of authorities, law or custom.**

Student-athletes who are not meeting NCAA continuing eligibility standards will not be permitted to participate in competition, so it is imperative to the student-athlete to meet these requirements. It is important for all those involved in the decision-making process to have all the pieces of the puzzle to ensure progression towards maintaining academic eligibility and eventual graduation. Academic advisors want to see all students succeed in their chosen major and eventually graduate however, academic advisors pose potential problems when assisting student-athletes. Student-athletes have time constraints due to practice sessions and competition schedules which may cause a student-athlete to have difficulty in scheduling the proper classes to maintain eligibility and progress toward graduation. In order to reduce stereotypes and prejudices between academic advisors, student-athletes and members of the athletic department, support for academic success must come from the institution and all parties involved. If it is perceived that winning is more important than a student-athlete passing classes and graduating, negative perceptions and stereotypes will increase toward the athletic department, but also toward the student-athlete. Universities and athletic departments must share the expectations of academic success with all members of the institution and provide the necessary support and training to make the academic goals of the student-athlete come to fruition. Academic advisors along with student-athletes can achieve these four conditions and improve relations between the groups, which can, in turn, provide the student-athlete with academic success.

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## **Method**

### **Participants**

This study specifically targeted academic advisors at institutions that are members of conferences that are considered the Power 5 conferences within NCAA Division I, i.e. Atlantic Coast, Big 10, Big 12, Pacific-12, and Southeastern. Members of the Big East Conference in 2013 were also included in the data collection. Academic advisors at 61 institutions were invited to participate in the study. The academic advisors worked within academic departments, colleges, or advising centers and advised not only student-athletes but all students within the university community.

### **Data Collection**

Each institution's website was searched and any person that had advising duties as indicated by their job title or listed as having advising duties by their college or academic department were selected for this study. The number of emails per institution varied as the categorization of advisors by each institution varied. Some institutions listed the advisors for a college or department, but only provided a phone number to schedule an appointment while many did include each advisor's contact information. The result was email addresses for 2,004 potential respondents. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was gained, and an email was sent with a message explaining the study with an invitation to participate and a hyperlink to an online questionnaire. A reminder e-mail was sent seven days later and data collection ceased seven days after that. The result was 369 valid responses for a response rate of 18.4%. Leonard (2004) had 12.5% of NACADA members responded to a study on technology and academic advising. The response rate was similar to the 21.6% response rate of Tovar (2011) in her study of faculty perceptions of student-athletes, particularly those in football and men's basketball. The number of respondents was within the range received by the Knight Commission (2007) of 12-34% across participating institutions in their extensive study on faculty perceptions of athletic departments

and student-athletes. The range in percentages in the Knight Commission study is a result of a completion percentage calculated for each institution that participated in the study.

### **Instrumentation**

A questionnaire was constructed for this study by using four different scales. The Perceptions of Athletic Departments Questionnaire (PADQ) was developed by the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics [Knight Commission] (2007) as a result of meetings, interviews, previous research, and discussions about faculty perceptions toward athletic departments. The Student-Athlete Stereotype Questionnaire (SASQ) measured the stereotype toward student-athletes and was modified from the Knight Commission (2007) version to target academic advisors versus faculty. Two additional scales were developed by the researchers to determine the involvement of academic advisors with athletic departments and student-athletes (Athletic Department Involvement, or ADI) as well as to determine knowledge and understanding of NCAA bylaws in regards to academic eligibility (NCAA Understanding). These scales were developed based on the process recommended by Fraenkel & Wallen (2000) and utilized by Cunningham (2007) and Hardin, Trendafilova, Stokowski, and Koo (2013). Input was sought from academic advising professionals in developing the statements that were used to comprise the new scales. The statements were then reviewed for clarity and the final statements were developed. All participants were also asked demographic questions including professional organization affiliations and years as an academic advisor.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted via SPSS 21.0. Descriptive statistics for the participants consisted of frequencies and means (when appropriate). Pearson's correlation was used to examine the relationship between the four scales. Cronbach's (1951) alpha was calculated for scale validity as well (see Table 1). A correlation matrix was constructed and significance levels were calculated to

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determine convergent and discriminant validity for the ADI scale and NCAA Understanding scale. The correlation between the items for each scale was higher than 0 and the significance level was  $p \leq .05$ . That suggests the convergent validity of the two constructs is valid. Discriminant validity of the two developed scales was based on the Campbell and Fiske's (1959) method of constructing a correlation matrix. Their guidelines are to use the items from the two scales to develop a correlation matrix then determine if the correlation is higher among the items in the one scale as compared to the other scale. That is, take the lowest Pearson correlation score and compare it to the Pearson correlation score of the items in the other scale. There were 11 items in the NCAA Understanding scale and 4 items in the Athletic Department Involvement scale. There were a total of 88 comparisons of Pearson correlation scores ( $11 \times 4 + 4 \times 11$ ). There were only nine violations of the comparisons which is well below 50% which is the standard set by Campbell and Fiske (1959).

## **Results**

### **Demographics**

All respondents were advisors at Division I–FBS universities. More than half ( $N = 201, 55.2\%$ ) were members of NACADA, but representation in the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics (N4A) was virtually non-existent as less than 1% were members. More than two-thirds of the respondents were female ( $N = 246, 67.6\%$ ), and less than 10% ( $N = 36$ ) were student-athletes when they attended college. A majority ( $N = 303, 83.2\%$ ) held advance degrees with 58.2% ( $N = 212$ ) having a master's degree and 25% ( $N = 91$ ) holding a doctorate. The average number of years as an academic advisor was 9.93.

### **Insert Table 1 Here**

Mean scores and reliability coefficients were calculated for the four scales (see Table 1). The scores were based on a rating scale of 1 to 6 anchored by 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree.

Score interpretation was based on the higher the score for Department Attitude and Stereotype or Student-Athlete Perception the more negative the attitude was. The score interpretation for NCAA Understanding and Involvement was the higher the score the more understanding the respondents of NCAA student-athlete eligibility and involvement in the athletic department.

The stereotype score was past the midpoint with a mean of 3.83 as the academic advisors had a negative perception of student-athletes. The department attitude had a mean of 3.17 which is just past the midpoint so there was a somewhat negative perception or ambivalent perception of the athletic department. The perception was characterized by stereotype and included concepts of only meeting the minimal academic requirements, less likely to graduate, and receive special treatment. This was correlated with the respondents' understanding of NCAA eligibility guidelines, their attitude toward the athletic department, their involvement with the athletic department. This was the basis for testing the three hypotheses. H1 examined the relationship between NCAA Understanding and Stereotype. The correlation showed a slight negative correlation but it was not significant thus H1 was rejected. H2 examined the relationship between athletic department involvement and stereotype. There was a negative correlation ( $r = -.189, p \leq .000$ ) which was significant thus H2 was supported. The more athletic department a respondent had the lower the level of stereotype. H3 explored athletic department attitude and stereotype and was supported ( $r = .620, p < .000$ ) which demonstrates the more negative the department attitude the more negative the stereotype.

### **Insert Table 2 Here**

### **Regression Analysis**

A linear regression analysis was conducted as well to examine the relationship with the variables and to explain the role of department attitude, NCAA understanding, and athletic department involvement on stereotype. The model tested was statistically significant ( $F = 75.105, p < .000$ ) and



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explained 38.5% (R square) of the variance. An examination of each independent factor of the model showed department attitude was the only statistically significant factor ( $t = 11.028$ ,  $\beta = .630$ ,  $p < .000$ ). An additional linear regression analysis was conducted using only department attitude, and the resulting model was statistically significant ( $F = 225.937$ ,  $p < .000$ ) and explained 38.4% (R square) of the variance.

### **T-Test**

The regression analysis led to splitting the sample into two groups: low department attitude and high department attitude. Low department attitude was defined as those with a mean score of 0 to 2.99 ( $n = 144$ ) and high department attitude were those with a mean score of 3.00 to 6.00 ( $n = 220$ ). The comparisons yielded significant results. The lower the negative attitude toward the athletic the lower the negative stereotype ( $t = -9.856$ ,  $p < .000$ ). Respondents with a higher level of athletic department also had a lower level of stereotype than those with a lower level of athletic department ( $t = 5.585$ ,  $p < .000$ ).

### **Discussion**

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to further develop an understanding of the perceptions of academic advisors working outside of the athletic department towards student-athletes as well as variables that may influence such perceptions. Overall, the results indicated that academic advisors have a somewhat negative view of both student-athletes as well as the athletic program at their institutions. These findings are consistent within the literature in that other campus stakeholders (i.e., faculty) tend to have negative perceptions of student-athletes, and thus, often negatively stereotype this sub-population of students (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Burke, 1993; Watt & Moore, 2001; Preacco, 2009). This study also found academic advisors lacked knowledge regarding NCAA eligibility criteria and had little involvement in the athletic department.

## Academic Advisors' Perceptions of Student-Athletes

One significant finding was that the more negative an academic advisor viewed the athletic department, the more likely the academic advisor was to negatively stereotype student-athletes. There was a correlation in that the greater understanding an academic advisor had of NCAA eligibility requirements the more positive the attitude toward the athletic department and student-athletes. This was also the case with involvement with the athletic department. The more knowledge academic advisors have regarding eligibility requirements and involvement within the athletic department, the better the perceptions that academic advisors had towards both student-athletics and the athletic department. This finding supports previous research that showed greater interaction with student-athletes and involvement with governance yielded positive perceptions (Ott, 2011). This relates back to the concept in Intergroup Contact Theory in that the lack of contact or familiarity with a group can result in prejudices and stereotypes (Allport, 1954).

Academic advisors feel the athletic department supports the mission of the institution as a whole. They agree the athletic department follows the rules of the institution, runs a “clean” program, and that student-athletes do not seek special treatment because of their status. They also feel confident in their ability to advise student-athletes. This is a positive development as any perceived notion that student-athletes are trying to circumvent the policies and procedures in place can lead to a negative working and advising relationship. This is very much a part of the common goal and intergroup cooperation of Intergroup Contact Theory. Both groups must have the goal of not only maintaining eligibility but also working toward degree completion. The groups (academic advisors and student-athletes) need to establish goals and then work together to meet those goals.

This study is a clear example that academic advisors need more time to interact with student-athletes and the opportunity to get involved within the athletic department. Increased involvement will assist in bridging the gap between athletics and academics and, ultimately, perceptions will change.

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Academic advisors should take a workshop on NCAA eligibility guidelines so they can become acquainted with the policies and rules of the NCAA, which is what Allport (1954) suggested in the support of authorities with Intergroup Contact Theory. Student-athletes should be encouraged to interact with academic advisors so they can learn more about what is required of student-athletes and the pressure placed on student-athletes (Gayles, 2009; Papanikolaou et al., 2003). Student-athletes certainly have demanding schedules but time should be made to develop a positive relationship with academic advisors. Learning more about this population of students will promote greater understanding and ensure student-athletes are reaping the benefits of having a positive advising experience, which will equate to student retention (Carstensen & Silberhorm, 1979; Lotkowski et al., 2004). This will also lead to an increase in satisfaction of the overall student experience (Coll & Zalaquett, 2007; Drake, 2011; Light, 2001; Thompson, 2009).

## **Conclusion**

It is important that academic advisors are aware of the perceptions or stereotypes they may have toward student-athletes. Those perceptions could in fact be influenced by how the advisor views that athletic department at his or her respective institution. Allowing academic advisors to uncover such biases will create a better understanding of the student-athlete population. This will assist in the overall effort to ensure that every student is gaining adequate guidance from academic advisors, allowing for students to have a successful academic experience. This study can begin the understanding and realization process for academic advisors about the potential biases they may have toward student-athletes as well as athletic departments. The key to decreasing the negative perception or stereotypes of student-athletes is creating a positive athletic department perception and attitude. This can be accomplished by increasing understanding of NCAA eligibility requirements and athletic department involvement. Academic advisors, faculty, students and student-athletes are all stakeholders within the

institution. It is crucial for academic advisors to understand the needs of all students within the department. Academic advisors are often versed on the various student services across a college campus, as we have seen, are unaware of the rules, regulations and protocols in place for student-athletes and their academic needs. In addition to workshops to learn about NCAA eligibility requirements and regulations, regular interaction with athletic academic advisors as well as compliance personnel is imperative to stay up-to-date on all rules regarding the NCAA. While it is not necessary for academic advisors to know the ins and outs of NCAA eligibility, familiarity with those rules would make the advising sessions more beneficial for the student-athlete.

### **Future Research**

This study examined academic advisors at NCAA Division I institutions so the findings may not be applicable to other NCAA divisions. Future research should expand the sample to Divisions II and III. The sample can also be expanded to conferences outside of the Power 5 conferences in Division I. The introduction of two scales was also a part of this study. Future research should work to refine those scales (NCAA Understanding and Athletic Department Involvement) so they can be used in future studies investigating parallel topics. Future research can also delve deeper into the demographic influences of both the academic advisors and the student-athletes. Gender, ethnicity, athletic experience may all be a factor in determining the perceptions of the academic advisors and those same factors may influence the perception of the student-athlete. Furthermore, the sample for this study was any person that had advising duties as indicated by their job title or listed as having advising duties by their college or academic department. The researchers did not include the advisor's specific academic program or majors. Upcoming studies may want to focus on academic advisors in specific majors and/or programs that may have a higher population of student-athletes. Future research can also explore the perceptions of student-athletes toward academic advisors as well as strategies to help

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improve the relationship to make it more symbiotic. This research did utilize questionnaires which did not allow for an in-depth investigation of the views of the academic advisors so future research can be focused on interviews or focus groups to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying issues involved in the perception of student-athletes. Advising protocols vary by institution and might impact how students and student-athletes are advised throughout the undergraduate career. This study aimed to look at perceptions of student-athletes by a new group—the academic advisor. Previous literature has focused on perceptions from the stand point of faculty and the general student body. This study provided much needed insight into the academic advisor—student-athlete relationship and why problems might exist. Future research will allow the researchers to understand this group a little better and be able to provide more insight into the perceptions of student-athletes by academic advisors.

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Table 1  
*Means and Reliability Analysis of Measurement Scales*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean*</b>	<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></b>
Department Attitude	3.17	.817
Stereotype	3.83	.825
Involvement	2.45	.732
Eligibility Understanding	3.15	.949

\* Based on a 1 to 6 scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree

Table 2  
*Correlation Matrix of Measurement Scales*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Attitude</b>	<b>Involvement</b>	<b>NCAA Understanding</b>
Stereotype	.620*	-.189*	-.083
Attitude		-.329*	-.181*
Involvement			.549*

\*  $p \leq .05$

## Academic Advisors' Perceptions of Student-Athletes

**Response Documents**Response Document to the **Editor**

Comments	Responses
1. Citations	All in-text citations as well as the reference page have been examined and corrections have been made.
2. Stereotype	An academic definition of stereotype has been provided. The concepts have been included in the literature regarding student-athlete perception to add to further understanding regarding how these concepts are operationalized. We also added hypothesis (based on the suggestion on reviewer two). Thus, we hope you find our results (especially pertaining to stereotypes) more focused.
3. Theory	Based on your suggestion, please note significant revisions regarding the theory in this paper. We went much more in-depth on what intergroup contact theory is and how it can be applied to our study (please see pages 5-8). Thank you for helping us improve our paper.

Response Document to Reviewer **ONE**

Comments	Responses
1. I was happy to see that research was being conducted in this area. I would also be interested to see reverse research on student-athletes perceptions of academic advisors vs. their academic counseling experience. I believe perceptions at a smaller DI institution may be a bit more favorable than those of the power 5.	Thank you for your kind review. We are so happy that you appreciated this research and feel it's practical. All of these potential studies have been included in future research.
2. I also would be interested to see the academic focus on advisors surveyed. Do they advise majors where student-athletes tend to perform well or not? The academic level of students they advise typically varies by program areas and can have an impact on perceptions of athletes.	We added academic advisor's programs/majors to suggestions for future research.

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Response Document to Reviewer **Two**

Comments	Responses
<p>1. A proper citation is needed. For example, in page 3, authors cited (Allport, 1954) but it was misused because Allport (1954) never mentioned about the bias in academic advisors—student athlete context. I saw many missing and misused citations in the whole manuscript so authors should address this issue.</p>	<p>The Allport (1954) citation was inadvertently added for this sentence and has been deleted and replaced with the correct citation.</p> <p>All in-text citations as well as the reference page have been examined and corrections have been made.</p>
<p>2. On page 3 authors mentioned perception or stereotypes. However, those concepts are not the same so the authors should provide the academic definition (not dictionary definition) of these concepts and explain how they were operationalized in the current study.</p>	<p>An academic definition of stereotype has been provided and included in the literature regarding student-athlete perception to add to further understanding on how these concepts are operationalized. However, the previous literature we cite in this area (Coll &amp; Zalaquett; Drake; Habley &amp; Crockett) fails to define “perceptions.” Thus, because we feel this is a common social science research term that refers to thought, and we were advised not to use the dictionary definition, we did not define “perceptions.” Please note, an effort was made to ensure the reader understands that stereotype(s) and perception(s) are different.</p>
<p>3. On page 4 authors included a section about the “importance of academic advising” but this part could be significantly reduced and moved to the introduction part. In the current research authors should directly go into the “Student-Athlete and Athletic Department Perception” and provide thorough review of the previous studies (this is place authors can give the definitions of perception or stereotypes).</p>	<p>Based on your suggestion, the importance of academic advising section was moved to the introduction. We did our best to cut down this section and eliminated several sentences that failed to support the importance of this topic.</p>

## Academic Advisors' Perceptions of Student-Athletes

<p>4. Although I kind of understand why the intergroup contact theory was used in this study but how the theory (especially the conditions) were applied to this study could be significantly improved. The first part of this section was from Pettigrew's (1998) study but authors should elaborate more how this theory works in the context of academic advisor – student athlete relationship. For example, the first condition to be met in order to apply contact theory is equal status. However, you didn't even mention this condition in terms of academic advisor and student athlete relationship. Explain how this condition was met between academic advisors and student athletes. Next condition is common goals. What are the common goals for both academic advisors and student athletes groups in the current study? Also elaborate how the third condition was met. Lastly, it seems like authors are confused with the fourth condition of the contact theory. When you apply the contact theory to examine the relationship between academic advisors and student athletes, then academic advisors are not in authority positions but you mentioned they are (page 6). Support of authorities in this context could be the athletic department, the institution, or NCAA but not the academic advisors since they are the "OTHER" intergroup.</p>	<p>Additional information regarding intergroup contact theory was added to the manuscript. The additional information includes how the theory is applicable to the study as well as to the population studied—the academic advisor.</p>
<p>5. The bottom two paragraphs don't fit within the "intergroup contact theory" section. They should be moved to the previous section "student-athlete and athletic department perception" or removed since they are redundant.</p>	<p>The bottom two paragraphs referenced within this comment were edited, moved and some parts were deleted in order for the sections to make more sense and not be redundant.</p>
<p>6. Hypotheses should be included.</p>	<p>The five research questions were replaced with three hypotheses. Thanks for the suggestion. The research is much more focused now.</p>

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<p>7. The format of the method section should be restructured. Now authors have only included <i>participants</i> and <i>instrumentation</i>. A general methods section (for this kind of research method) should include <i>participant</i>, <i>data collection procedure</i>, <i>instruments</i>, and <i>data analysis</i> (e.g., statistical software, descriptive statistics analysis, regression, etc.).</p>	<p>Clear subheads were added. More information in regards to the data analysis was added as well under the Methods section.</p>
<p>8. On page 7, authors mentioned they have developed two additional scales. Scale development procedures should be conducted in most rigorous ways. The authors mentioned briefly they followed the process recommended by Fraenkel &amp; Wallen (2000), Cunningham (2007), and Hardin, Trendafilova, Stokowski, and Koo (2013) but I would recommend at least examined the construct validity (i.e., convergent and discriminant validity; e.g., Kline 2010; Anderson &amp; Gerbing, 1988; Fornell &amp; Larker, 1981) for the newly developed scales.</p>	<p>Information was added in regards to the two developed scales in regards to convergent and discriminant validity under the Data Analysis section under Methods.</p>
<p>9. Revise the tables by following the APA publication manual 6<sup>th</sup> edition.</p>	<p>The tables were reformatted for APA Style.</p>
<p>10. When you report the results, follow also APA publication manual 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Just give an example, on page 8 authors reported “Department Attitude had a significant positive correlation (<math>r = .620, p \leq .000</math>) with...” It should be changed to (<math>r = .620, p &lt; .001</math>)</p>	<p>We corrected this.</p>
<p>11. The main analysis for this research is regression. So include regression table.</p>	<p>Please see response #12.</p>

## Academic Advisors' Perceptions of Student-Athletes

<p>12. So based on the results, the only significant predictor of stereotype is department attitude. This is a perfect example why development of hypotheses are important. Considering the nature of multivariate statistics in social science area, pre-determined (or expected) theoretical relationships between the variable should be established before conducting multivariate statistics to prevent “fishing”. Another potential reason why only department attitude is a significant predictor could be found in the study design. In my opinion there is a design flaw in this research. The reason the authors used contact theory to examine the academic advisor-student athlete relationship seems like “if the academic advisors are more involved then they may have less stereotypical perception of the student athlete”. If that is what the authors want to find out, authors should’ve examined the “involvement” as a moderator here. For this research (since it uses regression analysis) the authors could divide the academic advisors into two groups based on the involvement level (high vs low) and conduct two separate regression analyses. If the results of the two analyses are significantly different, there is a moderation effect of the academic advisors’ involvement on stereotype perception.</p>	<p>We must have not been clear on the findings. Hopefully switching to hypotheses will help with this. The regression indicated this but the correlation matrix shows the higher the NCAA Understanding score the lower the Stereotype and also the higher of Athletic Department Involvement the lower the Stereotype. This led us to split attitude into two groups (high and low) and conduct t-tests to see if there were any differences. Those results did show a relationship between involvement and stereotype. That information was added under Results. We opted for this approach rather than regression analysis.</p> <p>We greatly appreciate your thoughts on how to make our paper stronger. We hope we met your expectations. Thank you for the opportunity to revise our manuscript.</p>
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