

Investigating the Relationship Between Varsity Student-Athletes and Faculty Members

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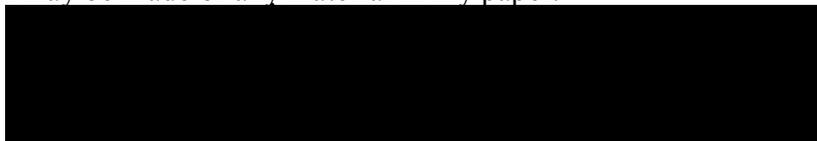
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## ABSTRACT

A number of studies have investigated the relationship between student-athletes and faculty members. However, of these previously conducted research projects, one's done from the perspective of the student-athlete are lacking. In order to better understand this complex dynamic, it is important to investigate the student-athlete's opinions of their relationships with faculty members as well as their overall comfort of interacting with professors. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the multi-dimensional relationship between student-athletes and professors focusing largely on the student's perception. To do this, a total of 20 varsity student-athletes (10 male, 10 female), in their 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> year of eligibility participated in this research. Faculties represented were Arts (5), Business (5) and Science (5), as well as five students from kinesiology (5) were treated as a special group, a decision based off previous research. All seven varsity team sports at UPEI, rugby (W), basketball (M/W), soccer (M/W) and hockey (M/W) were represented. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with each participant to understand the student-athlete experience throughout university and their relationships with professors. Concurrent to the interviews, 33 faculty members completed The Academic Competence Evaluation Scales (ACES) College edition questionnaire to understand professors' perception of student-athletes. In terms of data analysis, the interviews were transcribed and analyzed both by faculty and by gender to identify the present themes. The data collected from the faculty members was considered strictly descriptive as no significance tests were conducted. Results suggested different experiences and perceptions by student-athletes of professors. The ACES showed minimal differences across faculties and genders of professors, however gave anecdotal

evidence that supports past research. The discussion was focus on comparing the results of this study to previous research touching on both faculty and gender differences as well as comparing this Canadian sample to the highly represented American studies. In conclusion, it was found that although there are differences amongst the participants experiences, the general population at this particular institution seem happy with their faculty relationships. Future recommendations as well as areas of study have also been stated.

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#Scotchos

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## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between student-athletes and faculty members has been thoroughly studied in past research. (Lawrence, 2008; Williams, Colles, & Allen, 2010). This being said, the majority of these studies have been conducted from the perspective of the faculty member, thus leaving the viewpoint of student-athletes underrepresented. Due to the unique role student-athletes play on campus, and the potential stereotypes attributed to them, it is essential to institutions' overall congruence that this perspective is further researched (Jolly 2008; Comeaux, 2011).

Previous research has shown that increased interaction between these two groups has benefited the student-athletes in many ways. Having positive experiences with faculty members has been found to benefit students' academic and athletic success, learning and development, as well as experiential and institutional satisfaction (Comeaux, 2011; Endo & Harpel, 1982; Jolly, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Past research has stated that these interactions, as well as individuals' personal perspectives, may be impacted by institutional athletic achievement, faculty, as well as gender (Noble, 2004; Comeaux, 2011). Thus, looking further into these views may prove beneficial to creating a more positive experience for all.

Throughout this research project, the perspective of the student-athlete, regarding their interactions and relationships with faculty members was further analyzed. Understanding this influential relationship from the outlook of the student is crucial for obtaining a holistic understanding of the interactions between the two groups. This dynamic, though highly complex, plays an integral role in the student-athletes' overall

experience. Thus, gaining a more thorough awareness of the specific experiences these individuals face, may allow for recommendations and best practices to be established.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Student-Athlete Academic Experience

In 2017, there were approximately 4300 students registered in full-time equivalent studies at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) (UPEI, 2017). Of these students, 184 of them were a part of a UPEI varsity sports team, thereby making about 5% of the total campus population athletes (UPEI, 2018). Compared to the size of UPEI as a whole, this percentage of student-athletes is quite significant when looking at other universities both in the Maritimes and all of Canada. For example, at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, there were approximately 16,000 students registered in full-time equivalent studies (MPHEC, 2018) and of those students, only about 250 of them played on a varsity sports team (Dal, 2018) in the 2017-2018 school year. From this, it can be calculated that only about 1.5% of the full-time student population at this particular university is made up of varsity student-athletes. Looking even broader, at Ryerson University in Toronto, Ontario only approximately 176 out of the 30,500 full-time equivalent students held a position on a U-Sports registered varsity sports team during the 2017-2018 school year (Universities Canada, 2018; Ryerson University, 2018). Having only about 0.6% of the population at this specific university being student-athletes, the seemingly insignificant 5% at UPEI proves to be quite substantial. Thus, it is essential to understand the differences this unique group faces regarding their academic relationships on campus.

Student-athletes are set apart from their peers not only by their athletic roles on campus but also by the substantial health, athletic and time-related demands placed upon them by their sport (Rubin & Moses, 2017). In a study done by Jordan (1990), it was

found that individuals in this population are controlled largely by their strict schedule often having classes in the morning and afternoons, practicing in the evenings and spending time outside of this to study or tend to other responsibilities they may have. Due to the additional commitments they have, it is often a constant balancing act trying to establish the appropriate combination of time spent on studies and sport (Jolly, 2008). Canadian student-athletes are required to register as a “full-time status” student, which is considered three to five courses per semester, to maintain their athletic eligibility (U Sports, 2018). This is equal to 9-15 hours spent in class per week, without the additional time spent in a lab if required. With school comes studying, and in 2016, a self-report survey conducted by Maclean’s magazine found that the average time UPEI students spent studying was close to 17 hours per week (Schwartz, 2016). Due to this being a self-report study it can be assumed that the reality of this may be lower; however, this is still a considerable amount of time spent on school work outside the classroom.

Along with their academic responsibilities’ student-athletes are required to dedicate a substantial amount of time to their sport (Huml, Hancock & Bergman., 2014). In a study done by Potuto and Hanlon (2006), it was found that 82% of NCAA varsity student-athletes spend more than 10 hours practicing and 40% claimed to spend 10 hours or more playing their sport per week. In addition to their daily practices, student-athletes are required to spend a number of hours traveling for competition thereby missing classes and potentially falling behind on their academics (Jolly, 2008). When looking at the big picture, it may be possible to downplay the extensive commitment being a student-athlete truly is. Though, when the numbers are broken down, and each aspect of their life is accounted for, it’s easy to see how little extra time these individuals have. For this reason,

it is essential to be aware of any additional challenges they may face regarding their academics (Jolly, 2008).

Many students, when first entering university, feel overwhelmed and underprepared for the intense academic workload they are faced with (Jolly, 2008; Rubin & Moses, 2017). A qualitative study conducted by Miller and Kerr (2002) at the University of Toronto, investigated the athletic, academic, and social experiences of varsity student-athletes. This study found that when transitioning from high school athletics to the university level, students struggled with the quantity of training with some athletes reporting over 20 hours spent in training and competition per week (Miller & Kerr, 2002). To combat these struggles, many institutions have opened athlete-only academic help centers to provide them extra assistance (Coakly, 2001). The purpose and effectiveness of these programs was further studied by Rubin and Moses (2017) who conducted focus groups with male and female student-athletes at Division I American institutions. These researchers found that student-athletes held this type of program in extremely high regard and claimed how beneficial they thought it was to their overall academic success (Rubin & Moses, 2017). Complimentary to these findings, Horner, Ternes, and MacLeod (2016) described the potentially detrimental situation of student-athletes strictly seeking academic advice from their coaches or teammates. Assistance from these groups may result in overrepresented athletic goals; thus it is important student-athletes branch out to programs similar to these to best set themselves up for high academic achievement (Horner et al., 2016).

In addition to the academic and athletic struggles these individuals may experience, university is an extremely influential time in students' lives when maturity

and knowledge are both increased as well as future plans, such as careers are further explored (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). During the years of 18-25, individuals are in the “emerging adulthood” stage of their development (Arnett, 2000). It is throughout these years that individuals go through significant change, transitioning from adolescence to adulthood. This period of life is riddled with various struggles such as identity affirmation, self-development as well as managing relationships both personal and professional (Comeaux, 2011). A study done by Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, and Hannah (2006), using data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) looked at the differences in overall college experience between student-athletes and their non-sport playing peers. In this study, it was found that both the male and female student-athlete participants reported larger gains in both personal and social development compared to their non-sport playing counterparts (Umbach et al., 2006). From the aforementioned study, it can be assumed that participating in a sport may have a positive effect on student’s development during this impactful time of their lives.

In contrast to this, Miller and Kerr (2002) reported student-athletes experiencing role conflict due to the constant balancing act of athletics and academics. University can be a difficult time for all students when considering the developmental processes they undergo; therefore, student-athletes due to their potentially overwhelming workloads may be at an increased risk. In a study done by Adams, Berzonsky, and Keating (2005), it was found that the relationships students have during the emerging adulthood stage can be extremely influential on their social and academic development. Furthermore, these researchers found that student-faculty relationships may impact a number of academic skills such as problem-solving, rationalizing, and study habits as well as the way they

handle personal decision making (Adams et al., 2005). Additionally, Chen, Snyder, and Magner (2010) claimed that faculty members might be the most fitting individuals to assist student-athletes in learning how to manage their two time-consuming roles. Thus, it is important for faculty members to gain an appreciation for both the academic and athletic aspects of these individuals' lives and aid them along their journey of learning how to balance these two significant roles (Jolly, 2008; Krebs, 2004).

University has a tremendous impact on students as previously mentioned, and the extent of that impact is partly determined by how engaged the student is in distinct activities both in and outside of the class (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Umbach et al., 2006). Class preparation, interacting with professors, collaborating with peers on academic assignments and community service work are all examples of the aforementioned beneficial activities according to Kuh (2001). Due to their demanding schedules, it would be easy to assume that athletes are less engaged in these areas of school however it was found in a study done by Umbach and colleagues (2006), that there are little to no differences in the level of participation in these key activities when comparing student-athletes to their peers. Thus, allowing for the conclusion that student-athletes are just as concerned about their education as they are about their sport.

#### Student-Athlete and Faculty Interactions

As mentioned above, and stated in a number of previous studies, student-faculty relationships play an integral role in both sports playing and non-sport playing students' overall academic success throughout their post-secondary experience (Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Harrison et al., 2006; Williams et al., 2010). A qualitative analysis conducted by Cotten and Wilson (2006), researched the student-faculty interactions of undergraduate

students in the United States of America (U.S). From their research, it was found that although most students reported interactions with their professors, there were some who stated that these encounters were infrequent and others even admitting to never experiencing them outside the classroom (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). For student-athletes in particular, this study found that many neglected the academic opportunity of utilizing their professors as an educational resource both in formal and informal situations.

In direct opposition to the negative behavior described by Cotten and Wilson (2006), a number of studies have found that interacting with faculty members, both in a formal and casual setting has been positively associated with learning and development, as well as overall institutional and experiential satisfaction in student-athletes (Comeaux, 2011; Endo & Harpel, 1982; Jolly, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Though both types of contact have shown benefits, studies have shown that informal interactions are preferred as they allow a casual relationship to form between the two parties (Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Jolly, 2008).

Work done by Jolly (2008) as well as Williams and colleagues (2010), found the aforementioned non-academic conversations have been shown to be further beneficial when concerning the student's athletic commitments. When professors expressed interest in their pupils' athletic performance, attended one of their games, or genuinely showed concern for their lives outside of the classroom, students felt more comfortable approaching them regarding future academic concerns (Jolly, 2008; Williams et al., 2010). A study conducted at the University of Syracuse by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), found that increased informal interactions between student-athletes and faculty members reinforced student's academic identity as well as social integration on campus.

Brand (2008) also mentioned how essential it is to student-athletes' academic success that faculty members be open to providing direct support regarding their classwork as well as increase their overall support of athletics. These interactions, in particular, can have a positive effect not only on academic success but also athletic performance due to their overall institutional satisfaction (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). Therefore, creating more casual relationships between these two parties may benefit all areas of campus life and increase the levels of satisfaction for both groups.

Contrastingly, a review done by Kuh (2003), using data from the NSSE found that merely having casual relations with faculty members does not necessarily impact students' academic achievement. Kuh (2003) states that contact between these two groups are dependent both on the frequency and the nature of the conversation. Furthermore, in this review, it was found that interactions between students and their faculty members show the largest benefits when professors encourage their pupils to increase their academic efforts in educationally sound activities such as studying. This type of behaviour ultimately creates a better academic experience for the student as well as a more open relationship between the two parties that may prove useful in future situations. Thus, it's essential that faculty members be open and willing to engage.

In the previously mentioned study done by Cotten and Wilson (2006), researchers found that the reason student-athletes may not approach faculty members is due to their lack of confidence approaching them. In saying this, it can be derived that the responsibility of maintaining a relationship between the two parties is shared, though the faculty member must provide encouragement and reassurance that the student's inquiries are both appreciated and relevant (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). Faculty members are placed

in a special situation with student-athletes as it is beneficial they acknowledge their athletic commitments, but simultaneously work to strengthen their student identity (Williams et al., 2010). In saying this, the relationship between student-athletes and faculty members is one that is critical in all parts of the students' lives and plays a significant role in the entirety of their post-secondary experience.

#### Faculty's Perception of Student Athletes

The worlds of athletics and academics although forced to mix aren't always done so in an amicable matter. This interesting interaction has been thoroughly researched and debated over the years with various studies looking at the two and how they affect overall student success (Lawrence, 2008; Williams et al., 2010). The main viewpoint looked at within this field is that of faculty members towards student-athletes. A study performed by Feezel (2013) looked at just this, analyzing faculty attitudes towards athletics at NCAA Division II institutions. This project surveyed faculty members using a 40-item Likert scale questionnaire that was focused on gathering their opinion on college level student-athletes. One major takeaway from this study was professors with first-hand student-athlete experience might actively try to dismiss any negative opinions of student-athletes thereby creating a more positive reputation for this population. In contrast to this, however, this study also found that in general, some professors hold the belief that athletics help produce inferior students thereby failing to create a consolidated bond between academics and athletics. Thus, this researcher's main conclusion was that this relationship is complex and ever-changing and may be influenced by the level of an institution (Feezell, 2013).

Furthermore, it has been found that faculty members may often stigmatize student-athletes as less capable, as well as hold more negative attitudes towards them than their non-athletic peers (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Jolly, 2008; Williams et al., 2010). In the work of Baucom and Lantz (2001), approximately 400 faculty members from universities in the US completed the Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) pertaining to student-athletes. From this, it was found that the negative attitudes held toward student-athletes stem partially from the belief that athletics overshadow the foundational academic purpose of the university experience (Baucom & Lantz, 2001). These stereotypes may place student-athletes at a disadvantage in comparison to other students regardless of whether or not they reach high academic achievement. Additionally, in a study done by Comeaux (2001), it was found that the aforementioned negative attitudes may result in a lowered quality of participation for students in educationally sound activities, such as interacting with their professors thereby, affecting them academically. This study, similar to that of Baucom and Lantz (2008), utilized the SAS to collect faculty members' attitudes towards student-athletes. From this, it was found that encouraging meaningful collaboration between these two parties may help foster a more effective relationship and thereby increase overall satisfaction (Comeaux, 2001).

Opinions on this particular group of students vary substantially between individual faculty members as well as whole institutions (Lawrence et al., 2009). In a study done by Noble et al. (2004), it was found that some of the variances amongst institutions could be attributed to the success rate of the sports teams. Schools with high athletic success generally had more positive attitudes towards student-athletes and vice versa (Noble, 2004; Lawrence et al., 2009). Additionally, the department in which a

faculty member teaches can also influence the way they perceive student-athletes. In a study done by Comeaux (2011), it was found that faculty members in the Social Sciences and Humanities reported more negative attitudes towards student-athletes compared to other departments. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Noble (2004) reported that faculty members within the department of Kinesiology had a far more positive view on athletes and the role that they play on campus. On top of the previously mentioned demographics, gender has also been found to play a role in this complex relationship (Comeaux, 2011). Comeaux (2011), found from the results of the SAS questionnaire that male faculty members were more likely to hold negative views towards student-athletes compared to their female counterparts. Overall, many variables play a role in faculty members perception of this population, thus understanding why these have an effect and trying to minimize them may be beneficial.

In contrast to the negative perspectives mentioned previously, some studies have found professors believe that athletics play a positive role on campuses and develop student-athletes in a positive way (Lawrence et al., 2007). Others, however, perceive there to be a disconnect between the two worlds of academia and athletics and therefore lack the appropriate knowledge to form an opinion apart from the experiences they have teaching student-athletes (Lawrence et al., 2007). To say the least the views individual faculty members have of athletics, and student-athletes themselves, are anything but consistent (Lawrence et al., 2007).

#### Student Athlete's Perception of Faculty

Although there are many studies done on the faculty's perception of student-athletes and athletics on campus, the number done from the perspective of the athlete is

quite small in comparison. Analyzing this complex relationship from the viewpoint of the student has been neglected in terms of research however it is essential to understand their experience in order to increase their positive relations with faculty as well as their overall comfort interacting with professors (Cotten & Wilson, 2006;, Harrison et al., 2006;, Williams et al., 2010).

A study done by Williams and colleagues (2010), one of the few mentioned above, looked specifically at the perceptions of over 1000 student-athletes towards their faculty interactions at Division III institutions. This project used a multi-method approach combining both quantitative data from questionnaires as well as qualitative results from focus groups. The results from this project showed that in general, student-athletes seemed content with their academic experiences, interactions with faculty as well as identified highly with their athletic status. Furthermore, although both male and female participants claimed to have overall positive experiences, the male athletes in this study had reported hearing more negative comments from their professors regarding their academic abilities. As well, the male participants had stronger beliefs that faculty viewed them as less motivated and less academically capable compared to the general student population (Williams et al., 2010).

In relation to the findings of Williams and colleagues (2010), Jolly (2008) found that some student-athletes have misperceptions of faculty and may perceive them to be discriminatory even if that is not the reality. The relationships between students and their professors are significant however and, according to Kuh (1995), can impact a student's self-concept in areas such as self-worth, confidence and academic abilities. If the misconceptions student-athletes have of faculty members are not set straight the students

may be less likely to approach them for academic guidance and their willingness to seek academic support, in general, may decrease (Jolly, 2008). Again, in the research of Williams and colleagues (2010), it was found that athletes may be more hesitant approaching their professors due to these fears and may even conceal their athletic identity to save them this potential discrimination. This unwillingness to search for help can ultimately decrease the students' academic performance thereby lowering their satisfaction with their academic experience. Thus, faculty play an extremely influential role in student-athletes' overall academic success as well as post-secondary experience (Jolly, 2008).

In addition to this, Strauss and Volkwein (2004) found that when athletes were satisfied with their relationships with faculty, their commitment to the institution increased. In the research done, student-athletes report both positive and negative experiences with faculty members (Williams et al., 2010). This is similar to the statement from Lawrence and colleagues (2007) that the perceptions of student-athletes by faculty are extremely varied.

As this relationship has an impact on both the lives of the faculty member as well as the student-athlete, it is essential to gain a deeper understanding of their interactions. From the research previously discussed, the outlook athletes have on this particular dynamic affects not only their athletic and academic success but their institutional satisfaction as well. Thus, it is imperative that more research is done from this unique perspective to gain clarity on the student-athlete experience.

## Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between student-athletes and their faculty members. As found in previous research, this relationship is highly influential for students (Adams et al., 2005); however, studies done from the perspective of the athletes are underrepresented. This perception, as described above, is equally as important and deserves to be researched as so. Thus, this study attempted to fill this gap in the literature in hopes to better understand this multi-dimensional relationship from the eyes of the student-athletes themselves. Information was collected from student-athletes and faculty to achieve a detailed data collection specific to the UPEI campus. The results were then used to make recommendations on how to improve the relationship thereby creating a better experience for both parties. Additionally, as the majority of research conducted on this topic is done in the U.S, this study provided a Canadian sample of participants in order to compare the institutional differences.

## METHODS

Two separate methodologies were used throughout the data collection process of this study. For the purpose of organization, Part I of the methods section will go over the participant demographics, materials, procedure, and data analysis for the student-athlete sample. Part II will follow the same format but will focus on the faculty members sample.

### Part I: Student-Athletes

#### *Participants*

The primary researcher led recruitment for this group, and prospective participants were contacted via word of mouth or email. Due to the researchers' previous exposure to UPEI athletics, a convenience sample of student-athletes was obtained. Inclusion requirements for this study were as follows: the student must be a member of a varsity sports team at the University of Prince Edward Island, and they must be in their third, fourth, or fifth year of study and eligibility. First and second-year students were not eligible for this study as it was believed they would not have had as much of an opportunity to form relationships with their professors. Due to the nature of the study, it was essential that the students have had a substantial amount of interaction with their professors; therefore, only upper year students were recruited. Additionally, athletes on individual sports teams were not eligible for this study. The reason for this being there are only two individual varsity sports teams at UPEI, cross-country and track and field, therefore to avoid further shrinking representation of teams, these groups were not looked at. It was important to achieve adequate representation from all teams being studied therefore only the seven varsity team sports at UPEI, men's and women's basketball, soccer, and hockey as well as women's rugby, were included.

The researcher contacted the potential student-athletes directly to cultivate interest and solidify participation. The participants varied in gender, sport, and program with five participants each from the faculty of Arts, Business Administration and Science. Additionally, five students registered in the Kinesiology program were interviewed and treated as a unique group, a decision made based upon previous research (Noble, 2004). These groups consisted of both male and female athletes varying across all varsity sports teams at UPEI. See Table 1 for a more thorough breakdown of the participant's demographics.

Table 1: Student Athlete Participant Demographics

	Arts	Business Administration	Science	Kinesiology
Age (average)	20.8 years (20-22)	22.4 years (21-25)	22 years (20-26)	20.6 years (20-22)
Gender	3 women 2 men	2 women 3 men	2 women 3 men	3 women 2 men
Sport	W Hockey W Soccer M Soccer W Rugby M Basketball	M Hockey W Basketball (2) M Basketball (2)	W Rugby M Soccer W Soccer M Basketball M Hockey	M Soccer (2) W Rugby W Basketball W Hockey
Starter or Non-starter	3 Starters 2 Non-starters	1 Starter 4 Non-starters	4 Starters 1 Non-starter	3 Starters 2 Non-starters
Year of Eligibility	3 <sup>rd</sup> (3 participants) 4 <sup>th</sup> (2 participant)	3 <sup>rd</sup> (2 participants) 4 <sup>th</sup> (2 participants) 5 <sup>th</sup> (1 participants)	3 <sup>rd</sup> (1 participant) 4 <sup>th</sup> (3 participants) 5 <sup>th</sup> (1 participant)	3 <sup>rd</sup> (4 participants) 4 <sup>th</sup> (1 participant)
Hours Spent Studying	12.6 hrs [ $\pm$ 8.1]	6.9 hrs [ $\pm$ 6.6]	16.6 hrs [ $\pm$ 10.2]	9.2 hrs [ $\pm$ 7]
Hours Spent Practicing	9.6 hrs [ $\pm$ 3.6]	11.7 hrs [ $\pm$ 4.8]	11.6 hrs [ $\pm$ 5.4]	9.6 hrs [ $\pm$ 3.5]
Hours Spent Playing	11.6 hrs [ $\pm$ 2.9]	6.4 hrs [ $\pm$ 5]	9.8 hrs [ $\pm$ 1.5]	9.8 hrs [ $\pm$ 3.8]

### *Materials*

Interested student-athletes were provided with a letter of information (Appendix A) including details regarding the study and the inclusion requirements. If they decided they were willing and able to participate based upon this summary, they were then asked to sign a consent form (Appendix B) ensuring the anonymity of their data. Participants were also required to complete a demographic form (Appendix C) providing information to the researchers. Their sex, age, sport, year of eligibility, whether they are a starter or non-starter, program of study, as well as the number of courses in which they are enrolled for the fall and winter semesters was collected. This form also provided data regarding how many hours the student spends studying as well as practicing/playing their sport per week. Additional materials that were used during the interview process included an interview guide (Appendix D) and an audio recording device.

### *Procedure*

The method of data collection for this group was via one-on-one interviews between the student-athlete and researcher. The location and time of the meeting was set after the participant had agreed to be a part of the study as well as the researcher has ensured they satisfy the inclusion criteria. The interviews took place in a private, quiet area agreed upon by both parties. The main concern regarding the environment was that the participant felt comfortable enough to speak freely about the topic of interest.

The first step of the data collection process was to have the participant read through the letter of information. They were then offered the chance to pose any questions they had about the study to the researcher. Once all of their questions and/or concerns had been addressed the researcher then instructed them to read through and sign

the consent form as well as complete the demographic form. When all of the forms were filled out and reviewed, and the participant felt comfortable with the procedure and expectations, the data collection began, and the audio-recorder was started.

The data collection process during the interviews consisted of the researcher posing a series of questions to the participant. The interview guide was made up of 12 questions that were categorized into four separate parts. The first three questions focused largely on the participants' overall student-athlete experience. This was followed by five questions that were more specific to their relationships with their professors. The third part of the interview was aimed at understanding how these relationships affected the participants academically, and finally, question 12 provided the students the chance to include any additional comments they may have had regarding the topic. All of the questions were worded in an open-ended manner to allow more detailed answers and more in-depth conversations between the participant and the researcher. This technique resulted in a more thorough data collection which aided the analysis process.

Following the interview, the researcher transcribed the recorded session verbatim into a word document. Each transcription was anonymized by the researcher assigning each participant a number as well as removing any names mentioned throughout the interview. Once this was completed, the document was emailed to the participant thereby allowing them to make any changes they saw fit. A time limit of one week was allotted for this process, and the participants were told that if they did not provide a response that would be taken as their approval. Upon receiving the participant's approval, the researcher began the data analysis.

### *Data Analysis*

In order to maintain organization throughout this process, an Excel worksheet was used to house the participant's responses as well as their demographic information. This system allowed the researcher to better categorize the themes identified as well as the quotes selected to support the findings. Upon receiving participant approval for the transcriptions, the researcher went through each question for all 20 interviews and identified the main points. This simplified the data analysis process as it allowed for all of the irrelevant comments to be removed before any further investigation. Upon moving into the evaluation of the data, an analysis was done once comparing the four different groups, Science, Arts, Kinesiology and Business, and again comparing the male and female participants. Each evaluation consisted of a thematic analysis being completed to identify the master and sub-themes evident for each question amongst the group (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

For the faculty analysis, upon identifying the main themes of each question for the five participants from each of the four groups a comparison was completed. The commonalities and differences evident for each question between groups were determined, and quotes from the participants were selected to support the findings. This process was completed again for the by gender analysis and the main similarities and differences between the male and female participants were distinguished as well as quotes to support these findings were identified.

### Part II: Faculty Members

#### *Participants*

Recruitment for this study occurred via an open invitation sent out by email to all faculty members through the administrative assistants of each faculty. Inclusion

requirements for this sample were limited with the only necessity being that they were a professor at UPEI. A total of 32 faculty members participated in this study. Faculties represented were: Science, Arts, Business, Education, as well as professors from the Atlantic Veterinary College (AVC). Table 2 shows a complete breakdown of the demographics collected during the study.

Table 2: Faculty Member Participants Demographics

	Science	Arts	Business	Education	AVC
Participants	15	6	8	2	2
Age (average)	38.9 (28-57)	56.0 (35-53)	49.0 (34-67)	51.5 (40-63)	56.6 (56-57)
Gender	9 Male 6 Female	4 Male 1 Female 1 N/A	5 Male 3 Female	2 Male	1 Male 1 Female
Professor Rank	Assistant Professor-Contract Faculty (1) Associate Professor (3) Assistant Professor-Tenure Track (4) Full Professor (3) Sessional Instructor (4)	Assistant Professor-Contract Faculty (1) Associate Professor (3) Full Professor (2)	Associate Professor (4) Assistant Professor-Tenure Track (3) Full Professor (1)	Assistant Professor-Contract Faculty (1) Associate Professor (1)	Full Professor (1) Sessional Instructor (1)

### *Materials*

The email sent out to all faculty members included a short write-up introducing the primary researcher as well as the purpose of the project and the researcher's contact information if they had any questions or concerns. Additionally, it contained an active link to a Google Forms page that housed the Academic Competence Evaluation Scales (ACES) College Edition questionnaire (DiPerna & Elliott, 2001), and all supplementary resources. The ACES was a 66-item Likert-scale questionnaire that collected information regarding faculty members' opinions on student-athletes' academic skill-sets compared to students who do not play on a varsity sports team. The questions of the ACES are focused on two main areas: academic skills (reading/writing, mathematics/science, and

critical thinking) and academic enablers (interpersonal, engagement, motivation, and study habits) (DiPerna, 2004). The first 30 questions were answered on a scale from “far below” to “far above” grade level, where the remaining 36 were answered by placing “student-athletes” in front of the statements and then ranking them from “never” to “almost always” regarding occurrence. The data collected from this tool allowed the researcher to draw inferences on faculty members’ perceptions of student-athletes.

Other forms used during this data collection included a letter of information, a consent form, and a demographic form which, as mentioned, were all available on the Google Forms page. The letter of information described the purpose of the project as well as specifics regarding data collection and anonymity. The consent form, located directly below the letter of information, consisted of a short paragraph explaining that with clicking the box located at the bottom of that section, they were properly informed on the project and willing to participate. Also, on this page, there was an option for participants to indicate whether or not they wished to receive a summary of the results as well as a prompt to include their email if they chose to do so. Finally, the demographic form captured necessary information about the participant such as their age, gender, faculty, department, and their faculty rank.

### *Procedure*

As mentioned previously, an email was sent out to all faculty administrative assistants in order to gain interest and participants. About 20 days after the initial email an additional one was sent in order to generate more response. The goal for this survey was to make it as accessible as possible in order to increase participation. Thus, it was housed on an application (Google Forms) that allowed it to be completed on any

smartphone, tablet, or computer. Additionally, the estimated time of completion, approximately 10-15 minutes, was advertised in the recruitment email.

Upon clicking the active link provided in the recruitment email, the participant was brought to the letter of information. Once they had read through all of the details and decided to participate, they then moved on to the consent form. After providing their consent by clicking the mandatory check-box, the participant followed a linear process through the demographic form and onto the ACES. Once all questions had been answered the participant submitted their results to the researcher by pressing the appropriate button at the bottom of the final page. After 30 days, the researcher closed the survey to ensure no additional data was collected.

#### *Data Analysis*

All participants' answers from the ACES questionnaire were aggregated together and the information collected was broken down into the seven subscales. Averages across both gender and faculties were calculated in order to compare perceptions and experiences. This being said, the data found from this particular questionnaire was considered strictly descriptive and was utilized as so. Due to time constraints, the data was not analyzed to the same degree as the student-athletes' results. There were no significance tests performed, thus it is unknown as to whether any significant conclusions can be drawn.

## RESULTS

The results section of this study will be broken down into three different analyses. Part I and II will contain the results from the student-athletes by-faculty as well as by-gender analyses, and Part III will focus on the results from the faculty member data collection. Each part of the student-athlete results will be further broken down into the three main sections of the interview guide: background student-athlete experience, relationships with faculty members, and finally how those relationships have affected them academically. The questions of interest from the two analyses will be identified as well as any commonalities/differences between the groups. Direct quotes/statements from the participants will be utilized in order to further display the themes identified. The faculty member results will be represented by a table capturing their responses to the ACES questionnaire.

### Part I: By-Faculty Analysis Results

#### *Background Student-Athlete Experience*

Due to the nature of the first two questions, there were no substantial takeaways from them — the first asked participants about their experience as a student-athlete from their youth until now. Although there was not a drastic difference shown amongst the groups, it can be noted that nearly all the participants claimed they spent the majority of their lives balancing both their roles in academics and athletics. This was summed up nicely by a participant in Kinesiology who stated, “...ever since I’ve been in school, I’ve been an athlete I guess you could say.” (Participant 2).

Question two was more focused on the students’ perceptions of their academic abilities and asked them to rank themselves on a scale from below-average to above-

average in terms of what kind of student they considered themselves. Although there were mixed responses to this question there were no specifics provided as to what classified as a below-average, average or above-average student; thus, the results are highly varied. For example, a participant in Arts claimed herself as an average student stating the following, “I think I would definitely say average I uh like I get pretty good marks, like I’ve made the Dean’s List the last um two years while also playing rugby, so I feel like my time management skills are pretty good” (Participant 14). Whereas in contrast to this, a participant in Business said this “I would say above average. we need to like get a 65% to maintain our AFA and like be able to play and stuff and I always try to aim a little higher. I think I have like 75’s and above right now...” (Participant 12). What each of these three titles meant to each participant was different; therefore, it must be noted that the results from this question were extremely inconclusive.

The third question looked at whether or not the participants found it difficult balancing both their roles as a student as well as an athlete. Although there were no real differences found here, the common themes of time management and the struggle of managing both roles were identified. This is well put by a participant in Science stating “Yeah it’s tough, this is the busiest I’ve ever been in my life” (Participant 7).

#### *Student-Athlete’s Relationships with Faculty Members*

Similar to question three, question four showed little to no differences amongst the different groups. This question was aimed at understanding what the students thought their responsibilities were towards their professors when it came to their academic lives. The takeaway from this question was communication which was further explained by a student from Kinesiology as she stated “...my coaches always told us to like go

introduce, and I actually have done that, and I think that's helped me because like now they know who I am, they feel comfortable talking to me if I ever need something then they're more willing to give it to me." (Participant 2).

Question five looked at what the students thought the professors' responsibilities were towards them, and during the analysis, a common theme of being accommodating and lenient was identified. One participant from Science summed this up nicely by stating, "I think they have a responsibility to be a little more you know accommodating for the athletes and hope that the athletes don't take advantage of that" (Participant 7).

Question six was the first question to show substantial difference amongst the groups. This question asked participants about their level of satisfaction regarding their professors fulfilling the responsibilities identified in question five. From this, it was found that Kinesiology was the only group in which all participants stated their professors were meeting their expectations and had no negative experiences. A kinesiology student attributed these positive experiences to her professors appreciating her commitment to athletics by saying "I've never had any issues with profs. Especially since I'm in kin too. I feel like the profs in kin understand the importance of sport..." (Participant 9). Although there were other participants who had positive experiences, such as this student from Arts, "From my experience for the most part my professors have been really good. They've been very accommodating with everything that I'm going to miss." (Participant 18), there was at least one negative experience from every other group. For example, this participant also from Arts had a less than ideal relationship with one of her professors saying,

“...my other prof like I said didn’t want me to miss anything kind of I had to do everything through email with him it wasn’t very personal. And when I did go to see him in person it was kind of a little bit belittling, like you’re picking sports over school but yes and no, I guess it is me picking it but I don’t have a choice when the schedule comes out.” (Participant 16).

Question seven showed the most variance amongst the groups as it looked at the highly subjective topic of whether or not professors from different faculties/departments had opposing views of student-athletes. This question resulted in many different opinions towards the various faculties with little to no consistency throughout the responses. The one group that showed uniformity in their responses was Kinesiology, this is presented well in this statement: “...well I’m in kin so I get the sporty professors. Like I guess they’re, like they’d be a little nicer to us than probably some of the other profs” (Participant 11). The other areas of study were more controversial in the sense that there were a variety of outlooks on them from both students in the program as well as outside. For example, business was viewed as mainly positive from participants in the program, displayed by Participant 12, “I’ve never had an issue with a professor this far about like missing class or whatever it is.” (Participant 12), however there were a variety of views on business professors from students of other faculties. This is shown by this participant from Kinesiology, “...in like business or something they might not quite understand, or they might kind of resent, not resent but kind of find that student athletes maybe asking for too much because they don’t really understand” (Participant 9) as well as this participant from Science “...as far as just like knowing some people on my team that are in business I feel like its way easier to get away with anything to do when you’re an

athlete” (Participant 3). These mixed opinions were seen for all faculties, with the exception of Kinesiology as it was the only department without any negative assumptions from the participants.

Question eight asked the participants whether or not their professors show interest in the athletics at UPEI as well as their team’s success specifically. This question also showed differences amongst the four groups as Kinesiology was the only faculty in which all participants claimed their professors showed genuine interest. A participant from Kinesiology stated “They are interested, I mean like kin is very sport, sports focused. I feel like they’re really interested in the athletic department.” (Participant 6). What’s important about this statement is that not only does this participant feel her professors care about her sport, but about UPEI athletics as a whole. This differs from this statement from a participant in Science “Yeah like none of my other profs would ever ask about it, like about rugby...” (Participant 1). Another participant from Science also admitted “I wish more profs were like that honestly [cared about sports]” (Participant 3). This statement is similar to one from a student in Arts who said

“...there’s only a few that like consistently called people out in class or like took us aside and had been like “oh congrats” or “good luck” or whatever, but the other ones are kind of like...they’ll bring it up every now and then but they don’t really...I still don’t, I don’t know if they’re as supportive as other ones...”

(Participant 15).

In saying this however, participants from the same faculty had opposing experiences regarding this topic with another student from Arts saying “yeah I think they do. I have a few of my professors that will always ask like how our games are going or

wish us good luck if we know, if they know we have a game. So I think they're pretty good about it." (Participant 17). This variance leaves room to assume that experiences in faculties other than Kinesiology have been diverse.

#### *Academic Effects of Student-Athlete and Faculty Relationship*

The ninth question asked participants if they believed professors had different responsibilities when it came to working with student-athletes. This question was answered in a very similar way amongst all participants with the majority saying something similar to "I do not feel that my faculty treats me differently because I am an athlete, but they can be very accommodating to situations involving sports and school like travelling or missing class..." (Participant 16).

Question 10 was the last question to show difference amongst the four groups and it was aimed at understanding whether or not the students thought they were at an advantage or disadvantage academically due to their athletic commitments. This question showed that of all the groups students from Kinesiology mentioned the most disadvantages with all five participants saying something similar to "...we have a lot less time to study, a lot less time to do, cause we have practice we have a lot of engagements" (Participant 6). Other faculties, such as Science focused more on the advantages as stated by this participant, "I think we do have a lot of support from the athletic department if we need it. We kind of have, like we can go to student affairs or to the athletic department and other students could only really go to student affairs..." (Participant 1). Although many participants mentioned either an advantage or a disadvantage some mentioned both, such as this participant from Business who stated "...there's a lot of resources to help you

out when you're an athlete but at the same time I think...that positive isn't as big as the negative with all the time it takes up and away from school" (Participant 4).

Finally, question 11 focused on determining whether or not the participants had ever been made to feel less capable compared to their non-sport playing peers. The consensus of this question was unanimous amongst the faculties with all 20 participants responding with something similar to "Never. I've never felt like that ever..." (Participant 12).

## Part II: By-Gender Analysis Results

### *Background Student-Athlete Experience*

As mentioned above, the first two questions of the interview guide, due to their focus on background, showed far too much variance amongst the groups to be considered of interest. The first question again, looked at the students experience balancing both their roles in academics as well as athletics. Results here were the same as what was found in the by-faculty analysis as both the male and female participants reported playing sports the majority of their lives. A participant from Kinesiology put it nicely by saying, "I've kind of been involved in organized sports my whole life..." (Participant 9).

The second question, looking at the student-athletes own perception of their academic abilities, showed substantial discrepancy on what the rankings of below-average to above-average represented. In response to this, five male participants claimed themselves as above average as well as five as average/below-average. Of the five who distinguished themselves as average, three of them stated that their grades would have been higher without the responsibility of athletics. A participant from Arts explained this nicely by stating "my main focus is sports and school like, obviously like student athlete

but like, I don't know, athlete student kind of comes first most of the time..." (Participant 15). It was also found that six female participants ranked themselves as above-average as well as the remaining four as average. The female participants seemed more unsure of their decided title as many participants mentioned two rankings rather than confidently choosing one. A participant from Science displayed this when she said, "I'd say I was like average or above average, like I always try to get the academic all Canadian and like I'm not really satisfied unless I get a high mark, I'm very like strict with myself about that" (Participant 5).

The last background question (3) looked at whether or not the participants had experienced any difficulties balancing school and sport. This question resulted as one of interest from this analysis as there were substantial differences amongst the two groups. Four out of the ten male participants claimed they didn't experience any difficulties managing their two roles. In saying this however, their reasoning was because they weren't putting as much pressure on themselves to be the top students of their class. This is shown by a participant from Business when he stated, "I don't find it that difficult because, I don't know I'm not like super concerned about like being one of the top students or anything so I'm not stressed out about that too much..." (Participant 10). In contrast to this, three out of the ten female participants also claimed to be able to balance everything, however this was because they had enough background maintaining both roles, that they developed strategies for coping with their busy schedules. A participant from Kinesiology displayed this by saying, "Definitely. Like it's stressful um...but I guess I think just like having the background that I have of just like always playing sports and I've just gotten used to it..." (Participant 2).

### *Student-Athlete's Relationships with Faculty Members*

Question four looked at what the participants thought were their responsibilities towards their professors. The main theme identified in this question was communication, and how important it is to keep the professors updated on their athletic commitments. Eight out of the ten male participants mentioned this as well as all ten of the female student-athletes. Most responses were similar to this one from a Participant in Business who said, "I think it's good that you keep them informed, kind of let them know early that you're a student athlete and you're pretty busy. I think it definitely makes them a little bit more...forgiving I guess you could say" (Participant 18). It was also mentioned however by four male participants and five female one's that it is their responsibility as student-athletes to not use their sport as an excuse regarding school. These responses were similar to this one from a student in Business who said, "do good at school and complete all my, all my school work on time like everyone else" (Participant 12). Similar to the by-faculty analysis, question five was one of the questions with the most consistent responses across all participants. It asked the students what they thought their professors' responsibilities towards them because of their additional commitment to athletics. Although some participants claimed that the professors didn't have any special obligations towards them, nearly all 20 student-athletes said their professors needed to be accommodating and understanding of their athletic duties. This was shown by a participant in Business, who said:

"I don't think they have different responsibilities, but I think it's important that they do understand that there's going to be conflicts. They don't need, we're not

asking for special treatment, but we do, there is going to be days that we miss.”  
(Participant 18).

Question six looked at whether or not the students thought their professors were fulfilling the responsibilities identified in question five. The results from this question were also fairly consistent across the two groups with the majority of individuals reporting their professors were indeed being accommodating. From the male perspective there were only three negative examples of professors not fulfilling their duties, and these were all similar to a professor not taking sport as an excuse to miss a class assignment. An example being this statement from a participant in Business:

“had an exam on a Friday night and we obviously played that night and the professor was very reluctant to say that that was a good reason to miss the exam and the best she would do was push the exam ahead two hours to 5 o’clock when we’re still supposed to be at the rink which is 2 hours before a game. And then finally after a week of debate I think even [athletic director] got involved she finally pushed it back to 2 o’clock in the afternoon so we could from 2pm-5pm and then go right to the rink” (Participant 18).

Similar to the male perspective, a small number of female students reported negative experiences with their professors with only two examples provided by the group. The reason behind these experiences were similar to those of the men, in which professors didn’t accept sport as a valid excuse for missing class. An example was given by a participant in Business when she said:

“I think some do and some just don’t care. one of my profs last semester, I had to drop that class actually because I would email him and let him know like hey I

won't be here but participation and attendance counts for my mark and he just, I guess didn't understand that I, I just couldn't be there I was losing a lot of marks because of my attendance and I ended up just dropping the course" (Participant 19).

As found in the by-faculty analysis, question seven showed vast differences amongst the two genders. This question was directed at understanding whether or not the participants believed professors views of student-athletes differed by faculty or department. Due to the subjective nature of this question there were a number of different opinions expressed. It was found that seven out of the ten male participants as well as five out of the 10 female participants thought there was variance amongst the faculties. Some participants thought their home faculty was more lenient towards them as student-athletes, such as this participant from Arts, "...more lenient I would say would be like art professors" (Participant 17). On the other hand, there were participants who thought their own faculty was actually harsher towards student-athletes such as this individual from Science, "No. I think a lot of professors in science or...some of the...like the stem fields probably aren't as accommodating and they don't really, maybe they don't like sports?" (Participant 7).

The last question of this subsection, question eight, looked at whether or not participants thought their professors cared about their athletic involvement on campus. For this analysis it was actually consistent across both groups with seven individuals, both male and female, claiming their professors cared and three stating the opposite. The individuals who thought their professors showed genuine interest had seemingly positive experiences with their student-faculty relationships. This was displayed by a male

participant in Kinesiology who stated, “Yeah oh yeah. like pretty much every time we go in, we’re always asked about like how we’re doing” (Participant 11). Although not all participants had this positive of an experience with other describing situations such as this male participant from Arts who said:

“there’s only a few that like consistently called people out in class or like took us aside and had been like “oh congrats” or “good luck” or whatever, but the other ones are kind of like...they’ll bring it up every now and then but they don’t really...I still don’t, I don’t know if they’re as supportive as other ones.

(Participant 15).

#### *Academic Effects of Student-Athlete and Faculty Relationship*

Question nine, looking at whether or not the student-athletes were treated differently than their non-sport playing peers, showed little to no difference between the male and female participants. Most participants spoke of not being treated any differently than their classmates, responding with something similar to, “I don’t think so no...like they’re not going to...I don’t feel like I’ve been graded easier or like because I’m an athlete I think we’re held to the same...or I’ve been held to the same standard as everyone else” (Participant 10). Those few students who did claim being treated differently mentioned that it was for the positive. These comments were all quite similar and can be summed up by this statement by a participant in Science who said, “I don’t think they have to but like I think it’s just something that naturally happens yeah. But it’s for the positive it’s never for the negative. It’s never like oh I’m treated poorly because I’m an athlete it’s always like I’m treated great because I’m an athlete...” (Participant 8).

The last question that showed interest from the by-gender analysis is question 10, which looked at the advantages and disadvantages participants felt academically due to their roles in athletics. It was found that four out of the ten female participants claimed their strict schedules during sports as not a disadvantage as some other students thought, but an advantage because it kept them more organized. This was nicely put by a Participant in Arts who said:

“I think we do have an advantage because we’re on such a strict schedule like I have everything planned out to the day in my schedule and I just have to do it and tick it off. I think a lot of students just kind of ride through university sometimes and don’t, like they do what they have to do but it doesn’t always happen like productively because they don’t have anything that’s like structuring them but like with sports you have to know when you have time...” (Participant 16).

As found in the by-gender analysis question 11 was consistent amongst both groups. Looking at whether or not the participants had ever been made to feel less competent than their non-sport playing peers, all students responded with a simple statement similar to that of a female student in Science who said “No, not by faculty no” (Participant 5).

### Part III: Faculty Member Results

The results from this questionnaire were fairly consistent across faculties (Science, Arts, Business, Education and AVC) as well as gender (male and female). It can be noted that the results from the male participants are higher for every subscale other than “study habits”, compared to those from the female faculty members. It was also found that the professors from Arts had lower averages for all seven subscales, in

saying this however they also had the largest standard deviations meaning the results were more varied across the participants. In saying this however, it's important to keep in mind that this data set is strictly descriptive as no significance tests were run.

Table 3: Results from the ACES Questionnaire [ $\bar{x}$  ( $SD$ )]

	Read/Write	Math/Science	Critical Thinking	Interpersonal	Engagement	Motivation	Study Habits
Male	3.32 (0.60)	3.28 (0.66)	3.38 (0.60)	4.33 (0.61)	3.88 (0.69)	3.88 (0.64)	4.17 (0.63)
Female	2.97 (0.72)	2.99 (0.90)	3.05 (0.75)	4.13 (0.86)	3.64 (0.92)	3.71 (1.00)	4.27 (0.94)
Science	3.32 (0.42)	3.27 (0.52)	3.36 (0.45)	4.37 (0.65)	3.92 (0.68)	3.96 (0.58)	4.30 (0.69)
Arts	2.56 (1.02)	2.50 (1.11)	2.65 (1.01)	3.77 (1.06)	3.12 (1.11)	3.26 (1.26)	3.53 (1.02)
Business	3.28 (0.41)	3.37 (0.51)	3.31 (0.45)	4.16 (0.32)	3.79 (0.46)	3.55 (0.46)	4.27 (0.44)
Education	3.00 (0.00)	3.00 (0.00)	3.00 (0.00)	4.50 (0.71)	4.17 (0.00)	4.33 (0.47)	4.50 (0.71)
AVC	4.00 (0.00)	4.07 (0.33)	4.20 (0.28)	5.00 (0.00)	4.56 (0.27)	4.76 (0.02)	4.92 (0.12)
All	3.19 (0.66)	3.19 (0.73)	3.25 (0.67)	4.26 (0.71)	3.78 (0.78)	3.81 (0.79)	4.20 (0.75)

## **DISCUSSION**

The unique experience of balancing both academics as well as athletics presents student-athletes with many potential challenges in order to excel academically (Jolly, 2008). Of these challenges, maintaining a positive relationship with their professors is at the top of the list (Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Harrison et al., 2006; Williams et al., 2010). Thus, the purpose of this study was to gain a more detailed understanding of the complex relationship between student-athletes and their professors from the perspective of the students themselves. It is also important to note that finding a Canadian sample of this dynamic was a large part of the reasoning as much of the research done previously was based out of the U.S. After analyzing the data, it was found that overall the student-athletes' at UPEI seem happy with their relationships with their professors. It was also discovered that Kinesiology seemed to be the group with the highest levels of satisfaction amongst the students in terms of being accommodating and showing interest in athletics. Participants from other faculties also appeared generally happy; however, there was more variance displayed in their overall levels of contentment. The discussion is organized into five parts with Part I looking at the by-faculty analysis of the student-athlete interviews, Part II at the by-gender analysis of that same group, Part III at the ACES faculty results, Part IV at the differences between American and Canadian relationships, and finally a general discussion including the current studies recommendations, limitations and future directions.

### Part I: By Faculty Analysis

From the by-faculty analysis, four questions from the 12-question interview guide showed notable differences across groups. These distinctions were found in

questions six, seven, eight and ten, and the similarities and differences found within these questions were, for the most part, synonymous with one another. The major theme, evident across all four questions was that Kinesiology seemed to be the group in which the student-athletes were the most satisfied. In question six it was found that Kinesiology was the only group in which all five participants stated their professors were fulfilling the expectations they had for them. The expectations being referred to here were collected in question five and included professors being accommodating to student-athletes when their athletic commitments overlapped with their academic ones. These results are similar to those discussed by Mihanovic, Batinic, and Pavičić, (2016) who found that students in Kinesiology had the highest self-reported quality of life and institutional satisfaction when compared to other faculties. Although participants from the other groups also claimed to have had positive experiences, there was more variance amongst their responses.

It was not only found that professors in Kinesiology were accommodating to their students, but question eight revealed that out of all the faculties they were also the one that showed the most consistent interest in their students' athletic responsibilities. As previously mentioned in the literature review, overall student satisfaction increases when professors display concern for the athlete's team performance (Jolly, 2008; Williams et al., 2010). This type of communication can create a more casual relationship between the two parties thereby increasing the likelihood of the athlete approaching the professor in the future for academic assistance (Cotten & Wilson, 2010; Jolly, 2008). When student-athletes have a positive experience with their professors, a ripple effect takes place as it impacts not only their academics but also their athletic performance can be positively

affected (Cotten & Wilson, 2010). The participants from Kinesiology spoke highly of their professors when providing their responses and were quick to provide specific examples of their experiences. This type of relationship may have stemmed from the small program size of Kinesiology as well as the students' frequent contact with their professors throughout their four years. It was mentioned by participants in Science that the reoccurrence of professors was low, with one individual even stating that she was struggling to find a professor who knew her well enough to write her a reference letter as she had not established any casual relationships within her faculty. Her situation was similar to the findings of Cotten and Wilson (2006) who stated that student's within larger programs and classes claimed their professors did not know them as more than a number. This impersonal experience is far less common within Kinesiology for the reasons previously mentioned. Thus, it may be looked at as an example for professors from other faculties in order to decrease the number of negative experiences.

As mentioned in the results, question seven showed by far the most variance across the participants with few consistent themes emerging. In saying this, however, one similarity found was that all participants from Kinesiology thought their professors viewed them in a more positive light due to the nature of their program. The results found were similar to past research in that faculty members within the field of Kinesiology have been reported as having a more positive outlook towards student-athletes and their distinct role on campus (Harrison, 2004; Noble, 2004). The statements from other faculties, however, are largely varied in terms of their opinion. When answering this question, many participants admitted that they could not answer the question from experience, but instead stated what they had heard from their teammates about that

specific faculty. For example, a student in Arts said she believed Business professors to be easier on student-athletes due to the comments she had heard. This is similar to that of another participant from Science who claimed the same thing. In contrast to this, there were students who thought business professors might be harder on student-athletes due to their “lack of understanding.” As stated by Rubin and Moses (2017), “student-athletes learn the academic subculture by interacting with other student-athletes.” Similar to this, a study done by Williams and colleagues (2010) found that athletes often seek support and guidance in terms of academic situations from their teammates. Thus, it may only take one student-athlete having a positive or negative experience in a specific faculty to alter the views of their peers.

The last question that sparked interest post-analysis was number 10, which was aimed at understanding whether or not the participants experienced any advantages or disadvantages academically due to their athletic commitments. From this, it was found that the group that reported the most disadvantages was Kinesiology. Although they seemed to have the most favorable overall experience with their professors, these participants held the most negative outlook on their lives as student-athletes in general. This was not the expected result from this question; however, the student's unexpected responses may be caused by their relationships with their professors. Due to their satisfaction with this particular aspect of their academic lives, they may have more room for dissatisfaction towards other areas. Furthermore, it was found that their main disadvantage of attaining both roles was time management, which was said to be a problem for nearly all participants. This is one of the most essential skills for student-athletes to master due to their increased workload (Harris, Altekruise, & Engels, 2003).

Similar to time management being claimed as the most severe disadvantage, having additional academic resources on campus was the most commonly mentioned advantage by the participants. Rubin and Moses (2017) found in a study done with NCAA Division I student-athletes that due to the increased time demands placed on individuals of this population, having extra resources available to them is imperative for their academic success. However, a study done by Jordan and Denson (1990), found that an area of significant difficulty for student-athletes “involves taking advantage of the range of services more readily accessible to other students in the university community.” This paper spoke of how utilizing these additional resources can be hard for student-athletes, though this type of support has been found to increase student-athletes educational success as well as their overall institutional satisfaction (Starch & Ohlson, 2009). From the responses of the participants, it can be concluded that the majority of them are aware of the academic tools they have on campus leaving room to believe that they care not only about their athletic goals but their academic ones as well.

### Part II: By Gender Analysis

After analyzing the data by-gender, three questions showed difference across the male and female participants-questions three, seven and 10. In question three, participants were asked to explain whether or not they had encountered any difficulties balancing school and varsity sports throughout their university career. Four out of the ten male participants claimed they had not experienced any issues managing both their roles, however their reasoning for this was because they “were not overly concerned with being a top student” as a participant in Business nicely put it. Contrast to this, the three female participants who said the same thing, claimed that it was because they had been able to

develop effective coping mechanisms and organizational skills over the years. This finding is supported by that of Lee and Sten (2017) who found that female student-athletes had higher levels of academic motivation when compared to their male counterparts. Although not specifically looked at in this study, Lee and Sten (2017) also found that female student-athletes tend to share their academic habits with their teammates thus, increasing the overall academic motivation amongst this population. Though this may have positive outcomes, it should be noted that this may cause a deeper desire for female student-athletes to fit in with their peers and may result in higher academic guilt if GPA drops (Lee & Sten, 2017). Furthermore, in a study conducted by Gayles and Hu (2009), it was found that between the sexes, female student-athletes are better able to balance their responsibilities, mentioning not only academic and athletic but also their social roles.

Additionally, in a study done by Leigh (2002), 236 university student-athletes participated in the Student-Athlete Motivation towards Sports and Academics Questionnaire. The results of this study were consistent with what was found here, as it was found that the female participants had higher levels of academic motivation compared to the males. This study also found that the male participants had higher athletic career motivation meaning, they had more long-term goals regarding their sport rather than their education. Again, although this was not directly looked at in this study, it should be noted that three out of the ten male participants mentioned that they put their sport before school. This is consistent with the findings from Potuto and O'Hanlon (2007), who conducted surveys with 18 NCAA Division I schools. These researchers found similarly that some student-athletes identified more with being an athlete rather

than a student. Thus, it may be that these male participants are more concerned with their athletic responsibilities rather than their academic ones.

Question seven, as touched on in the by-faculty portion of this discussion, showed a wide variety of perspectives from the participants. It was found from this analysis that seven out of the ten male participants as well as five out of the female participants believed professors from different faculties/departments did not share the same views of student-athletes. Across both genders, the majority of participants' main outlook their home faculty and believed others to view student-athletes in a more negative light. These findings compliment what was found by Comeaux and Harrison (2007) which was that there were little to no differences between male and female student-athletes and their relationships with faculty members. Therefore, the similarities between the athletes perspective of their own faculty may be contributed to past experiences and a certain level of comfort with their professors.

The final question that showed interesting differences between the two genders was question 10, which was looking at the advantages and disadvantages the students felt due to their athletic commitments. Here, it was found that four out of the ten female participants admitted that because they are on such a strict schedule during their sport season, they are more organized academically. Although time management skills have come up as a disadvantage for other participants, these individuals were able to turn this potential negative into a more positive benefit to their academic lives. This is an excellent asset for these individuals as Papanikolaou, Nikolaidis, Patsiaouras, and Alexopoulos (2002) found that "poor time management skills also result in feelings of inadequacy."

### Part III: Faculty Questionnaire

The data collected from the faculty member sample using the ACES questionnaire showed very minimal differences across both genders as well as faculties. In saying this, however, the slight dissimilarities that were found remained consistent with past research for both groups. From the data, it was found that between the male and female participants, the female faculty members held a slightly less positive perception of student-athletes across six out of the seven subsections with the only exception being “study habits.” These results contrasted what was previously mentioned in the literature review however were similar to the research of Kuga (1996), who found that male faculty members tend to hold a more positive perception of student-athletes compared to their female counterparts. In saying this, however, the differences found here were extremely small which is more comparable to the results of Atwater (2010) as well as Spitzer (2014), who found that faculty members gender did not play a significant role on their perceptions of student-athletes. Thereby, it may be concluded that the research is inconclusive on whether or not gender plays a significant role in faculty member’s perceptions of student-athletes (Ott, 2011).

As for the differences in perceptions across faculties, the findings here were also similar to those found in previous research. Although no inferential tests between groups were performed, it should be noted that the professors from Arts, on average, had a more negative perception of student-athletes compared to the other departments. As mentioned in the literature review, a study done by Comeaux (2011) found that professors in the social sciences/humanities viewed student-athletes in a more negative light. This is also consistent with the study done by Mihanovic (2016), which found that students within

these departments had a lower quality of student life compared to the rest of campus. However, just to reiterate, significance tests were not applied to this data which should be kept in mind when making recommendations based on these results.

#### Part IV: Contextual Differences

The results from this research project revealed that all in all, the student-athletes at UPEI seem happy with their relationships with their professors. With this being a Canadian sample, there is reason to believe that this may have influenced the results as the majority of the research previously conducted has been from the United States of America (USA). In saying this, however, the positive experiences of the participants in this study were similar to those in a study evaluating NCAA Division III athletes and their perceptions of faculty interactions (Williams et al., 2010). In this study, it was found that overall the student-athletes who participated were satisfied with their experiences and considered being an athlete as a valued aspect of their college experience (Williams et al., 2010). Contrast to this, a study conducted by Baucom and Lantz (2001) found that faculty members at NCAA Division I and II institutions tended to have a more negative outlook towards student-athletes when compared to their non-sport playing peers. Due to the high commercialization of sports at these institutions, there may be reason to believe that this relationship between student-athletes and faculty members may be strained due to the athletes' professional level of play. This increased focus on the advertisement for college sports has resulted in a decreased focus on academics and has had a negative impact on student-athletes academic identities (Eitzen, 2009). A study done by Umbach and colleagues (2006), using data from the NSSE found that both male and female

student-athletes from NCAA Division III schools received more academic support than their Division I or II counterparts.

Furthermore, in this same study, it was found that both genders had a more positive university experience at Division III schools compared to student-athletes at higher ranked institutions (Umbach et al., 2006). Complimentary to this, Feezel (2013) found that athletics at Division III institutions were far more integrated into the academic goals of the establishment. Thus, it may be concluded that student-athletes at smaller, less commercialized universities are more likely to have positive relationships with their professors resulting in higher experiential satisfaction.

#### Recommendations

Although the results from this research project showed mainly positive experiences from the student-athletes, this may be utilized as a guide to improve the overall relationship between academics and athletics at the University of Prince Edward Island. Even though this study focused strictly on the student-athlete faculty relationship, there is room for growth not only from these two parties but by institution itself as well as by the athletic department.

By the institution, it is important to encourage communication between the worlds of academics and athletics. This may be done by providing faculty members with workshops in order to explain the importance of this relationship to student-athletes. If professors were made more aware of the impact they had on the students' academic, as well as athletic success, there might be less variance in the student-athlete's experience across the faculties.

For faculty members, it is essential they remain open and willing to form relationships with their students. The fostering of this relationship may increase student-athletes satisfaction with the institution as well as form a closer bond between the two parties. In addition to this, if faculty members remember to make the conscious effort to express interest in their students' athletic commitments, these experiences and relationships may become even more positive.

The athletic department may aid this process by making efforts to provide faculty members with more opportunities to support athletics. This may be done by providing professors with tickets to home games or having "campus nights" where all faculty members are granted admission to the event free of charge. This interaction may help bridge the two worlds of academics and athletics and seeing their students play may further improve professors outlook on this population.

Finally, student-athletes are encouraged to maintain consistent communication with their professors in order to strengthen this relationship. As nearly all participants in this study mentioned, communication with their professors was one of their main responsibilities as student-athletes. They spoke of how important it was to keep their professors "in the loop" with their athletic commitments and by doing so improving that relationship.

All in all, this relationship has many impacts both on the parties involved as well as the institution as a whole. Thus, it is important to realize this and make the improvements necessary to further create a positive relationship between athletics and academics at UPEI.

### Limitations

Due to the structure of this study, some limitations existed especially amongst the participants. As individual sports were excluded from this study, the opportunity to gain the perspective from this unique group was lost. Although this allowed for a higher representation of participants from the varsity team sports included, it excluded a group of student-athletes on campus which, although small, may have made valuable contributions to this study.

The data was also limited by excluding the participation from student-athletes in their first or second year of eligibility. The reasoning for this was to include participants who have had sufficient time to form relationships with their professors in order to adequately answer the questions being posed. Regardless of this, not allowing these younger students to participate may have sabotaged the opportunity to understand how this unique relationship between student-athletes and faculty members is initially formed.

Additionally, all participants were student-athletes at UPEI meaning; only one institution was analyzed. In saying this, the findings from this particular study may not be transferable to other institutions as every university is different and not all campuses are similar to that of UPEI. Finally, the participants recruited were done so as a convenience sample; thus, the interview process may have been influenced by the researcher's previous relationships with the students.

### Future Directions

As understanding the relationships between student-athletes and faculty members is so essential, it is equally important to understand the differences that may occur between different populations within this dynamic. Thus, looking at the differences in the

relationships, if any, between individual as well as team sport student-athletes and their professors, may be an area of interest within this field. As these distinct groups have contrasting representation on campus, with team sports being much more common, opposing relations may arise.

Similarly, it may be beneficial to look at the differences between fall and winter sports. As found in this research project, participants from fall sports such as soccer and rugby, claimed to not struggle as much academically due to their sport. The seasons for these sports run only from September to about mid-October. Although pre-season may begin in August and play-offs run into November some, the general time commitment is about two months. Compare this to winter sports such as hockey and basketball that run for the majority of the school year. With pre-season competition beginning in September and playoffs lasting until March, the individuals on these teams have far more time in season during their studies than not. Therefore, it may be interesting to look further into the relationships these groups have with their professors and distinguish any differences between them.

Finally, it may be wise to investigate how relationships between student-athletes and their professors are initially formed. Although it is important to understand how these dynamics affect the students, it would also be beneficial to understand how they begin. This may provide information regarding the behaviour that is most effective in forming a solid bond from day one, as well as how to maintain a good relationship throughout the students' academic experience. As important as this relationship is to student-athletes lives it is crucial to understand what behaviour is the most favourable both from the student as well as the professor.

## CONCLUSION

This research project helped increase the understanding of the relationships between student-athletes and faculty members at the University of Prince Edward Island. From the use of a semi-structured open-ended interview guide, the researcher was able to conduct 20 one-on-one interviews with both male and female athletes ranging from 3rd to 5th year of eligibility. This approach allowed participants to feel more comfortable disclosing information regarding their experiences in order to obtain a more accurate data set. Additionally, descriptive data from a sample of faculty members was collected in order to compare the two perceptions.

After analyzing the data, it was found that overall, student-athletes at UPEI are satisfied with their relationships with their professors. It was also determined, however, that out of the four faculties included (Science, Arts, Kinesiology, and Business), that the students from Kinesiology seemed the most content with their interactions. Participants from this department claimed their professors were accommodating, showed a genuine interest for their athletic commitments as well as reported their professors viewing them in a positive light.

Gender differences found amongst the group were minimal; however, from the data collected it can be assumed that female participants may have better time management skills compared to their male counterparts. It was also found that both male and female participants perceived their interactions with their professors in a similar way with both claiming the relationship to be satisfactory.

Future research should be conducted on how this relationship begins in order to potentially improve both parties overall experience. By looking further into how these

bonds are formed, misconceptions that both sides may have are more likely to be clarified.

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## APPENDIX A

### Student Athlete Letter of Information

The information below describes a research study and invites you to volunteer to participate in the research being conducted. You are free to keep a copy of this form.

The purpose of the present study is to gather information from approximately 20 student athletes regarding their opinions on their interactions with faculty members. In addition, approximately 100 Faculty members will be recruited to complete an online survey regarding their perceptions of varsity athletes who take their classes.

The researchers for this study are Jennifer Newman and Dr. Dany MacDonald from the University of Prince Edward Island. The requirements for participation in this research project are 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, or 5<sup>th</sup> year university athletes who are currently full-time students and a member of a UPEI varsity sport. The data collection, which is expected to take approximately 1 hour, will take place at a time and location agreed upon by the researcher and participant. During the data collection, participants will be asked to complete a demographic information form. They will then be asked a series of broad questions pertaining to their experiences with faculty and asked for their thoughts throughout the interview process. The participant's comments will be audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. Once the data has been transcribed, participants will be sent a copy of their transcript for review and asked to provide any edits within one week. This will provide participants with an opportunity to add or withdraw any comments made during the data collection process. Once data collection is complete, data will be pooled together to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of students. Each participant will be given an identification number to further ensure anonymity as it is possible that individual quotes may be used in the reporting of results. As a reminder, participation in the study is completely voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time without consequence. For participants who withdraw, data collected up until that point would be destroyed. After having completed the study, if a participant wants to withdraw from the study, he/she may do so until March 1, 2019 without penalty or reproach. The data collected will help us to better understand student's perceptions of their interactions with professors and identify areas of concern, should they exist.

All the information collected will remain confidential to the researchers listed below. Throughout the study, data will be stored in a secure, password-protected computer in a room that is locked at all times when no one is present. At no point in this study will participant's personal information be shared with others.

There are no physical, psychological, economic or social risks associated to participation in this study.

\*\*\*This research project has been approved by the Research Ethics Board of the University of Prince Edward Island. I understand that I can contact the UPEI Research

Ethics Board at (902) 620-5104, or by e-mail at reb@upei.ca if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study.\*\*\*

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## APPENDIX C

### Participant Demographic Form

INSTRUCTIONS: Please fill in the following questionnaire to help provide us with some relevant background information about yourself.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Sport: \_\_\_\_\_

Year of eligibility: \_\_\_\_\_

Starter or Non-starter: \_\_\_\_\_

Program of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of courses per semester: Fall \_\_\_\_\_ / Winter \_\_\_\_\_

On average how many:

hours per week do you spend practicing: \_\_\_\_\_

hours per week do you spend studying: \_\_\_\_\_

hours per week do you spend playing your sport: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D

### Interview Guide for Athletes

- 1) Can you tell me about your experience as a student athlete from youth to now.
  - Probing questions: which sports played, what level, for how long?
- 2) On the academic side of your university experience, what kind of student do you consider yourself (above average, average, below average)? Can you provide me with examples to support your answer?
- 3) Have you encountered any difficulties in balancing school and varsity sports throughout your university career?
- 4) When considering your experiences as a student-athlete, what do you think are your responsibilities towards your professors when it comes to school? [Ask why they think these are the case]
- 5) Do you believe that professors have different responsibilities when it comes to dealing with student athletes? If so, what are these? If not, why not?
- 6) Generally speaking, do you feel as though your professors are fulfilling these responsibilities? Can you provide examples of how they are or are not?
- 7) When looking at your academic experiences, do you think professors across all Faculties/Department have the same views of student athletes? If so, why, if not, why not?
- 8) Do you feel as though your professors care about UPEI athletics and/or your teams' performance? Please provide examples to support your position
- 9) Do you feel that faculty treats you differently because you are an athlete?
  - Positive or negatively?
  - If yes, do you feel that it has an impact on your work/grades?
- 10) Are there certain situations in which you believe you are at an advantage or disadvantage academically as opposed to other students because of athletics?
  - If so, how have you lived through these advantages or disadvantages?
- 11) Have you ever been made to feel as though you are less capable than your non-sport playing peers by faculty (academically, motivation levels etc.)
  - If yes, describe the situation(s)
- 12) Do you have any other comments related to your university sport experience that you would like to share or that we have not covered?

## APPENDIX E

### Faculty Letter of Information

The information below describes a research study and invites you to volunteer to participate in the research being conducted. You are free to keep a copy of this form.

The purpose of the present study is to gather information from approximately 20 student athletes regarding their opinions on their interactions with faculty members. In addition, approximately 100 Faculty members will be recruited to complete an online survey regarding their perceptions of varsity athletes who take their classes.

The researchers for this study are Jennifer Newman and Dr. Dany MacDonald from the University of Prince Edward Island. The requirements for participation in this research project are faculty members who teach and are currently employed by the University of Prince Edward Island. The data collection will occur online with participants asked to complete a demographic form and a 66-item Likert-type scale pertaining to perceptions of student-athletes academic abilities. This survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes. The participant's answers will be aggregated with others who complete the survey and the data will be analyzed as a group. The data will be confidential to the researchers and no identifying information will be included in the dissemination of results. As a reminder, participation in the study is completely voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time without consequence. For participants who withdraw, data collected up until that point would be destroyed. After having completed the study, if a participant wants to withdraw from the study, he/she may do so until March 1, 2019 without penalty or reproach. The data collected will help us to better understand Faculty perceptions of their interactions with student athletes and identify areas of concern, should they exist.

The confidentiality of online surveys and data collected and stored through American based companies such as Google, cannot be guaranteed because the data can be accessed by Homeland security as per the US Patriot Act. Data confidentiality can therefore not be guaranteed, but barring a request from Homeland security to access the data, it will remain confidential to the researchers listed below. Throughout the study, data will be stored in a secure, password-protected computer in a room that is locked at all times when no one is present. At no point in this study will participant's information be shared with others.

There are no physical, psychological, economic or social risks associated to participation in this study.

\*\*\*This research project has been approved by the Research Ethics Board of the University of Prince Edward Island. I understand that I can contact the UPEI Research Ethics Board at (902) 620-5104, or by e-mail at reb@upei.ca if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study.\*\*\*

## APPENDIX F

### Faculty Consent Form

I have read the letter of information and understand the purpose of the present research study. I understand that all of the information collected will remain confidential to the research team and that anonymity of my identity will be ensured. I understand that I can keep a copy of the signed and dated consent form. Finally, I realize that participation in this research is voluntary and I can withdraw from this study at any moment or choose to not answer any question posed without consequences and that any data collected to that point will be destroyed. I understand that if at any point during data collection or the question period I wish to withdraw from the study, the collected data will be destroyed. Data can be withdrawn until the data collection is complete, which is when the researcher and I have concluded data collection, I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and the researcher has left.

\*\*\*This research project has been approved by the Research Ethics Board of the University of Prince Edward Island. I understand that I can contact the UPEI Research Ethics Board at (902)620-5104, or by e-mail at reb@upei.ca if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study. \*\*\*

By clicking this box I consent to participate in this research project.

## APPENDIX G

### Faculty Demographic Form

INSTRUCTIONS: Please fill in the following questionnaire to help provide us with some relevant background information about yourself.

Faculty:

- Science
- Arts
- Business
- Engineering
- Education
- Nursing
- AVC

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ (if Departmentalized Faculty)

Faculty Rank:

- Lecturer
- Sessional instructor
- Assistant professor – contract faculty
- Assistant professor – tenure-track
- Associate professor
- Full professor
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years

## APPENDIX H

### Faculty Questionnaire

Directions:

The Academic Competence Evaluation Scales assess a student’s academic skills and academic enablers (interpersonal skills, engagement, motivation, and study skills). For each item, a rating is required. The rating should reflect your best estimation of the skill level of a typical student-athlete in comparison to other students at your college or university. This survey is completely voluntary and should take no longer than 10-15 minutes. Thank you for your time.

Reading/Writing Skills	Far Below	Below	At Grade Level	Above	Far Above	Don't Know
1. Reading Comprehension						
2. Reading unfamiliar words by sounding out each of the letters						
3. Vocabulary						
4. Identifying a main idea						
5. Reading fluency						
6. Spelling						
7. Punctuation						
8. Grammar						
9. Written communication						
10. Drawing conclusions from written material						
Mathematics/Science Skills	Far Below	Below	At Grade Level	Above	Far Above	Don't Know
11. Computation						
12. Analyzing errors in information or processes						
13. Measurement						
14. Understanding of spatial relationships						
15. Mental math						
16. Using mathematical concepts to solve daily problems						
17. Testing hypotheses						
18. Breaking down a complex problem						
19. Identifying patterns from information						

20. Problem-solving						
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<b>Critical Thinking Skills</b>	<b>Far Below</b>	<b>Below</b>	<b>At Grade Level</b>	<b>Above</b>	<b>Far Above</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
21. Synthesizing related information						
22. Drawing conclusions from observations						
23. Comparing similarities or differences among objects or ideas						
24. Classifying objects or ideas into categories						
25. Generalizing from information or experiences						
26. Constructing support for or against a position on an issue						
27. Analyzing supporting and opposing viewpoints on an issue						
28. Deciding among alternative solutions						
29. Investigating a problem or issue						
30. Developing a solution to a problem						
<b>Interpersonal Skills: "Student-athletes..."</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
31. Are considerate of others						
32. Are willing to compromise						
33. Express dissatisfaction appropriately						
34. Accept suggestions from others						
35. Work effectively in large group settings						
36. Listen to what others have to say						
37. Work effectively in small group settings						
38. Interact appropriately						

with other students						
<b>Engagement: “Student-athletes...”</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>	<b>Don’t know</b>
39. Use outlines to organize written work						
40. Speak in class when called upon						
41. Ask questions about exams or other assignments						
42. Participate in class discussions						
43. Volunteer answers to questions						
44. Assume leadership in group discussions						
45. Initiate conversations appropriately						
46. Ask questions when they are confused						
<b>Motivation: “Student-athletes...”</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>	<b>Don’t know</b>
47. Are motivated to learn						
48. Prefer challenging tasks						
49. Produce high-quality work						
50. Critically evaluate their own work						
51. Attempt to improve on previous performance						
52. Make the most of learning experiences						
53. Look for ways to academically challenge themselves						
54. Assume responsibility for their learning						
55. Pay attention in class						
56. Are goal-oriented						
<b>Study Skills: “Student-athletes...”</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>	<b>Don’t know</b>
57. Complete course assignments						

58. Edit their work before they submit it						
59. Finish their assignments on time						
60. Take notes in class						
61. Review notes and other materials						
62. Use strategies to remember information						
63. Manage their time effectively						
64. Prepare for exams						
65. Prepare for class (e.g., complete readings, review notes)						
66. Attend class						